

THE AMERICAN DRUG WAR IN COLOMBIA: CAUSES,
CONSEQUENCES, AND NEW POLICIES FOR AN ERA OF A
LOOSENING STANCE AGAINST DRUGS

by

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The United States has been fighting a War on Drugs since 1971. Although the goal is to reduce the amount of drugs in the United States, the policies against drugs extend to other countries where many of the drugs are produced. Colombia is a prime example of that, the recipient of United States aid for decades, yet the goals of less cocaine entering the United States from Colombia, a decrease in coca production, and fewer cocaine users have not been achieved. Instead, there have been environmental, economic, and civilian consequences that have seriously hurt Colombia as a country. New policies are needed that target more than just coca production and cocaine trafficking. There should be efforts to incentivize people to avoid coca production, to increase the government's ability to act strongly, to create peace with guerrillas, and to help all drug abusers and users. Hopefully the combination of all of the mentioned policies will make a positive difference in the War on Drugs in Colombia and the United States.

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Introduction

In 1971, President Nixon declared a War on Drugs, declaring drugs to be America's number one enemy, and Americans have been fighting that war ever since, both within and outside of their borders. This War has many obvious, well known side effects such as violence between drug cartels, an increasing prison population, billions of dollars spent, and many, many deaths. Its policies have been oriented towards demolishing the supply of drugs through efforts such as interdiction, cartel busting, eradication and more in the hopes that removing the supply of drugs will result in no drug users due to the lack of drugs. Unfortunately, the well-known side effects are not the only side effects, and the supply-side policies have not had the desired effect on the current international situation regarding drugs.

American policies are not limited to affecting events only within American borders, and Columbia has been and continues to be the target of many American drug policies, most likely due to its status as the world's leading producer of cocaine (Cannabis, Coca, & Poppy: Nature's Addictive Plants), but these policies are not having the desired effects. For example, the number of hectares in Colombia used for coca production has only grown during the period of supply-side policies even going so far as to encroach on the Amazon Forest in order to counter the fields destroyed by aerial fumigation (Massey, 282; Guizado, 160). The kilos of cocaine entering the United States cannot be accurately measured, but even with increases in seizures through interdiction, the Office of National Drug Control Policy predicts that the availability of cocaine is increasing which means that plenty is still crossing the border (Robinson, 221). A major goal of the War on Drugs, the reduction of drug users, has not happened

as the percentage of Americans using cocaine has hardly fluctuated since the start of the War in 1971 (Robinson, 210). In addition to the failure of reaching certain goals, there is also the increase in violence in Colombia due to the militarization of drug prohibition and the fighting between cartels and the state, a negative effect on the environment, and a large negative impact on the Colombian economy, side effects that only add to the weight of the issues regarding the current policies.

Although these policies are flawed and problematic, the time in which they were originally written must be taken into consideration. These policies were created and later extended during times in which a hard stance policy was seen as the best way to fix a problem, hence the strong prohibition stance with little to no consideration of demand-side policies such as expansion of treatment, decriminalization of drug use, or talk of drug addiction being a mental health issue. For example, although Reagan recognized the need for demand-side policies, he talked about “getting tough on drugs” and had a “zero tolerance policy” in which the focus was punitive measures against drug users, blaming them for their decisions and thus punishing them, not helping them (The United States War on Drugs). However, in the current time period, it has become clear that supply-side only policies are not going to end the War on Drugs, and therefore something new must be attempted in order to end the extreme violence and impact the drug production and consumption of the world. There has been an increase in policy flexibility in the United States as certain states legalize the use of marijuana, as well as in Latin America where marijuana is legal in all of Uruguay, and Colombia refuses to continue aerial spraying of coca plants (State Marijuana Laws Map; McKay; Neuman). These actions indicate a changing policy stance in regards to preventing drug

production and consumption thus opening up the conversation to a variety of new policy considerations.

To further highlight and support the need for a new package of policies to fight the War on Drugs, this paper will analyze the outcomes of American policies against cocaine in Colombia. The many outcomes of the policies will serve to prove the failures and shortcomings of the prohibition policies that have turned Colombia into a country riddled with violence, environmental issues, death, and an ever increasing amount of drugs. To counter the current policies and issues, a new set of policies will be presented, oriented towards the goals of reducing cocaine production in Colombia, reducing cocaine use in the United States, and beginning to repair the damage caused by previous policies. This will ultimately prove that the supply-side oriented policies alone championed by the United States are not effective in terms of reaching the stated goals of reducing coca and cocaine production, have produced an incredibly dangerous and hostile situation in Colombia, and thus that there is a need for a change in policy orientation that moves to include more demand-side oriented policies, ones that will be considered and possibly accepted in the new period of drug policy conversations.

A History of the American Drug War in Colombia

The American War on Drugs began in the United States, but its policies have extended to many Latin American countries where drugs are produced and trafficked. One early focus was the Andean region of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia where the vast majority of the world's coca was grown and cocaine was produced (Cannabis, Coca, & Poppy: Nature's Addictive Plants). Colombia was mainly a production country, turning coca leaves into cocaine, but early American policies along with the cooperation of the foreign governments resulted in many farmers being pushed out of Bolivia and Peru, relocating the growing of coca to Colombia, making Colombia the most important country in regards to cocaine production (Hidalgo). Following this change in country and then many years of increasing levels of coca cultivation, there was a new focus for American policy, a change that resulted in the policy known as Plan Colombia which was designed to help reduce both coca and cocaine production while targeting the revolutionaries in the country as well, such as the FARC, who use the drug trade to fund portions of their operations (LeoGrande, 1). Although there were several provisions within the Plan that focused on social and economic issues within Colombia to help counter the drug issues, the vast majority of the money went towards the police and the military in prohibition, supply-side oriented policies including interdiction and eradication (New: Plan Colombia; LeoGrande, 1).

Arming the military to a greater extent is one overwhelming factor of the policies of both Plan Colombia and earlier aid packages to Colombia. The focus was to strengthen its capabilities in order to carry out interdiction and eradication as well as cartel busting and to fight back against the FARC and other revolutionary groups

(Crandall, 60). This has been successful, to an extent, as seen with the eventual death of Pablo Escobar and the fall of his cartel, but it also struggles with its own issues like worrisome cooperation between the government and the Cali cartel during the manhunt (Bowden, 269). Corruption results in leaders having more than one agenda, sometimes working for the cartels they are fighting, sometimes funding, training, and/or supporting a paramilitary organization that fights the FARC without following the rules that militaries must follow. For example, General Santoyo has been accused of helping both drug gangs and paramilitary organizations while serving as the president's head of security, leading to a conflict of interests (Colombia Gen Santoyo Turns Himself in over Drug Charges). One result of that is the increase in human rights violations in Colombia.

Interdiction focuses on attempting to seize shipments of drugs before they can cross the border into the United States whether at the border or before. As the number of kilos seized increases, many people see this as a positive outcome of interdiction. Unfortunately, more seizures might be more indicative of increased production more so than decreased availability for users (Robinson, 215-216). This stems for the fact that for every way that the DEA and other agencies come up with to target and take the drugs, cartels come up with at least one new way to move their drugs, creating a never-ending arms race between the two sides. Cartels have even gone so far as to buy or make mini submarines to move their drugs into the United States (Williams).

Eradication focuses on destroying the coca crop so that there will be no coca to turn into cocaine. One way eradication happens is by hand, men using machetes to chop down the plants, which can be rather expensive. The far more common method is to use

aerial spraying of glyphosate, a chemical found in Roundup, to kill the plant, but this policy has its own drawbacks (Massey, 281). For one, the spraying can only occur in certain areas of the country. Many of the coca fields are located in areas controlled by guerrilla organizations with the firepower to bring down the planes spraying the crops. Thus helicopters are used to protect the planes, but they have a much shorter range away from airports than the planes, thus limiting the reach of the chemical spray (Reyes, 73). Another issue is the delivery method itself. No matter how accurate and precise the calculations are of where to spray the chemical, wind and other factors can, and do, interfere with the spray, pushing the chemical to land on legal crops and natural flora, as well as humans and animals (Massey, 282).

Funding the military and focusing on interdiction and eradication is supposed to have several results, and the United States wants those results to be a reduction of the flow of cocaine to the United States, a lowered purity of cocaine, and an increase of the price of cocaine on the streets. All of this would make it harder for users to gain access to cocaine and their high which should lower the percentage of cocaine users, the ultimate goal of these policies. However, the United States has not seen these desired results, and the results of that should be people arguing for a change in policies since the War on Drugs is not meeting its goals. This has not occurred though, in part due to the use of statistics to present the War on Drugs in a more positive view than reality.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy, ONDCP for short, has been reporting for years that we are winning the War on Drugs, which provides support for the continuation of previous/current policies and the War. In fact, the current prohibition, mainly supply-side oriented policies, have created many positive statistics

that can be presented to people, when displayed in the proper manner. For example, thousands and thousands of kilos of cocaine have been seized by border patrol agents and others year after year. The United States Customs and Border Protection reports on its website that 61,663 kilos of cocaine have been seized in 2015 alone (cbp.org, conversion done through Google). Statistics such as these provide support for the argument that the policies are having the desired effect on the cocaine trade and industry.

