

Forum: Security Council

Issue: Addressing the violation of human rights due to austerity measures

Student Officer: Vedant Shah

Position: Deputy President

Introduction

The drug war in Mexico and the Northern Triangle, which began on 11th December 2006 with operation Michoacán, continues to cause mass destruction and desolation throughout the region. As of today, over 300,000 soldiers and over 100,000¹ cartel members are at war throughout North America. There have been countless homicides, rapes, and massacres over numerous countries in the Northern American Region -specifically Mexico, the United States, and the Northern Triangle, consisting of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

Large scale interconnected drug trade between the United States, Mexico and the Northern Triangle started in the 1980's and continued without any threat to the Mexican people for the next two decades. In 2000, drug cartels increased their power by expanding their membership and territory. This led to an increase in corruption within these countries as well. This expansion of the drug cartels took place while the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) governed Mexico for 70 years.² The PRI was a political party in Mexico consisting of all the important personnel of national and local Mexican politics. Despite the seeming stronghold of the PRI over Mexico, drug cartels continues to expand their influence and gain more power. This gave the drug market enough time to expand, increasing the availability of drugs while reducing its price, furthering rivalries between drug cartels over market share. The increased violence between cartels contributed to the growing instability of the region in the form of more protests, homicides and revolts. In 2001, there was a massive spark in the drug war, post the 9/11 bombings.

At this time, it became increasingly difficult for drug dealers and drug traffickers to cross American borders, and hence, drugs began to accumulate in Mexico. This led to a decrease in their prices. This led to an increase in the sale, consumption and therefore production of the drugs. This in turn led to conflict and violence as cartels competed to sell and traffic drugs to increase their influence in region. The

¹ CFR.org Editors. "Mexico's Long War: Drugs, Crime, and the Cartels." *Council on Foreign Relations*, 26 Feb. 2021, www.cfr.org/background/mexicos-long-war-drugs-crime-and-cartels.

² Yinglang, Connor. "DISECChairLetter". *Wboro*, <https://www.wboro.org/cms/lib/NY01914047/Centricity/Domain/751/DISECChairLetter.pdf>

United States has assisted the governments in the region by providing them with funds and forces since the beginning of the crisis, and has analysed the issue in great depth, to take sufficient action.

To this end, The US State Department estimates that 90% of cocaine entering the USA is from Columbia, with Mexico as the main transit route. The cartels in Mexico control almost 70% of the narcotics entering the United States.³ However, as production of cocaine in Columbia reduced in 2010, the amount of overall drugs remaining in Columbia reduced. Therefore cartel violence increased to obtain the minimal drugs that remained. This violence further added to the number of homicides in not only the region, but other countries as well. Cartels caused homicides in these nations when they passed through them as they moved towards Columbia to obtain the remaining drugs⁴.



There are numerous cartels in Mexico and the Northern Region, the main ones being the Tijuana Cartel, the Sinaloa Cartels, and the Gulf Cartel⁵. These cartels also smuggle arms through the US-Mexican border, occurring between cartel members and gun runners on the American side. Furthermore, there have been times when traffickers have shipped drugs through the Mexican black market⁶. Drug traffickers in these cartels use various tactics to reduce suspicion by US Authorities, such as hiding drugs in vehicles, smuggling them through underground tunnels, or flying them over the border using drones. These methods of smuggling drugs further lead to cartel rivalries. These rivalries between various drug cartels has

³ Creechan, James. "An overview of drug cartels in Mexico" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology (ASC), Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles, CA, Nov 01, 2006 .