Another positive outcome of the policies has been the destruction of large cartels and the imprisonment of large drug traffickers. This has been a somewhat successful endeavor since 1991 with the surrender of Pablo Escobar due to lots of pressure from the government on his business in spite of early struggles (Bowden, 98). Although he managed to escape prison, Colombian officials managed to track him down, with American help, and kill him, ending his reign of terror in Colombia and beginning the destruction of his cartel (Bowden, 249). In the United States, Rick Ross, the man blamed for the crack cocaine epidemic in America, was arrested while trying to sell drugs to an undercover cop (Silverstein). In other words, American officials have had several victories against drug cartels which supports the idea that the current policies should continue because, apparently, they are working.

Aerial eradication provides another set of statistics that back up the War on Drugs and its current policies. Year after year, more and more hectares of coca fields were sprayed by Colombians in order to hinder and prevent coca production (Reyes, 72). Again, the numbers that various government officials can provide would support the current policies and present a case for continuing on with them. However, these

statistics are not representative of sufficient aspects to categorize the policies as successful or not.

On the contrary, the situation is not as positive as the ONDCP likes to portray it. While interdiction policies have worked to prevent thousands of kilos of cocaine from entering the United States, thousands more still enter the States. Part of this is due to the arms race between new ideas for cocaine transportation and the detection of said ideas, a race in which the cartels often have the advantage (Cocaine Smuggling in 2010). The cartels know that interdiction occurs and is unavoidable, and therefore there is a reasonable possibility that they factor the losses into their accounting, increasing their production goals and rendering interdiction much less effective (Rouse, 549). This enables Americans to have high seizure numbers while maintaining a large flow of cocaine into the United States. Along this line, the maintained flow of cocaine into the United States allows the cartels to maintain a relatively steady purity level of cocaine, not needing to dilute it to reach all of the markets. Price has not been affected greatly by the prohibition policies either because although there were early drops in prices, the price in 2011 had roughly recovered to pre Plan Colombia levels (Robinson, 226).

Cartel busting does not always have the desired outcomes either. Once Escobar had lost control of his portion of the cocaine trade, there were other cartels that moved in to control what Escobar once controlled. The larger cartels often break into smaller cartels based on the nodes they formed within the original cartel structure which are often harder to target than larger ones especially when authorities do not know how many new cartels have emerged (Kenney, 190-191). Busting cartels can also cause problems when the actors move, leading to the need to gather new information.

One outcome that none of these policies attempt to factor in is known as the Balloon Effect, when policies appear effective in one particular area simply because the problem moved to another location. When the War on Drugs began, the majority of coca was grown outside of Colombia, but the fields migrated to Colombia when pressure mounted against the cartels in other countries (Rouse, 547). This effect can also be seen within Colombia with the outcomes of aerial eradication. As coca growers need more fields to grow their crop, they expand out into regions further from airports and with a smaller federal government presence (Guizado, 159). They have gone so far as to expand into the Amazon, deforesting more and more hectares as aerial eradication continues, using more hectares than are being sprayed, thus creating the possibility of even greater coca harvests. This environmental impact is an unforeseen outcome of the policies that must be taken into consideration when deciding if the policies have been successful or not.

Another major shortcoming of the current policies is the lack of demand-side policies. Economics talk about supply and demand, how each one affects the other, and thus policies to fight the War on Drugs should consider both supply and demand. There are demand-side policies in terms of punishments for drug dealers and drug users/abusers, but there is very little focus on treatment for drug addiction. From Nixon's focus on interdiction in Mexico, although he did initiate the largest treatment focus the United States has had, to Regan and then Clinton, the vast majority of policies has focused on supply-side policies, ignoring the need for treatment (The United States War on Drugs). Imprisoning a drug user does not help him overcome his addiction because the focus of a prison is not treatment and in part because there are many drugs

in prisons. Treatment has traditionally been underfunded resulting in not enough services for all of the drug users in the United States (Robinson, 249). Supply-side policies are created under the idea that with no more drugs, there will be no more users because there will be no product. However, if there are no more drug users, drug cartels will go out of business as they run out of income. Each set of policies supports the endeavors of the other, and thus one set of policies should no longer be overlooked in favor of the other.

The Results of the Policies

In terms of American policies to combat the War on Drugs internationally, very little has changed in the United States. There are still drugs entering the country at roughly the same price and same purity being used by roughly the same number of people. Plan Colombia has not had the desired effect on the United States, not much of an effect at all, but the situation in Colombia is vastly different. Although the desired outcomes, a major reduction in coca crops, cocaine production, and cartel power, have not been reached, there have been major effects on Colombia.

One major impact of the policies has been on nature and the environment due to two different results of aerial eradication. The first issue stems from the chemical that is sprayed. Glyphosate is not specific to coca, killing it and leaving all other plants untouched, and thus any plant that it lands on will die. As stated before, aerial eradication is not the most accurate method of eradication, and thus many natural plants are killed in the process as well. The destruction of natural flora changes the ecosystem and creates changes in how both plants and animals interact, altering the system and having various effects on the humans living in the area as well. Additionally, the loss of coca fields forces the farmers and cartels to locate new land to use as fields if they want to maintain their current levels of coca production. Since the majority of presently cleared land is occupied, farmers have been pushing into the Amazon, cutting down four hectares of forest for every one hectare of fields lost to aerial eradication. Not only does the loss of the Amazon result in other plants and many animals losing their habitats, the loss of trees contributes to increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere which factors into the global warming debate (Guizado, 160). Therefore,

while aerial eradication was designed to hinder the coca growers and cocaine traffickers, nature and the environment are the ones feeling the greater impact while the coca producers just expand their fields, gaining control over more and more land.

The policies have also had a large negative impact on Colombian citizens. Over the past decades, human rights abuses have been rampant in Colombia, even before Clinton's Plan Colombia. Even with that knowledge, Clinton and Congress waived the American policy of requiring the governments of aid receiving countries to meet a certain standard of respect for human rights in order to pass Plan Colombia (Massey, 280). The idea was to enable the military to hunt down and destroy the various parts of the drug trade used by guerrillas and other drug traffickers. The guerrillas arose after the 1948-1958 conflict known as *la Violencia* when they were not given a position within the new power structure in Colombia. Their main conflicts with the government stem from the privatization of natural resources and the desire to represent the rural poor. Although there have been peace negotiations before, the conflict continues, and the FARC uses cocaine trafficking to fund a lot of their operations, supposedly accounting for sixty percent of the cocaine exports entering the United States (Renwick). Unfortunately, the militarization of the War on Drugs has mostly just increased human rights violations as these three types of organizations commit said violations: the military, paramilitary organizations, and guerilla organizations.

The military is known for disappearances of citizens in efforts to gain information on drug traffickers. There is also little protection for citizens as the military passes through, leading to murder and rape (De La Asuncion, 449). Paramilitary organizations often receive many of their weapons and training from the military, but

their actions are more extreme while fighting against the FARC and other guerilla organizations. Ironically, even as they try to reduce cocaine trafficking and prevent the FARC from getting funds from cocaine, many paramilitary organizations themselves get additional funding from drug trafficking (LeoGrande, 5). Guerrillas are constantly fighting against the paramilitary organizations, and civilians get caught up between the two groups. If a group is in need of funds, civilians could be forced to turn their farms into coca farms, growing the coca for whoever took over their land. The paramilitaries and guerrillas also often have to decide if the people in a village are “supporting the enemy” or not which can lead to village-wide massacres if it’s decided that the village doesn’t support the “proper” group (Dion, 407; Delacour, 66).

Therefore, the increased focus on using militarization to fight the War on Drugs gave more money to the military which then resulted in the general outcome of wars: many deaths. However, the majority of them are civilians, not people involved willingly in the drug trade. They are often just innocent bystanders who have land that other organizations want or who are accused of affiliations they do not have. Thus although aid money given to the Colombian military was designed to weaken the guerillas and other drug traffickers, it has strengthened some, in terms of the paramilitary organizations, and grievously hurt the Colombian people while maintaining a dangerous environment for them to live in.