⁴ Mejia, Daniel. "Scarcity without Leviathan: The Violent Effects of Cocaine Supply Shortages in the Mexican Drug war". *Bu.edu*, http://www.bu.edu/econ/files/2019/05/cmr_scarcity_restat_final_45pages_short.pdf

⁵ Aslam, Hammad. "PMUNC". *Irc.princeton.edu*, <http://irc.princeton.edu/pmunc/docs/SC%20BG%20formatted.pdf>

⁶ Grosse, Robert. "Mexico: The Black Market in Foreign Exchange and Its Relationship with Narcotics Money Laundering | Emerald Insight." *Emerald*, 1 Mar. 1999, www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/eb027214/full/html

further led to an increase in the instability in the region due to heightened cartel violence and counter-operations by police forces to curb the smuggling. Furthermore, these drug cartels threaten young people to join them to increase their power in the region. The cartels also intimidate each other in a show of power. Their main means of doing so is by spreading fake news on their power in the region and on the lack of power of other cartels operating there, presenting themselves as the hegemons. They often threaten or even pay off reporters, journalists and newspaper organisations to spread fake news about them or to prevent the spread of negative stories. If the journalists⁷ do not comply, they are killed. For example, the *El Norte* paper ended its own business as it did not want to see the death of more employees. Cartels and national officials have further been enraged due to the spread of propaganda. Due to this, the three operations mentioned below took place.



There have been three major operations in this drug war; some with the intention of reducing violence have further worsened the crisis. Operation Michoacán initiated by Felipe Calderon, the President of Mexico, took place in 2006 where 6500 troops were sent to Michoacán to end drug trade. However, it ended up increasing violence in the region as the Michoacán cartel members retaliated to the infiltration of the soldiers by launching an attack against them. Furthermore, around 30,000 people were arrested in 2011 on other drug related charges such as smuggling and trafficking, leading to further uprisings and revolts. The second operation took place from 2008-2012, but was the pathway to an escalation in the drug war. This started with General Sergio Aponte, the Mexican Army General, accusing the police forces of being corrupt and working as bodyguards for drug traffickers. As matters further escalated, the demand for drugs and rivalries between cartels increased, eventually leading to a battle between the Tijuana and

⁷ Harp, Seth. "In Mexico, 'It Is the State, Not the Cartels, That Poses the Biggest Threat to Journalists.'" *Columbia Journalism Review*, 20 Sept. 2017, www.cjr.org/the_feature/mexico-journalists-cartels.php.

Sinaloa⁸ cartels. It also led to a grenade conflict between the Mexican Navy and armed gunmen in Sabinas, Mexico. These drug rivalries led to thousands of massacres and homicides in the Northern American Region. Two years after the beginning of the second operation, the Los Zetas-Gulf cartel conflict took place in 2010. This was a conflict between the Los Zetas⁹ Cartel and the Gulf cartel. It took place in Tamaulipas, Mexico and led to over 3000 deaths as the Los Zetas split from the Gulf Cartel.

Calderon's successor, Enrique Pena Nieto, focused on reducing the cartel violence. He created a new national police force of several thousand officers known as the Gendarmerie. However, towards the end of his term, in November 2018, the number of homicides greatly increased to the highest level in Mexican History of around 36,690¹⁰ homicides, as drug related crime increased by cartels. His successor, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, announced that he would stop large-scale military action against cartels and in turn focus on reducing homicide rates. However, this has not yet occurred and homicides are at record level with hundreds reported daily. To worsen matters, the Pandemic has contributed to an unprecedented increase in homicide rates and crime rates in general.

Currently, violence in the region has increased to one of the highest levels. In March 2020, Mexico witnessed one of its most violent months with 3000 murders. There were also two brutal attacks on drug rehabilitation centres. On June 16th 2020, a federal judge who was overseeing a case of the son of the leader of Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG), was murdered. Similarly, numerous security officers, politicians, and federals have been killed by Drug Trading Organisations (DTO's)¹¹ which is a great issue considering it is these politicians and security officers who must protect and assist the civilians.

The drug war has seen over 300,000 deaths since its beginning, with the violence and drug trafficking continuously increasing each month. As of 2021, there are over 100,000 members in the drug cartels who are facing the armed forces of the country of Mexico. The crisis is of high importance and a matter that is imperative for the UNSC to handle.