Loss of life is not the only result of being caught between the various groups fighting in Colombia for civilians. For many, there is the issue of internal displacement, being forced from their home and farms to move around the country in hopes of finding new homes, beginning before even the implementation of Plan Colombia (De La

Asuncion, 440). This has created a large refugee crisis within the country, one which the United States has not done much to help with due to its legal definition of a refugee (De La Asuncion, 452). The loss of home and farm removes a citizen's ability to be a productive citizen in terms of contributing to the economy and democracy but also in terms of being able to survive. Large internal displacement, while not mass murder, is another example of human rights violations, violating the economic/social right to adequate housing as well as various civil/political rights such as the right to safety and the right to participate in politics. People constantly moving around looking for food, shelter, and safety do not have the time to vote or file a complaint and see justice served.

There are more than just environmental issues aerial eradication. Not only does the spray miss the coca plants, landing on legal crops families depend on to survive, it can land on farm animals as well as people, and it can harm them even though glyphosate is designed to destroy plants. The loss of farm animals can be as devastating as the loss of a crop due to lost income as well as a potential food source for the family itself. In terms of the effect on people, it can make them sick, hindering their ability to live and work, especially if they live in an area that receives frequent spraying. The negative health effects can be more than just irritating. Colombia recently refused to continuing its aerial eradication program due to concerns that glyphosate causes cancer in people that it lands on (Neuman). Thus between murderous organizations in the countryside, internal displacement, loss of livelihood, and deadly chemicals, the lives of Colombians have been severely negatively impacted by policies like Plan Colombia

even as few of the goals are met, creating a list of “cons” more expansive than the “pros” of the policies.

With all of the effects on citizens, the economy has been negatively affected as well. For one thing, many people cannot contribute to the economy if they are displaced or if their farm was taken by guerrillas. Another issue stems from the fact that there is not always a market for legal crops. Due to the lack of government presence in certain portions of the country as well as difficult terrain to traverse, accessing a market where a farmer can sell his crops might be impossible or too difficult to be profitable (Dion, 405). Depending on where the farmer lives, growing a legal crop may be highly problematic due to soil and water conditions as well as the threat of accidental aerial eradication. In addition to those struggles, the price for legal crops is not very high which makes making a living very difficult for farmers, and the emphasis on the militarization of the War on Drugs hinders the availability for aid money to go towards economic or social programs. On the other hand, coca is a hardy plant that can grow in a variety of environments, and each plant can yield up to four harvests per year, helping to negate the drawbacks of possible aerial eradication (Guizado, 155). The price for coca leaves is often higher than that of many legal crops, especially those easy to grow, making it a more appealing option to those struggling to make a living. Lastly, the cartels and guerrillas are always looking for more coca to turn into cocaine, providing a permanent market for a farmer’s harvest creating guaranteed money. In other words, there is very little incentive to maintain or turn to legal crops on farms which is not good for an economy mostly comprised of agriculture and oil production.

Oil can also be at risk from the guerrillas, further hurting the Colombian economy. In retaliation for government actions against organizations like the FARC, such as targeting their cocaine trafficking activities or simply sending the military after the guerrillas to shut them down, guerrillas will often counter by exploding oil pipelines and other locations key to oil production to hurt the government in retaliation (Crandall, 64). In this situation, the drug war and the guerrilla war combine to negatively impact the economy, it being difficult to tell which war is actually the cause of the issues. However, oil targeted retaliation cannot be ignored given that oil exports are a key factor in the economy, and thus any disruptions in oil production will cause problems for both the government and the citizens of Colombia (The World Factbook-Colombia). The militarization of the War on Drugs in Colombia only serves to exacerbate the situation as retaliation often occurs after actions taken against the guerrillas whether for drugs or other reasons. Therefore, the major impacts on the economy, disrupted oil and many incentives to not grow legal crops, is a major drawback to Plan Colombia.

Several of these effects also result in helping the drug traffickers in addition to hurting civilians. Disenfranchised and displaced people provide a fertile recruitment pool for the guerrillas and perhaps for the paramilitary organizations as well, depending on need (LeoGrande, 3). With no farm or home, civilians become more susceptible to the recruitment tactics of guerrilla organizations, thus increasing their ranks as well as their need for money. This would result in an increased need to traffic drugs which is counterproductive to the goal of reducing drug flows and production.

The targeted goals of policies like Plan Colombia were to decrease the amount of cocaine being produced in Colombia and shipped to the United States. However, these goals have not been the outcome as seen by increasing hectares of coca fields, increasing amounts of cocaine production, negligible variation in cocaine purity and price in the United States, minimal decrease in the number of cocaine users in the United States, and the continued fight between cocaine producers and traffickers against the Colombian government. Instead the outcome has been to hurt nature and the environment, disadvantage civilians through death and displacement, hinder legal economic growth, and help the guerrillas, one of the targets of the policies. Given that the ideas behind the policies seems logical, why is it that the current situation is the observed outcome instead of the desired goals?

One cause of the situation is poorly implemented policies. For example, eradication of coca fields should result in the decrease of coca production, but there has to be more than just eradication. Follow through should occur to ensure that farmers are not replanting the coca plants once eradication has occurred, and an increase in a federal presence can help with the extended policy. New federal officers can also assist in providing subsidies and increasing market access. There also needs to be some method to make sure that field expansion cannot happen either, thus protecting the Amazon and preventing an increase in coca production. Eradication alone is not enough to solve the problem.

The lack of follow through is not the only problem with the aerial eradication program. As stated before, aerial eradication is not a very precise practice regardless of the preparation put into the plane's route. Wind, plane speed, and other factors can

divert the sprayed glyphosate away from the coca fields and towards legal crops, natural flora, animals, and people. The inaccuracy of the program contributes to its inability to create the desired outcome of the policy, and the lack of follow through only exacerbates the issues.

Another source contributing to the current situation is the lack of sufficient oversight and accountability. Although the paramilitaries are highly illegal, they often function with complete impunity as the military looks the other way from massacres and other human rights violations. There are even times when they receive active support from the military (LeoGrande, 5). These groups are focused in their goal of targeting guerilla organizations, and civilians become the collateral damage of their goal, and the paramilitary organizations also often use drugs to further fund their operations. Therefore, without sufficient oversight of the military to prevent support of paramilitaries, human rights violations flourish, and American money tangentially contributes to an increase in drug trafficking and production due to the military corruption and the lack of sufficient oversight to prevent and counter it. Therefore, the policy of giving money and power to the military ends up working against its goals of reducing terror and drug trafficking due to an incomplete policy.

Lastly, poorly focused polices have only helped to exacerbate the problems of the current situation as well. For example, there is not enough focus on civilians instead of drug traffickers. For example, many of the cocaine producers do not grow their own coca, hence the high prices offered for it which then incentivize civilians to produce coca (Dion, 407). If there were policies oriented around providing support to civilian farmers so that legal crops were close to or as profitable as coca, then a drop in coca

production might be a more viable goal, thus working towards the decrease in cocaine production as well. This would also require policies to help increase market access for the farmers, an idea that might prove problematic for many policy makers given that those policies are not specifically anti-drug policies. However, given the poor current situation, a focus reorientation might result in a change in the situation for the better.

Another aspect of the poorly focused policies is the high emphasis on the “stick” over the “carrot.” The policies are mostly punishments with only minimal ways to help reduce the causes that push some people towards participating in the drug trade. For example, policies to help reduce poverty and increase the prices of legal crops would provide incentives to leave the drug trade rather than just punishing people for participating as they do what they have to in order to survive (Reyes, 71). A similar issue is the lack of incentives to avoid enabling the drug trade. Corruption in the police is related to low salaries, and so finding ways to provide higher salaries for police officers and public officials might decrease corruption. With less willingness to accept bribes from cartels and other drug traffickers, there should be a decrease in the influence of drug traffickers as well as their relative freedom of movement around the country (LeoGrande, 3). On the other hand, there is not sufficient punishment for those highly active and important in the drug trade. Some people who are arrested get extradited to the United States, but the justice system in Colombia is strangled by judges scared to deliver sentences for drug traffickers due to the threats delivered and carried out against judges and their families, starting during the 1990s under the reign of Pablo Escobar and his policy of *plata o plomo*, a bribe or death (Bowden, 24). Although the situation against judges might not be so dire today, the judicial system has only very

recently started straightening itself out (Crandall, 63). Further strengthening of the judicial system would increase incentives for the more powerful to get out of the drug trade, thus potentially decreasing drug production and trafficking through judicial means rather than violent militarized means.

New Policies for the War on Drugs

When devising new policies for the War on Drugs, several categories become evident when classifying the policies. The first category is targeting coca production. This includes the obvious policies like manual eradication as well as not so obvious ones like subsidies to try and reduce the incentive for farmers to start or continue coca production. The second category is strengthening the Colombian government. With a stronger government, there will be less impunity for the cocaine traffickers as a stronger judicial system will keep them in prison, and there will be less freedom of movement for the cocaine traffickers. Along with that, there needs to be the corresponding policies to counter corruption among all of the new government positions. The third set of policies involves forming peace with the guerrillas. Although their main goal is not to traffic cocaine, they will continue to do so as long as they need to support a fight against the Colombian government.