⁸ Thomson Reuters Legal. "Sinaloa Cartel Money Laundering and the Capture of El Chapo." *Thomson Reuters Legal*, legal.thomsonreuters.com/en/insights/white-papers/money-laundering-methods-of-drug-cartels-and-the-capture-of-el-chapo. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.

⁹ "The 6 Most Infamous Crimes Committed by Mexico's Zetas Cartel." *The World from PRX*, 16 July 2013, www.pri.org/stories/2013-07-16/6-most-infamous-crimes-committed-mexicos-zetas-cartel.

¹⁰ Statista. "Mexico: Number of Homicides 2000–2018." *Statista*, 30 Aug. 2021, www.statista.com/statistics/312488/number-of-homicides-in-mexico.

¹¹ Beittel, June. "Mexico: Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking Organizations." *Congressional Research Service*, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R41576.pdf>

Definition of Key Terms

Drug Cartels

A drug cartel is a criminal organization that serves the purpose of supplying drug trafficking operations. It controls the production and distribution of drugs¹².

Drug Mules

A drug courier who is paid, coerced, or tricked into transporting drugs across an international border, but who has no further commercial interest in the drugs¹³.

Drug Trafficking Organisations (DTO)

Drug trafficking organisations are organised crime groups involved in the production, transportation and distribution of drugs in large quantities.¹⁴ They also maintain large drug distribution networks and may also be para-military, using armed forces to protect their drugs.

Homicide

A homicide is the killing of an individual. Homicide greatly consists of murder and manslaughter which is the illegal killing of a person¹⁵.

Money laundering

Money laundering is the process of making large amounts of illegally obtained money such as from drug trafficking, appear as having originated from a legitimate source¹⁶.

Background Information

The effects of cartel violence

From 2018 to 2020, it was estimated that there were 11,400 reports of gang violence over the entire Northern Triangle region, and over 80% of the attacks targeted civilians, resulting in 13,000 deaths related to organized crime during this period.¹⁷ This has led to an increase in death rates in the region. As of today, even though Mexico is officially controlled by the government, the cartels seem to be maintaining immense political control in various regions in Mexico. In the Northern Triangle, the transport and movement of drugs

¹² Samuels, Richard. "Drug Cartel." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/drug-cartel.

¹³ "Definition of 'Drug Mules' for Use in a European Context | Office of Justice Programs." *Www.Opj.Gov*, 1 Jan. 2012, www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/definition-drug-mules-use-european-context.

¹⁴ "(U) Drug Trafficking Organizations - National Drug Threat Assessment 2010 (UNCLASSIFIED)." *Drug Trafficking Organizations*, 2009, www.justice.gov/archive/ndic/pubs38/38661/dtos.htm.

¹⁵ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "homicide". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 12 May. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/homicide>. Accessed 1 October 2021.

¹⁶ Chen, James. "Money Laundering." *Investopedia*, 16 Mar. 2021, www.investopedia.com/terms/m/moneylaundering.asp.

¹⁷ BBC News Mundo. "'Desde Pemex se organizaba el robo de combustible': cómo funciona la red de 'huachicoleo' que detectó el gobierno de AMLO en México." *BBC News Mundo*, 28 Dec. 2018, www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-46697816.

such as cocaine, methamphetamine, opiates etc. is handled by cartels themselves. To add to this, a new specialized transport market has been formed in the Northern Triangle, which in turn has led to drugs being easily accessible. It has been stated that in the Northern Triangle region, the areas in which drug trafficking took place the most, were also the areas in which there were most homicides.