However, not all of the policy changes need to occur in Colombia. The United States needs to put more time and effort into its demand-side policies. Imprisonment for drug offenders is not the most effective solution for drug users, and thus there needs to be a greater focus on treatment options. Lastly, the United States should focus on making its policies as productive as possible. This includes attempting to focus on streamlining its policies to focus on the War on Drugs rather than things like pork barrel policies as well as extending the policies to other countries where the drug problem may spread. There are lots of components to creating the new set of policies, but the more thorough and complete the policies are, the greater the chances of making a dent in the cocaine trade.

Targeting Coca Production

The first set of policies involves targeting coca production. Without coca, there is no cocaine as it is the main ingredient in cocaine. This can be done in a variety of ways. The most obvious method is by removing coca plants, and this is better done through manual eradication than aerial given the human and environmental side effects of aerial eradication. Another way is by providing subsidies for the production of legal crops. This will increase the profit of farmers, high enough for the farmers to support themselves and their families, which will remove the main economic incentive for farmers to grow coca. A third way of targeting coca production, related to aiding farmers, is providing greater market access for farmers in remote areas. If the farmers cannot sell their products, then even subsidies will not provide an incentive for them to stop producing coca.

Manual Eradication

The most obvious way to target coca production is by targeting the plants themselves. Currently, the most common policy is aerial eradication, although there has been a decrease in spraying. One of those reasons is the inability to control the exact recipient of aeri ally sprayed glyphosate results in it landing on humans, animals, legal crops, and natural flora rather than only coca. Eradication of coca plants helps reduce the amount of coca produced, thus hindering cocaine production, but manual eradication should replace aerial eradication in the future to counter the environmental and human consequences. As previously stated, Colombia has recently terminated their support of glyphosate spraying of coca in Colombia, countering American goals for policies in Colombia (Neuman).

There are more benefits to manual instead of aerial eradication than just accuracy. For example, manual eradication provides the ability to move further out into the country away from urban areas. Aerial eradication can only take place so far away from an airport due to the somewhat limited range of the helicopters needed to protect the unarmed spraying planes (Reyes, 73). With manual eradication, not only could the eradicators be armed themselves, having more guards would be an option as well. If one eradication team had a base of operations, it could move out into the countryside, establish itself, and then provide a launching point for another eradication team to move further into the countryside. This would reduce the coca growers' ability to move out of range of eradication since men on foot could simply keep following them. There is also the benefit of saved costs due to not needing helicopters anymore, maintenance or replacement, as well as no more risk to pilots.

Although there would be no more need for pilots, manual eradication will logically require a lot of workers to go out to coca fields and then cut down the plants. One group of personnel that would be good for this job is the police. This would enable them to have a larger presence in certain areas of the country where a government presence has previously been weak or entirely missing (Crandall, 62). This increased presence will also help ensure that farmers are not replanting coca after eradication has occurred. Therefore, this policy is more comprehensive than aerial eradication since there is action, the eradication, and follow up, supervision to help prevent replanting of coca. And while increasing the military and government presence, there needs to be an increase in personnel salaries. Without sufficient payment, the temptation for joining in the cocaine trade will be high which means that an increase in the military personnel

will lead to an increase in corruption, making the policy counterproductive. This temptation is seen in Mexico and Brazil where police officers take bribes or commit other crimes for the money necessary to support their families (Williams, Hubert, 89-90) With higher salaries, there should be less incentive to help the cocaine traffickers.

Additionally, greater training can help prevent corruption and human rights violations. With the proper training, military personnel, like police officers, can learn what their job is to do, where their authority and power end, and how to respect human rights (Williams, Hubert, 88-89). With this greater knowledge, there should come better behavior as the military personnel know better the limits of their power. Hopefully, with sufficient training, the responsibility to the people will begin to be passed down from officer to officer, reducing the amount of corruption along with the increased salaries that can make greater respect for human rights and the rule of law easier to do.

While aerial eradication might be the more prevalent policy currently, that does not mean that there has not been manual eradication before. It is the less preferred policy though due to it being more expensive per hectare eradicated (Reyes, 72). These previous efforts show that there is a framework for implementation of greater manual eradication, something that should help ease the transition of relying on one form of eradication to the other. Expanding a previous policy also creates a sense of familiarity in terms of policy which should help counter possible concern over newer policy ideas. Manual eradication continues part of a policy that people know can be beneficial in terms of fewer hectares used for coca growth without the negative side effects like spraying humans with glyphosate. In fact, it has become more common along the Ecuador border due to political pressure over environmental concerns (Reyes, 72-73).

Thus it helps ease people into the transition from old policies to new policies while still focusing on minimizing the negative impact on Colombia and increasing the policies' level of comprehensiveness.

Unfortunately, the change from aerial to manual eradication does not address the environmental issue of coca farmers spreading into the Amazon. What could be even worse is that if manual eradication proves to be equally or more efficient than aerial eradication in the long run, there would be an even greater incentive for coca growers to move into the Amazon and increase deforestation. One way to decrease the incentive to find new land for coca plants would be to decrease the demand for cocaine. Without the demand to meet, there would be less need to increase the hectares of land being used to grow coca. However, until there is less need for coca, the environmental impact of coca production will continue, or perhaps until anti-coca policies prove sufficient enough to severely impact coca production. Therefore, the best way to protect the Amazon and the environment from further degradation will be to implement the suggested policies, reduce the need for coca and cocaine, and thus reduce the need to expand into the Amazon forest for farmland.

Providing Subsidies for Legal Crops

Many of the producers of coca are poor farmers, and there are multiple incentives for them to enter into coca production for the many cocaine producers. For example, there is no guarantee that growing legal products will provide enough income for a farmer and his family. Compared to coca, which grows in many regions without too much trouble, legal crops are more likely to fail due to perishability and lack of hardiness when compared to coca (Dion, 405). In addition to that, the price for coca is a

lot higher than that of legal crops. Therefore, the incentive to grow legal crops is still somewhat lacking.

Subsidies to raise the price of legal crops could provide the added incentive needed for farmers to turn away from coca production. Although raising the price to coca levels might prove to be too expensive for the government, raising the prices enough that farmers and their families can survive should be sufficient, especially with increased market access. Whether a farmer willingly turns away from growing coca or has to do so after manual eradication efforts, subsidies should be given to support farmers and support the loss of coca production. Subsidies target coca production rather than targeting cocaine traffickers directly, removing their base of support and the main ingredient of the traffickers' product as fewer people are desperate enough to turn toward coca production to make enough profit to survive.

One of the most positive aspects of this policy is that it is nonviolent. Subsidies can be distributed to farmers without harming anyone, thus reducing coca production without the concern of wounding or killing civilians who are only involved with drugs because it appears to be the only way to survive. This serves not only to fight the War on Drugs but also prevents the same issues experienced under current anti-drug policies like the continued production of large amounts of coca.

Dispersing the money for subsidies can prove to be highly problematic though. While the government can give out the money, there is always the issue of corruption to worry about. However, there are ways to counter corruption, such as intense oversight of the officials in charge of handing out the subsidies. Later, an increase in government strength and presence will be addressed which can help with the subsidy policies. If

there are programs being instituted for greater oversight of the military and the police, then a similar program can be applied to those who are handing out the money for subsidies. Also, an increased government presence in remote areas of Colombia, means there will already be officials in place to give out the money.

Another issue stems from farmers and the possibility that they will try to defraud the system by growing coca on their farm while claiming to grow something else and earning the subsidy for it (Guizado, 157). Farmers can even continue to grow coca while growing legal crops at the same time, thus getting the benefits of high coca prices and subsidies at the same time. However, there are ways to prevent both of these issues. For example, once the personnel in charge of manual eradication have gone through and eradicated all of the coca in the area, a group can make regular sweeps of all of the farms to make sure that coca is not being grown again. Any farmer found growing coca can then be charged a fine, written up, or lose some portion of his subsidy money for his legal crops. Another solution involves requiring proof of sale of the reported crops before a farmer can receive his subsidy funds. For example, if a farmer grows corn, he will harvest it and sell it at the market. After that, he can go to an office, present proof of the sale, and then he can receive subsidy money based on how much of his crop he sold. The government official can mark the documents he presented so that they cannot be used again at a different office. A system like this should make receiving subsidies for crops not grown rather challenging for a farmer trying to receive more subsidy money than he should.

Although subsidies will be expensive, they provide a way to reduce the amount of coca, and thus cocaine, in Colombia without using violence or hurting civilians.