The increase in human trafficking

There are links between the drug cartels and human trafficking for forced labour, prostitution, and rape. It was reported in El Salvador that cartels used and sold women as prostitutes. This issue worsened when it was found that some buyers were corrupt politicians. Civilians began to realise that these politicians were encouraging and participating in the practices of cartels which led to violent protests. Most of the women being trafficked are migrants who are abducted while trying to enter or leave countries in the Northern Triangle. A report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) states that migrant families t "must navigate a long, uncertain journey in which they risk being preyed upon by traffickers or other criminals." Furthermore, children are also being greatly affected. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)¹⁸, children account for 3 out of every 5 victims of human trafficking in the Northern Triangle region. These children are then put into and used by various drug cartels as dealers and traffickers. In 2019, the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS)¹⁹ formed a partnership with government officials from the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador by signing a Memorandum of Cooperation, which focuses on combatting human trafficking. However, countries such as Belize are classified as tier 3 by the United States DHS which means neither do they meet the standards of the act and neither are making efforts to do so.

The killings of migrants entering the Mexican region

The cartels engage in kidnapping, ransom, murder, robbery, and extortion of migrants traveling from Central America through Mexico. Sometimes the cartels force the migrants to join their organization and work for them. Mass graves of migrants have also been discovered in Mexico suggesting that cartels have been killing undocumented migrants and burying them without being noticed. In 2010 and 2011, in Tamaulipas, 265 Central American migrants were killed by the Zetas cartel. Furthermore, 2/3rd of migrants moving towards the United States from the Northern Triangle, have said to be victims of cartel violence. Therefore, the killing of migrants continues to be one of the most pressing issues in Central America today.

The effect of poverty

¹⁸ Kudzai.Chinoda. "About Us." *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, www.unodc.org/southernafrica/en/sa/about.html.

¹⁹ "Napolitano's Testimony on Southern Border Violence." *Department of Homeland Security*, 13 Feb. 2017, www.dhs.gov/news/2009/03/25/napolitano-testimony-southern-border-violence.

One of the main factors driving the Mexican drug war is the willingness of people living in poverty to join criminal organizations due to the failure of the government to provide legal means for the creation of well paid jobs. Corruption within the Mexican government has led to inefficiency in helping people in poverty, causing this issue to worsen. The percentage of the population living in poverty for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras stands at 47.9%, 54.8%, and 66% respectively, which promotes membership in cartels. Hence, poverty in Mexico and the Northern Triangle has been a major root cause of drug cartels expanding their forces and hence leading to more violent conflicts throughout the region.

Military Involvement

A significant security issue in the region is the use of armed forces to help combat Drug Trafficking Organisations (DTO's) and drug related activity. Because of the inability of the police to protect the population, governments in the Northern Triangle have decided to employ their militaries to combat DTOs, gangs, and organized crime²⁰. Furthermore, DTO's have been targeting military forces as stated in the 2007 Congressional Research Service report. Therefore, conflict between national forces and cartels has increased. There is also military involvement by the United States in Mexico. Since DTO's are increasing in size, the Mexican government believes there is a higher need for military involvement. Hence, the US military involvement in Mexico has been growing.²¹

Ethnic Prejudices

Ethnic prejudices have emerged in the drug war, and indigenous communities have been targeted by the police, military, and drug traffickers. According to the National Human Rights Commission, Mexico is disproportionately incarcerated. Nearly one-third of the indigenous prisoners in Mexico are in prison for federal crimes, which are mostly drug-related. Drug leaders and traffickers have abducted them into cartels and used them for illegal purposes such as drug trafficking²².

Political Instability

Due to the drug war, DTO's have been battling governments of countries in the Northern Triangle for sovereign control of the nations in question. Since governments of the Northern Triangle have been unable to provide security to their people, DTO's are further infiltrating and assassinating political leaders in governments who oppose the influence of cartels. Furthermore, large scale corruption²³ in governmental bodies is also adding to the political instability in the region.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

²⁰ "Mexico Calls on UN to Help Control Flow of High-Powered Weapons To." *UN News*, 21 Sept. 2011, news.un.org/en/story/2011/09/387662-mexico-calls-un-help-control-flow-high-powered-weapons-drug-gangs.

²¹ Wade, Mark. "Defeating Mexico's Drug Trafficking Organizations: The Range of Military Operations in Mexico."

²² "----." *UN Documents for Drug Trafficking and Security*, www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/drug-trafficking-and-security. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.

²³ Brice, Arthur. "Latin American Drug Cartels Find Home in West Africa - CNN.Com." *CNN*, 21 Sept. 2009, edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/africa/09/21/africa.drug.cartels/index.html.

Colombia

Colombian cartels have been transporting drugs into the United States since the 19th Century. Colombia too is part of the Merida Plan to counter drug trafficking. As of today, it is estimated that Colombian cartels gain approximately 3000 million dollars from the drug trade annually²⁴. The Colombian National Police has been taking strict measures to curb drug trafficking in the nation. They carry out operations to seize arms from drug cartels. They use their equipment such as radars to monitor the zones of drug cartels²⁵. These measures have been effective enough to not only reduce drug transportation, but also reduce homicide rates especially from 1990 to 2010.

El Salvador

The El Salvadoran government has lost control of a large part of its Santa Ana department (Ecuador is divided into 14 departments for administrative purposes) which constitutes a portion of a drug route into Guatemala, to the Taxis cartel. In El Salvador, several government officials including the Director of Police, a high ranking prosecutor, and a senator, were linked with a territorial criminal group running drugs. The amount of drugs which transit El Salvador remains somewhat unclear. The government claims that most of the drugs in the region do not pass through its borders due to a lack of a coast near the Atlantic side, preventing drug shipments. However, several criminal transport organizations such as the Perrones and Taxis Cartel are now known to operate in El Salvador.

Guatemala

The increasing violence and drug busts by the Mexican army has led some cartels to conduct their operations in locations with lower police and army forces, such as across the Guatemalan border. In 2020, Guatemala's national police chief and anti-drugs official were arrested as they were linked to drug trafficking. It is stated that the Los Zetas cartel controls around 75% of Guatemalan territory through political corruption. Guatemala is in the need of immediate attention to remain a sovereign nation in the hands of its lawfully elected government.

Honduras

In Honduras, intelligence officials claim that the mayor of El Paraiso, a town in the region, has enabled the Sinaloa cartel to carry out their operations in plain sight. According to the United States Government, roughly 65 of the 80 tons of cocaine transported by air toward the United States lands in Honduras, representing 15% of United States bound cocaine flow.

The United States of America (USA)

²⁴ Salazar, Hernando. "BBC World Service - News - The Colombian/Mexican Alliance." *The Colombian/Mexican Alliance*, www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/news/2008/11/081029_narcofight1.shtml.

²⁵ "Violence, Crime and Illegal Arms Trafficking in Colombia." *UNODC*, Nov 2006.

The USA believes that the Mexican cartels are the greatest organized crime threat to its national security.²⁶ Mexican drug cartels launder between 18 to 39 billion dollars from drug sales in the USA each year²⁷. Since 2007, the US government has provided around 3.3 billion dollars to Central American countries, under the Merida Initiative, which is a security agreement between the USA, Mexico and Central American countries with the aim of combating drug trafficking and transnational crime to help Mexico combat drug trafficking. However, violence has continued to increase and now officials under the Biden administration are beginning to question whether the American approach is working. Mexico might be in a position to lose the support of the United States. Furthermore, under the Biden Administration, the United States has been working to resolve corruption in the Northern Triangle as they believe it is the root cause for most issues in the region. The administration named a State Department career officer as a special envoy for the Northern Triangle. Furthermore, Vice President Kamala Harris also announced a joint task force on anti-corruption during her trip to Guatemala in June 2021. The task force is formed to support investigation, prosecution, and conviction of corrupt actors in the region using financial intelligence and other forensic methods.

United Nations office on Narcotic Drugs (UNODC)

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been helping make the world safer from drugs, organized crime, corruption and terrorism. The UNODC forms drug reports to focus future missions on. According to the UNODC²⁸ World Drug Report 2019, outdoor cultivation of cannabis in Central America has been reported by Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama. The UNODC is the official UN body with the power to combat the drug war in Mexico and the Northern Triangle.