Given that increased incentives to grow legal crops should result in an increase in said crops, there will be a corresponding growth in the legal economy which should help pay for the subsidies through increased tax revenue.

Increasing Legal Market Access

While subsidies work to incentivize farmers not to grow coca, that is not the only action that should be taken. One of the struggles for farmers who are dedicated to growing legal crops is the inability to access a legal market (Guizado, 158). Without somewhere to sell one's harvest, the cost of the crop, the hardiness of the plant, and the ease of farming don't matter. No market means no sales and no income. This can drive farmers to plant illegal crops, like coca, because there is a guaranteed market for the harvest, and cocaine producers are generally in the same area, making a buyer easy to find for a farmer's crop. Given that the government generally has a weak presence where the majority of coca is grown, this proximity between coca producers and coca buyers is especially true (Guizado, 157; Dion, 406). Making legal crops profitable provides a major incentive for farmers to turn away from growing coca while increasing access to markets for legal crops enables farmers to not depend on subsidies while providing a second source of income for the crops, two policies that should reduce the amount of coca grown.

In order to facilitate greater market access, roads are needed to let farmers take their goods to where they can be purchased, whether by large companies that will sell them later overseas or by locals who have grocery stores or are buying for their homes. Maintenance of the roads would be costly, but with greater farmer profits, there should be an increase in the revenue collected from taxes, and the increase in money could go

towards paying for the upkeep of the roads. In addition, if there are more government officials in the remote areas, like those needed for manual eradication of coca, the government will need to use the roads as well, increasing the likelihood of maintenance which means that providing greater market access would be a long term solution for fighting the War on Drugs. Instead of seeing a few years of decreased coca production until the roads wore out, thus once again hindering market access and therefore increasing the interest in coca production again, there should be a permanent decrease in the amount of coca produced in Colombia.

Another benefit to the increase in roads and market access is the boost to the economy due to greater production. With more goods entering the legal economy, Colombia will receive an increase in taxes which can be used for a variety of things, not just road maintenance (Piana). This could help improve conditions for many people in Colombia living in slums or could provide the money needed to increase military oversight to protect civilians during the War on Drugs. It could also result in a decrease in the black market in Colombia which could help lower other forms of crime as money is taken out of the illegal market in Colombia.

However, the greatest benefit of increasing the number of roads in Colombia is that it would result in a decrease in the amount of coca produced. With less coca being grown, there will be less materials with which to create cocaine, especially very pure cocaine. In reaction, drug traffickers might turn towards other sources of coca, such as moving into the Amazon. Unfortunately for them, the benefit to a comprehensive policy package is that there are portions to prevent that from becoming an issue. With an increase in government officials near the Amazon, perhaps even a forest protection

service, the drug traffickers would be unable to move into the Amazon. Therefore, they would be pinched between several different policies and unable to find more hectares to use for coca, thus forcing coca and cocaine production levels down permanently.

With less coca being grown and thus less cocaine being made, there are several positive results that cascade out from these policies. The power and influence of cocaine traffickers would decrease as they are unable to maintain their high levels and production and therefore profits due to the decrease in available coca. This should result in a decrease in violence in Colombia as there would be less to fight over and to protect as well as less money to finance the fighting. There should also be a decrease in the number of traffickers as the high rewards for high risks drop to minimal rewards once there is less money in the system. Lastly, there would be less cocaine entering the United States and thus fewer people using and abusing the drug. Targeting coca production is a vital aspect of the War on Drugs, but it must be done in more than one way with policies that focus on more than just the plant itself.

Creating a Stronger Government

None of the previously mentioned policies will be effective if there is no government to support the policies and ensure that they are carried out and sufficiently funded. Therefore, there needs to be a conscious effort to strengthen the Colombian government and expand its presence throughout the entire country. This will enable all of the policies to be enacted as well as reduce the power of the guerrillas once civilians have someone else to turn to for support. The strengthened government will also then have the ability to enact greater oversight of the military, alone or with international assistance, in order to try and prevent further human rights violations. Additionally,

more than hindering the production of coca is needed to end cocaine production. Cocaine traffickers and producers need to be punished for their crimes, and that can only be done under a strong, fully functioning judicial system. A functioning judicial system will support a stronger government, and the two should function together to further hinder cocaine production and trafficking.

Increasing the Government's Presence Throughout Colombia

Increasing the government's presence in more parts of Colombia is the first step toward strengthening the government. As previously stated, coca is often grown where the government's presence is weakest, a clear reason to expand the government (Guizado, 157). There are other reasons as well, such as the previously mentioned manual eradication process. With more government officials in far flung areas, ones where coca growers like to go because of the low government presence, it will be easier to watch over the process. This provides the ability to prevent civilians from actions that work counter to the goal of eradicating drugs, such as replanting coca after eradicators have passed through a farmer's field. Another benefit would be the possibility of creating an agency along the lines of the forest protection service. With more government officials near the Amazon, ones who are scientists or environmentalists perhaps, there could be an effort to prevent further deforestation of the Amazon and perhaps even start a program to replant some of the trees that have been removed. Not only would officials near the Amazon serve to dissuade coca growers from expanding into the Amazon, they could work to counter the negative environmental effects of current policies.

Before sending out officials to more remote regions, there needs to be various programs to educate the officials about the lifestyle and situation in whichever region they are visiting. Having officials who have no idea of the reality of the local situation can make implementing policies more difficult since more knowledge about an area enables individualized policies that can then be more effective. For example, when discussing development, Vicky Randall, a professor in the Department of Government at the University of Essex, mentions the need for differentiated policies at the national level in order to successfully combat underdevelopment rather than lumping all of the nations together into the “Third World” category and applying one policy (6-8). Although cultural diversity within a nation is less than that between nations, different geography, different people, and more can provide enough diversity that a certain level of specialized attention by government officials could only be beneficial. There should still be a basic standard focus for all of the officials, helping farmers to stop growing coca, oversee eradicators to avoid abuses of power, and so on, each region might need a different policy with which to do that. Even within a country, policies should not be one size fits all.

One power that all officials must have is the ability to punish any official who abuses his power in any way or takes advantage of his position in efforts to fight as much corruption as possible. This could include taking bribes, applying the law unfairly, allowing farmers to grow coca in certain areas along with their legal crops, and more. If there is no oversight or punishment for inappropriate and unlawful actions, the increase of government presence would most likely result in a correspondingly large increase in corruption which would be counterproductive to the goals of the policies

fighting the War on Drugs, but corruption can be reduced through “accountability and transparency” (Dion, 419). Although it might prove to be somewhat of a hassle, using an official from one area or district to check up on an official in another might be the most effective way to reduce corruption due to the lack of ties the oversight official would have to the area. To make sure that no official has to travel too far, which makes the trip cost prohibitive, officials could help the districts closest to them, alternating officials each time.

In addition to greater oversight of other policies, there are several benefits that would come from an increased government presence. One is a reduction in the power and influence of the guerrilla organizations. With no government presence to control the area, it is rather simple for guerrillas to take and maintain control over civilians through various means, like fear (Dion, 406). If the government is in the region though, then the people have another power to turn to for actions such as governing. There would be no more need for guerrillas to step in. With fewer people depending upon the guerrillas, by force or by choice, the support base for the guerrillas shrinks which in turn reduces their power and freedom and ability to act.

With a decrease in guerrilla power comes an increase in civilian safety, another benefit of increased government presence. For example, the threat of displacement for civilians who are unwilling to work for or with the guerrillas vanishes, letting people live their lives and turn toward legal means of production (De La Asuncion, 440). There should also be a decrease in human rights violations because the guerrillas will have less power and because there will be more officials to protect the civilians. More

officials also means that more guerrillas could be arrested, further reducing the power of guerrilla organizations, assuming a corresponding strengthening of the judicial system.

An increase in government presence could have a negative outcome, increasing levels of corruption more than helping civilians in the areas. However, with proper oversight, it can help further the policies focused on the War on Drugs, like the manual eradication of coca. It can also reduce the power and influence of guerrilla organizations which should lead to a decrease in cocaine production given that guerrillas depend on cocaine to fund their fight. With less power, there is less for them to fund and do. Lastly, it helps increase the safety of civilians which works to counter and attempt to prevent the same atrocities seen under current policies in regards to displacement and human rights violations. Although risky due to the possibility of corruption, when done properly, an increase of the government's presence into more regions of Colombia is a good step towards reducing and eliminating cocaine production.

Greater Oversight of the Military

Over the course of the past decades of the War on Drugs, there have been many human rights violations committed by the military as well as corruption. Greater oversight could help prevent the continuation of such higher numbers of violations as well as the ties between the military and illegal paramilitary organizations. In Mexico, the organization Human Rights Watch criticized President Calderon for allowing the military to investigate allegations of military wrongdoing as it rarely results in bringing soldiers to justice. Therefore, it should be put into civilian hands so that justice might be done and ending the “dysfunctional justice system” (Wilkinson). However, civilian oversight of the military can extend beyond just judicial issues, and if that were to

happen, then perhaps there would be less need for judicial hearings as the issues would be prevented before they occurred. Due to the previously mentioned expansion of the Colombian government, there will be more officials available to be near military actions, thus able to provide oversight. However, using Colombian officials might not be the soundest idea given how easily corruption can spread within a government.

Thus military oversight should be provided by a different entity, one that could be watched itself to ensure that it does not overstep its boundaries and violate Colombian sovereignty. This could be the UN, AS it is a nonbiased organization, and the family members of officials would be further away than those of Colombian officials. While the officials would be in Colombia to watch over the military, there is also a need to prevent cocaine traffickers from attempting to find leverage against the oversight officials in case they wish to have a military and an oversight official on their side. If Colombia wanted officials with a little more personal knowledge about the drug and cocaine situation, a delegation of officials from various Latin American countries might be used instead. Their family members live outside of Colombia as well, and this kind of action would create Latin American cooperation across all nations working together to fight the War on Drugs. There have been conventions held by Latin American countries before, looking for new ways to fight against drugs, and creating an oversight committee for the Colombian military might be a goal of one such future convention (Sorj). These international officials could also coordinate with local officials. This would give Colombia a little more control over what occurs within its borders, reducing the issue of violated sovereignty, and it would help the officials have

a better understanding of the local situation, similar to the training that Colombian officials should receive before heading out into the more remote regions of Colombia.

This committee could have various different jobs. One could be to double check all plans of action before they occur. For example, before taking out a cocaine laboratory, it could make sure that there is enough evidence to carry through with the operation, that all exits are covered, that the personnel involved are sufficiently trained, and so on. Another thing could be the use of body cameras for all military personnel in the field. Although they would not be very proactive tools, as the footage is reviewed after events occur, military personnel would be held accountable for their actions while in the field, an idea that is spreading in the United States in regards to police violence (Lewinski). This could prevent future human rights violations and prevent occurrences like false positives, when the military kills civilians then dress them up as guerrillas to help increase statistics for their War on Drugs (Daniels), thus helping to protect citizens and keep corruption down.

However, body cameras would only prove useful if there were direct and appropriate consequences for inappropriate action. If a member of the military is recorded committing a human rights violation, permitting a paramilitary organization to do something illegal, creating a false positive, and so on, appropriate consequences must occur. If enough men are discharged for illegal behavior or suspended or otherwise punished depending on the severity of their transgression, then other military personnel should be less likely to commit the same offenses themselves. This is based in the concepts of punishments and negative reinforcement to influence people's behavior in regards to unfavorable actions (McLeod). Discharges or prison sentences,

depending on the crime, would also serve to clean out the military, removing those most likely to break the rules, and thus providing Colombia with a more loyal, more capable military.

The greatest benefit to increased oversight of the military is the ability to reduce and eventually sever the links between the military and various paramilitary organizations. Without the military looking the other way while paramilitary organizations act, and without the military actively participating with the paramilitary organizations, there should be an increase in arrests and prosecutions of paramilitary members committing human rights violations and otherwise breaking the law (LeoGrande, 5). This will reduce the amount of violence in Colombia as the paramilitary organizations are hindered due to lack of freedom of movement. With a lessened ability to act without repercussion, the amount of massacres committed should decrease which would provide the citizens of Colombia with a safer place to live, giving them longer lives and a much lower threat of displacement. It could also make peace talks with guerrillas easier as they would experience a reduced number of attacks from paramilitary organizations, thus perhaps making them more willing to lay down arms in order to begin peace negotiations.

Permitting foreigners to watch over and keep track of military personnel is not likely to be a favorable policy, but the advantages are there. There should be less violence as military personnel are held accountable for their actions as well as less corruption as links to paramilitary organizations are severed. Therefore, the supply-side aspect of the War against Drugs should be more effective as the military becomes more effective, and the consequences of supply-side policies should decrease as the violence

and pervasiveness of human rights violations decreases. While a foreign presence might not be a popular idea, greater military oversight is valuable when fighting the War on Drugs.

Addressing the Issue of Human Rights

As state above, greater oversight of the military can reduce the violence and human rights violations in Colombia. Military personnel will have less impunity to cause them, paramilitary organizations will have less freedom to cause them, and the guerrillas will have less reason to cause them. However, it is not just Colombian policies that must change to fully protect human rights. American policies much reflect the desire to protect civilians as well. When the United States passed Plan Colombia, politicians removed the requirement for the military and the government to maintain a certain level of respect for human rights in Colombia (Massey, 280). Although improving human rights will not directly lead to a decrease in cocaine production and trafficking, that does not mean that they do not need protecting. When creating new policies to fight drugs, the United States must recommit to protection human rights once again.

Reducing the amount of cocaine produced and trafficked might appear to be the more important goal, because it will save many lives with the decrease in violence around cocaine production as well as cocaine consumption. However, reducing human rights violations should save just as many, if not more, people. For example, many of the human rights violations stem from the military, guerrilla groups, and paramilitary organizations attempting to reach their various goals (De La Asuncion, 449; LeoGrande, 5; Dion, 407; Delacour, 66). If there was a requirement for the military to

maintain a certain level of human rights protection, it could not have the same links to the paramilitary organizations that it has had. This would reduce the influence and power of the paramilitary organizations, thus hindering their ability to massacre entire villages with impunity and lowering the need for the guerrillas to retaliate in kind.

Yes, reducing the power and influence of the guerrillas and the paramilitary organizations that rely on drugs for funding should also reduce the number of human rights violations. Without anything illegal to protect at all cost, there will be no need for the kind of violence that has been seen. However, it would be a great injustice to allow the human rights violations to continue while attempting to end them through targeting the perpetrators for cocaine production and trafficking. There should be policies implemented to show that the American government will protect human rights directly, not as an afterthought or side effect.

One concrete way of attempting to put human rights first is by rescinding the waiver that allows Congress to give aid money to the Colombian military regardless of its track record with human rights. If Colombia is as dedicated to the War on Drugs as it appears to be, then there should not be too much opposition to cleaning up the military so that aid money can be delivered. Additionally, the greater oversight of the military previously mentioned to prevent corruption will be used to ensure that military personnel are protecting human rights, not just saying that they are. Immediately cutting off all funds to Colombia until its human rights record improves would not be a good policy as it would make the aforementioned policies incredibly difficult to fund. However, provisions can be put into place that provide money for non-militarized policies, such as subsidies, while slowly allowing the military to earn more and more of

its aid money as its record with human rights improves. Therefore, the War on Drugs in Colombia would continue while the actors in the government would improve at the same time.

While not necessarily ideal for the War on Drugs, proceeding without protecting human rights is not a good idea. It creates a modern precedent that the ends justify the means. In other words, one of the strongest nations in the world is projecting the idea that as long as the end goal is met, the means are not as important. This is not true and is a rather dangerous precedent as can be seen in China. Economic development is the end goal, the means is fossil fuels, and the side effect is massive environmental problems, analogous to the human rights violations in Colombia (*The Hidden Cost of Fossil Fuels*). The ends do *not* justify the means, and the United States must step up and counter that concept by providing protection for human rights in any and all future policy packages that fight the War on Drugs.

Strengthening the Judicial System

In recent years, there has been an increase in conversations about working to create a stronger judicial system, the final aspect to strengthening the government. This includes efforts like progressing from oral complaints to written complaints that can be filed and followed through on (Crandall, 60, 63). Another important aspect of rebuilding the judicial system includes having judges capable of carrying out their job of sentencing drug traffickers. For example, during the time of Pablo Escobar, many judges protested their vulnerability to the drug traffickers if they sentenced anyone connected to the drug trade due to fear of their death or the death or kidnapping of a family member, and it was a valid fear (Bowden, 71-71). Therefore, ensuring that a

situation like that cannot arise again would be a positive as it enables the judicial system to be the main form of prosecution, not violence.

There should be a decreased need for violence because the judicial system involves arrests, evidence, trials, lawyers, and such. This means, logically speaking, that if the War on Drugs was fought in the courtroom rather than in the countryside or on city streets, the levels of violence should decrease because the main action would take place in the courtroom rather than on the streets. Defending one's territory or cocaine trafficking would take place in a courtroom with lawyers rather than with guns on the street. At a minimum, it should reduce the number of village-wide massacres once the villages are no longer the battlefield. Depending on who is on trial, there might be violence from supporters, but it would most likely be directed against police or military personnel, people who are trained for such actions and know how to react. Therefore, an increase in judicial sentencing provides a way to remove drug traffickers from the playing field without resorting to violence and death.