Venezuela

Venezuela has played a large role in the international drug trade, attracting numerous organized crime groups. The largest being Mexico's Sinaloa drug cartel. There have also been cases of Venezuelan air force collaborating with Mexican cartels. Former captain Gino Alfonso Garcés Vergara, for example, received \$500,000 in exchange for allowing narco-flights loaded with drugs to pass through Venezuelan airspace undetected.

Timeline of Events

²⁶ "NPR Cookie Consent and Choices." *U.S.-Mexico Efforts Targeting Drug Cartels Have Unraveled, Top DEA Official Says*, 3 May 2021, [choice.npr.org/index.html?origin=https://www.npr.org/2021/05/03/993059731/u-s-mexico-efforts-targeting-drug-cartels-have-unraveled-top-dea-official-tells-](https://www.npr.org/2021/05/03/993059731/u-s-mexico-efforts-targeting-drug-cartels-have-unraveled-top-dea-official-tells-).

²⁷ Hunt, Edward. "The U.S. Has Spent Billions Trying to Fix Mexico's Drug War. It's Not Working." *Washington Post*, 15 Mar. 2021, www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/03/15/us-has-spent-billions-trying-fix-mexicos-drug-war-its-not-working.

²⁸ "Resolutions and Decisions." *United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime*, www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Resolutions_Decisions/Resolutions-Decisions_2010-2019.html. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.

Date	Description of event
11 December, 2006	Operation Michoacán is launched against the La Familia Michoacana cartel
29 December, 2007	The entire police force in the town of Playas de Rosarito, Baja California, is disarmed under suspicions of collaborating with drug cartels.
1 January, 2008	The Federal government, along with SEDENA, launches the Joint Operation Nuevo León-Tamaulipas in order to eliminate the operation areas of both the Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas
13 May, 2008	The Federal government launches the Operation Sinaloa to crack down on the Sinaloa Cartel, the Beltrán-Leyva Cartel, and Los Zetas in the state.
17 September, 2008	Over 200 people across Mexico, Guatemala, Italy and the United States, including members of the Gulf Cartel and the 'Ndrangheta are arrested in a major anti-drug trafficking operation called Operation Solare
15 February, 2009	The Mexican Navy, with the help of the United States Coast Guard, confiscated 7 tons of cocaine being transported on a fishing vessel in international waters in the Pacific Ocean.
17 May, 2009	Gulf cartel gunmen disguised as police officers break into a prison in Zacatecas and free 50 inmates
18 October, 2010	Mexican authorities seized 105 tons of marijuana bound for the U.S., representing the biggest bust in the history of the state of Baja California

- 9 June, 2011 The United States government arrested 127 U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents who were collaborating with the Mexican drug cartels.
- 19 February, 2014 Mexican authorities discover clandestine mass graves with at least 30 corpses in Gómez Farías, Tamaulipas. They believe that Los Zetas may be responsible for the mass murder. Local residents believe that there are at least 80 bodies in the area.
- 27 September, 2014 43 students disappeared in Iguala, Guerrero, after having been taken from the city by municipal police and handed over to the Guerreros Unidos criminal organization
- 11 October, 2017 17 inmates are killed and 37 injured in a riot at a prison in Cadereyta Jiménez, Nuevo León. The attack was allegedly instigated when inmates belonging to Los Zetas attempted to take over the prison, sparking a violent reaction by inmates belong to rival groups.
- 31 January, 2019 At the border checkpoint near Nogales in the United States, a truck coming from Mexico is stopped and found to be carrying 254 pounds of fentanyl under its load of cucumbers. This is the largest ever drug bust containing this specific kind of opioid, and the truck also contained 395 pounds of methamphetamine. The total value of the load is estimated to be more than 5 million US dollars.
- 8 January, 2020 41 homicides are reported in the first 8 days of the year in the city of Tijuana, with the majority being linked to cartel violence and organized crime.