With a stronger judicial system, with stronger rule of law, the decrease in violence will not be immediate. However, it will provide a system that citizens should learn to trust and respect over time as they see it arresting and sentencing cocaine producers and traffickers. Once that trust begins to build, citizens will begin to turn to the police and the legal system to handle issues with illegal behavior which will reduce the need for citizens to handle the issues themselves (Frühling, 6-9). This is what will reduce violence, the trust in the system, but there needs to be a system to trust before the violence will decrease.

Additionally, having a stronger judicial system would do more than just provide a way to reduce the violence in Colombia. Like the United States, Colombia has a separation of power at the federal level which includes a judicial branch (Colombia). Without a strong judicial branch, there is uneven power which gives too much to either the executive or the legislative. This could prove to be a long-term problem for the entire country and thus a focus on the judicial system would be beneficial for the whole country, not just reducing drug related violence.

Fortunately, building up the judicial system should not be too difficult. Since there already exists a system in Colombia, judges, politicians, and others would not have to start from scratch to accomplish this. There would need to be a focus on three things, one of which is finding judges who are qualified to serve in the courts. Another is ensuring that the judges are safe which can be done with police escorts and details for both the judges and their families. Lastly, there would need to be regular oversight to ensure that the judges are not being bribed to deliver lighter sentences for cocaine traffickers which could be done with a bipartisan commission assembled by the legislative branch. None of these actions should be too terribly difficult to implement, but the main issue will be to ensure that they continue in a fair manner so that the rebuilt and strengthened judicial system will not need to be overhauled again in twenty years or so.

One of the major flaws of this plan is how to keep sentenced drug traffickers, sellers, and producers in jail once the trial has ended. As Pablo Escobar showed, the prison system is not always the most secure (Bowden, 133). Extradition has been a policy in the past, but if people are sentenced in Colombia and are causing issues in

Colombia, they should serve out their prison time in Colombia. In order to carry through with that idea, prisons should be inspected and upgraded where necessary, and there should be greater oversight of the police as well to look for signs of bribes and other corruption to ensure that prisons stay prisons, not mini palaces for some of the prisoners. With up to date prisons and qualified, reliable, loyal guards and police, Colombia should be able to keep the sentenced people in jail.

Guerrilla Peace Negotiations

One aspect of cocaine trafficking that is often talked about but not necessarily directly addressed is the issue of the guerrilla fighters. Although the results of guerrilla actions are mentioned, such as massacres and forcing civilians to grow coca, there is not a lot of conversation around what to do to decrease the need for guerrillas to depend on cocaine trafficking. Although there have been peace negotiations before, they have never reached any conclusion that would stop the violence and need for drug trafficking (LeoGrande, 4-6). Thus attempting to restart peace negotiations and talks between the Colombian government and the guerrillas should be a key consideration in the War on Drugs.

Before beginning the peace negotiations, the government must decide what it is willing to negotiate over, what concessions are realistic for it to consider, so that when negotiations begin, there is less wasted time discussing options that will never be accepted by the government. If each side is upfront with the other before negotiations begin, there should be a better chance of reaching a resolution. Another key factor will be finding officials who are willing to negotiate. If the government is willing to do so, but the officials sent to talk are not, then although the officials must do their job, the

conflict of interests might make it more challenging for them to accept a solid peace offering. Although, in theory, any official with the correct qualifications to negotiate with the guerrillas should be appropriate to assign the task, it cannot hurt to do everything one can to ensure success, especially given the outcomes of previous talks.

In addition to the government deciding what is and is not on the table, there must be a ceasefire, an agreement from the guerrillas to lay down arms during the peace negotiations. This could show a willingness on the guerrillas' part to negotiate as well as to reach a compromise. In the past, a ceasefire was used as a way for the guerrillas to test the boundaries of what they could do, but stricter rules around the ceasefire and the requirements for negotiations might help prevent that from happening again (LeoGrande, 9). Negotiation alone does not necessarily mean that they want to reach an agreement; it might be an excuse to waste time for some other reason. Unfortunately, without a serious desire to reach a negotiated resolution between the government and the guerrillas, negotiations will most likely not be successful.

However, if peace can be reached, the benefits for both Colombia and the War on Drugs will be numerous. One benefit would be fewer attacks on oil production. Guerrillas often target oil pipelines with bombs, disrupting oil production which hurts Colombia as a whole given that oil is a large part of its economy (Crandall, 64; The World Factbook- Colombia). Without these attacks, oil production should be smoother and would not have as many losses, thus increasing output and profit for Colombia, whether directly through sales, with taxes, or both. The greater profit for the Colombian government can increase the funds for other policies, further helping the War on Drugs. More oil production would help the economy, but so would the increase in the number

of people capable of participating in the legal economy. Once no longer fighting the government, guerrillas and their families still have to support themselves, and this economic activity would be a part of the legal economy, again increasing taxes and increasing the economy with greater production.

In fact, the Council on Foreign Relations has reported that there are negotiations currently happening right now that started in 2015. Several of the steps that are being taken follow similar guidelines to what I have mentioned. For example, there are six points that have been decided on that each side must agree to for peace to be reached, including “eradication illegal crops and drug trafficking.” There is also a focus on disarming the guerrillas and allowing them to rejoin the general population, becoming regular civilians once again (Renwick).

In regards to cocaine, there are several benefits to reaching peace between the government and the guerrillas. The first related to cocaine in the sense that the guerrillas should not need to or be able to produce or traffic cocaine after making peace with the government. If the cessation of cocaine production and trafficking is a requirement of the government for peace, then there should be a dramatic drop in cocaine production immediately, especially if all materials and supplies used by the guerrillas are destroyed at the same time. Secondly, once the guerrillas and their families enter the legal economy and general society once again, maintaining the same large-scale cocaine production efforts for other actors remaining in the business should be incredibly difficult if not impossible, thus aiding the continued decrease in cocaine production given that the gap that would need filling will be rather large. And third, without the fight against the guerrillas, the paramilitary organizations have no excuse for fighting

and no enemy anymore. With no more excuses to fight, they should not need to fund themselves and thus would not need to produce and traffic cocaine for funds anymore. Although reaching peace between the government and the guerrillas would not end the cocaine production and trafficking in Colombia, it should create a serious reduction in cocaine levels by taking out a large number of actors.

Peace between the government and the guerrillas would also result in less violence. Not only would the guerrillas not attack the government anymore, there would be no need to attack civilians either. With no need to force compliance with coca or cocaine production or support for the guerrilla organization, civilians should be safer and under less threat of human rights violations. Additionally, the paramilitary organizations would not be fighting the guerrillas anymore or be threatening civilians either. Reaching peace will not only provide a serious blow in the War on Drugs, but it will go a long way in helping rebuild Colombia into a safer country.

Demand-Side Policies

Other than the need for Americans to recommit to protecting human rights, the previously mentioned policies all occur within Colombia. It is in Colombia that the coca is grown. It is in Colombia that the judicial system is struggling. However, it is the United States that the majority of the cocaine is consumed. Therefore, there should be policy changes within the United States as well to help focus on the consumption of cocaine. Without consumers, there are no profits. Therefore, the United States should focus on policies to help both abusers and users, treatment programs unrelated to prisons, as well as decreased punishments for drug possession. Although treatments and possession policies currently exist, they are not effective at meeting the goals of the

War on Drugs, so the policies should be reexamined and reevaluated to create more effective policies.

Drug Treatment Programs and Alternatives to Prison

Drug treatment has been proven to be very effective, especially compared to supply-side policies in reducing drugs user numbers (Massey, 282). This high level of success alone should be sufficient to increase support for more expansive drug treatment programs as well as to research into more effective programs. Unfortunately, there is not sufficient support, monetarily or otherwise, due to the emphasis placed on prohibition, and thus prison is often where drug users end up. There are drug treatment programs in prisons, but they are not the most effective. Additionally, placing drug users and abuser in prison is not necessarily the correct response, especially for those charged with possession rather than those arrested for some other crime while under the influence of drugs. For example, drug treatment programs in prisons are not very effective for a variety of reasons, and are additionally hindered by the proliferation of drugs in prisons (Peters; *Drugs Inside Prison Walls*). Treatment programs outside of prisons will enable users to get clean without being labeled an ex-con which will give them greater opportunities post treatment when trying to find employment, something that should help them stay clean post treatment.

One aspect of removing the link between treatment and prison involves recognizing that drug addiction is a disease (*Understanding Drug Abuse and Addiction*). It is a mental condition that influences some people more than others, and those who are affected should not be punished so severely for something that is not an entirely conscious decision. If people who commit crimes and are then declared mentally

incompetent to stand trial are placed in hospitals to serve out their sentences and to receive treatment, then why can't someone who committed a crime because of their drug addiction receive treatment in a place designed to help them rather than punish them? The focus should be the root of the problem, the addiction, not consequences when trying to decide on corrective punishments. Given that cocaine user rates have not fluctuated much under prohibition and prison sentences, it is clear the punishment enough is not sufficient to reduce the number of users (Robinson, 210). It's time to try something else, treatment outside of prison, that is proven to help people and make a difference in something other than the prison population.