16 October, 2020 Former defense secretary of Mexico Salvador Cienfuegos Zepeda is arrested by the DEA at Los Angeles International Airport on drug trafficking and money laundering charges.

28 April, 2021 The town of aguillilla gets taken over by drug cartels.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- 2006, (Commission on Narcotic Drugs Resolution 49/8): This resolution discusses strengthening cooperative international arrangements at the operational law enforcement level in order to disrupt the manufacture of and trafficking in illicit drugs.
- 2008, (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 62/176): This resolution discusses international cooperation against the world drug problem.
- 2018, (Commission on Narcotic Drugs Resolution 61/5): This resolution discusses promoting the implementation of the electronic International Import and Export Authorization System for licit trade in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- 2018, (Commission on Narcotic Drugs Resolution 61/8): This resolution discusses enhancing and strengthening international and regional cooperation and domestic efforts to address the international threats posed by the non-medical use of synthetic opioids.
- 2018, (Commission on Narcotic Drugs Resolution 61/9): This resolution discusses protecting children from the illicit drug challenge.
- 2016, (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 30/1): This resolution discusses joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem.
- 2017, (United Nations Security Council Resolution 2388): This was a resolution, unanimously adopted, on the trafficking of persons in conflict situations.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Over the last fifteen years, there have been various reforms that have taken place in an attempt to solve the drug war in the Mexican and Northern Triangle region.

Laws Enforced and Bodies formed

Governments in the Northern Triangle region have responded to corruption in the nation mainly through the creation of new anti-corruption bodies. For instance, in Honduras, after a series of corruption accusations by the National Anticorruption Council (CNA)²⁹ and the local Transparency International chapter (ASJ) regarding irregular purchases of medical products during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Juan Orlando Hernández administration created a Transparency Ministry with a mission that overlaps that of the CNA. However, these bodies have not worked to their expectations. Corruption³⁰ reduced very minimally as numerous government officials in the region still remain corrupt, and transparency has also led to civilians holding government officials accountable for various crimes and issues in the nation.

Impact of National forces

Since 2006, Mexican drug policies have changed to increase the use of military force in combating drug cartels. Furthermore, the Mexican government introduced a National Guard to tackle the drug problem. This body consisted of military police, naval forces, federal police, and the National Gendarmerie. However, even today, such forces have not been able to control cartel violence throughout the region. Mexican drug policies saw an increase in militarisation and centralisation to fight cartels, however it did not lead to a great reduction in the supply of narcotics, and instead homicides, corruption and human rights violations increased in the region.

International Collaborations

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for Central America and the Caribbean, the Salvadoran National Assembly and the U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) of the U.S. Embassy in El Salvador, joined efforts to establish the "Inter Parliamentary Forum on Security in the Northern Triangle". The objective of this event - which gathered representatives from the Ministries of Security, the Offices of the Attorney-Generals and the National Assemblies of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras - was to discuss the best practices on the fight against organized crime and decide ways to collaborate together. The Heads of State of Central American nations adopted a Regional Security Strategy to make the region safe. The Central American Integration System played a leading role in its implementation, and the United Nations stood ready to support these efforts. In March 2011³¹, a Task Force on transnational and organized crime and drug trafficking was set up in order to coordinate the United Nations system's responses to the conflict. It promoted drug prevention,

²⁹ "LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSES TO MEXICAN DRUG CARTELS." *U.S. Government Publishing Office*, 17 Mar. 2009, www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111shrg56913/html/CHRG-111shrg56913.htm.

³⁰ Kimer, James. "Combatting Corruption in the Northern Triangle: Prioritizing a Whole-of-Society Approach." *Atlantic Council*, 8 June 2021, www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/combatting-corruption-in-the-northern-triangle-prioritizing-a-whole-of-society-approach.