For people arrested under the influence, separate facilities that focus on drug use treatment as well as rehabilitation should be used. If people who commit crimes due to insanity receive special care and rehabilitation designed to their issues, then why not those who commit crimes due to drug use? This does not mean that the accused do not serve time for the crimes that they committed but that they serve them in a facility that provides the help that they need. If Americans want prison and prohibition to work, then there need to be programs that focus on what works, such as treatment, rather than just general prison time.

Sentences for Drug Possession

For those who are arrested with drugs, there are policies in place to serve long sentences based on the drug and the quantity of it. However, all this does is increase the number of people in prison and disproportionately affect non-white citizens (Ingraham). This does not decrease the number of possible drug users, just change where they are located. Instead, decriminalization of drug possession should be considered. If someone

is caught possessing an illegal drug, rather than arresting the person, requiring a fine to be paid or community service provides a better option. While drug abusers are considered likely to be violent or commit a crime, people who only use drugs, not abuse them, are not a menace to society assuming that they use in the privacy of their own home. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the dangers of using at home in regards to safety of others in the home, but it is a much different threat than one posed by someone high on cocaine in public.

To provide a sort of halfway ground between criminalization and decriminalization, there could be a policy similar to traffic violations. The first two or so violations might be accompanied by fines that go on a driver's record, but after enough violations, drivers might have their licenses suspended (Traffic Ticket Consequences). A similar system could be set up for those who are caught possessing drugs. The first few possessions are handled with a ticket and a mark on the possessor's record, but enough possessions results in something more severe, such as a short prison term or community service. Years long prison sentences are not reducing the availability of drugs or the number of people using drugs, and so something new must be tried.

Further Points for the United States

All of the previously mentioned policies should help reduce the amount of cocaine produced and trafficked in Colombia and the United States. However, no matter how successful the policies should be, poor focus and poor implementation of the policies could ruin the chances of success, resulting in yet another set of policies that are only somewhat successful. One rather simple way to combat that issue, in theory, is

the need to orient policies toward fighting drugs and nothing else. While pork barrel policies are common and unavoidable, that does not mean that they should define the policies designed and passed to fight the War on Drugs. For example, aerial eradication maintains high support because of Congressmen whose districts produce the helicopters used to protect the planes that do the spraying (Crandall, 60). Without a focus reorientation on drugs, framed perhaps as protecting future generations from such widespread drug production and availability, there will always be conflicting interests that will make creating an effective policy package difficult, thus drawing out the war and making it, perhaps, endless.

Another clarification that should be made is if money is going to support the War on Drugs or the fight against guerrilla organizations. Although the guerrillas use cocaine trafficking to support various aspects of their operations, trying to reduce their cocaine production is a different goal than trying to reduce their influence and/or presence. Instead of sending money to fight the War on Drugs and having it used against the guerrillas as well, there should be a specific aid package that targets aiding the initiation of peace negotiations. Simply sending money to fight the guerrillas without any more guidance than that will not be effective. Clear, and concise uses for the aid money should produce the most positive results. Therefore, clarification does not mean that the United States cannot support Colombia's efforts towards both ends, but there needs to be a separation of the policies.

Trying to reorient policies to focus solely on one thing is challenging and most likely unrealistic. Unless there is enough public pressure around the issue, there is no incentive for politicians to do so. However, cleaning up the policies and what aid money

to Colombia is for will help make a more productive War on Drugs. The most useful aspect is that with more focused policies to target the supply-side of drugs, there will be more money to focus on newer supply-side policies as well as new demand-side policies as well. This means that there should not be budgetary issues in terms of finding money for the United States to fund its changed policies which removes a stumbling block to implementing change.

Lastly, although these policy changes are good, no matter what is done in Colombia, it is not the only portion of the cocaine picture. As the suggested policies should result in a much harder time growing coca and producing cocaine in Colombia, the Balloon Effect predicts that the growth and production will simply move to a different area, most likely back to Bolivia and Peru. In fact, these countries have recently seen a growth in coca production (LeoGrande, 3). Therefore, similar policies to the ones enacted in Colombia should be enacted in the other countries as well, like manual eradication, with the governments' consent. If not, although the fight in Colombia will appear successful, the overall fight against drugs will not change much at all.

Conclusion

Americans have been fighting a War on Drugs for decades. Although the goal is to reduce the impact of drugs on Americans, the War does not always stay within American borders. As Colombia shows, the United States has a large influence over the fight against drugs in other countries as well through various aid packages involving policies and money. Unfortunately, Colombia also shows that the consequences of the War are not always the desired ones.

Over the past fifteen years or so, Colombia has seen many negative side effects of the policies implemented against drugs whether due to poor policies, poor implementation, or other reasons. There has been environmental damage as more than just coca is destroyed and as nothing prevents coca growers from moving into the Amazon to find new fields. There have been many civilians hurt through human rights violations such as massacres and internal displacement. Paramilitary organizations flourish as the military turns a blind eye further hurting civilians. Guerrillas continue to recruit and produce cocaine while avoiding government forces. And through it all, the situation in regards to drugs is hardly changing.

In the United States, levels of cocaine use have hardly changed. The price on the street remains roughly the same as well as the purity of cocaine. Any small street price changes are most likely easily absorbed by the traffickers given the wide difference in street price and the price to produce. Thus, in regards to the goals of reducing cocaine production, trafficking, and use, the policies implemented in Colombia have failed.

And so something else must be tried. Currently, there are countries trying new things. Guatemala has legalized marijuana (State Marijuana Laws Map). Several states

in the United States have legalized marijuana use as well (McKay). Although there is a large difference between marijuana use and cocaine use, the changed policies indicate a different time period, one in which there are more options than just prohibiting drugs and focusing on supply-side policies. Policy makers need to take advantage of the loosening stances and try something new along with the something old in hopes of finding something that finally reaches the long desired goals.

Targeting coca is an old aspect of the War on Drugs, but the new policies take a different approach. They are more focused and hopefully accurate in two ways. The first goal is removing coca more accurately with manual rather than aerial eradication. The second involves attempting to incentivize farmers to grow legal crops to support themselves rather than coca through subsidies and better access to legal markets for their crops.

Another aspect involves strengthening the government, both to better implement the policies against cocaine production and trafficking but also to help create a stronger country for the Colombian people. Coca flourishes where the government presence is weak, and thus there should be more officials in the country to help counter that and carry out policies as well as reduce the influence of the guerrillas. Greater oversight of the military will be an offshoot of that which can help reduce levels of violence as well as human rights violations. Although the focus is on removing cocaine production and trafficking, that does not mean that there should be efforts to counter negative side effects of the policies. Lastly, the judicial system should be strengthened so that the fight can occur in the courtroom rather than the streets.

Peace with the guerrillas should be considered another aspect of ending the War on Drugs. If the guerrillas are no longer fighting the government, then they will no longer need profits from cocaine to fund their fight. Additionally, the increase of people in the legal economy and the halted attacks on oil production will help the economy which will help the country as a whole and help the government focus on implementing other policies.

There need to be policy changes in the United States as well. Treatment should be the focus of helping drug users and abusers, not prison. While that does not mean that those arrested under the influence should not be punished, it does mean that the punishment could be more effective. The legal consequences for those caught possessing drugs rather than using them should also be less strict. Prison is not the answer for everything.

And lastly, the United States should do its best to focus on policies that work, not the ones that bring money to a Congressman's constituency. If money is the focus of policies instead of the drugs, then the War will continue to drag on. Spreading similar anti-drug policies to other countries will be important as well so that the problem is truly eradicated, not just moved from one location to another.

Some of these policies have been suggested before. Some of them have been implemented before. However, it is the combination of all of them together that should make them the most effective. Instead of targeting just the effects of the cocaine trade, like violence, there are efforts to stop what causes the violence, like moving the struggle into the courtroom rather than the streets. Instead of just possibly removing coca with aerial eradication, there are more targeted efforts to stop the production in the first

place, like with subsidies for legal crops. The polices also recognize some of the negative side effects of previous and suggested policies, and they work to counteract them as much as possible, like with the American reorientation on protecting human rights. There is no perfect set of policies that can guarantee to end the War on Drugs in a short period of time. There might not even be a set of policies that can guarantee to end the War on Drugs ever. However, these policies, when implemented together, should have the greatest positive effect in the War on Drugs and hopefully will cause a major decrease in cocaine production, trafficking, and use.

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