³¹ "Strong, Urgent, Global Action Needed to Help Central America Fight Transnational Threats from Crime, Drug Trafficking, Secretary-General Tells General Assembly | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." *United Nations*, 16 May 2012, www.un.org/press/en/2012/ga11232.doc.htm.

treatment, rehabilitation and health, and urged Governments to implement the Drug Conventions and the Conventions on Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols. These international collaborations led to a more organized structure in combating the drug war, however have not had the necessary impact as drug trafficking and violence still takes place on a large scale. Such solutions have made small steps towards alleviating the crisis due to increasing organization in combatting violence, but are still far from alleviating the entire crisis.

Possible Solutions

One possible solution would be to call upon the United Nations Regional Collaborative Program (UNRCP) in Latin America along with the Issue-Based Coalitions (IBC's) to coordinate the training of Mexican National forces and police. The reason for this is not only the corruption in the Mexican forces, but its large scale disorganisation. The forces need to be trained well for further military action in order to combat the cartels. There is also need to reduce the corruption of the force. The UNRCP and IBC's can carry out a vetting process in which they will only select the officials who they deem are not corrupt by investigating their personal life such as any ties to cartels, any bribes etc. and who they deem fit to combat cartels.

A joint agency between the USA, Mexico, the Northern Triangle and the UNODC should be introduced to increase border security. The UNODC will provide technical assistance to these countries to carry out checks for drug smuggling in areas that have been suspected to be drug smuggling transits. Furthermore, this agency can work towards providing appropriate technological equipment such as X-ray machines at the border transits as well to catch any drug mules.

Another possibility is implementing a demonetization scheme in Mexico, to prevent the usage of illegally obtained money. The IMF³² could assist the government during this period. This scheme which would entail changing all monetary bills and coin values, along with the creation of new credit and debit cards for each bank, should take place over 2 months maximum and at the end of these two months, new notes should be printed. This will largely help reduce the usage of illegally obtained money by the drug cartels.

Safety should be provided to journalists and news channels to prevent them from being threatened into spreading false information. This can be carried out by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). A required number of forces can be sent into the region to protect journalists. Furthermore, reporters without

³² United Nations. "UN System." *United Nations*, www.un.org/en/about-us/un-system.

borders should also be sent into these regions with the protection from the CPJ. Due to this, reporters will be protected, and factual information will be spread.

The UNHCR (High Commissioner for Refugees) and UNHRC (Human Rights Council) should be called upon to work in tangent to better the situation for civilians in the region. The UNHRC should send officials to help ensure the civilians are receiving their basic human rights, and the UNHCR should help the internally displaced people (IDP's) and set up camps in neighbouring nations for refugees.

Possible Solutions

A substantial proportion of a nation's resources must be systematically directed towards long term assets such as transportation, energy and social infrastructure (schools, universities, hospitals...) in the name of long term economic efficiency (stimulating growth in economically lagging regions and fostering technological innovation) and social equity (providing free education and affordable healthcare) to prevent austerity from having to be used. Additionally, establishing government advisory subsidiaries will help countries avoid a debt crisis by advising the government on its expenditure. The subsidiary will also provide alternatives to austerity, should the country be faced with an issue of high debt. These will work closely with the World Bank and the IMF to identify implementable solutions to tackle debt crises, that can be implemented in their country and other countries. To comply with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, countries must justify their use of austerity measures and prove that it protects the rights outlined, if they implement such measures. A significant increase in public investment spending would boost jobs in the short run and pay enormous dividends- money paid regularly to shareholders- in more rapid productivity growth in coming decades.

Many migrants aren't entitled to social security services, so when austerity measures are implemented, they are affected the most. Therefore, paying special attention to their well-being would ensure that their human rights are protected. Governments must provide such services to migrants upon their request, along with an attorney to explain the benefits to them, to ensure that their human rights are respected. If, in times of austerity, access to such services are cut to a large number of migrants, the state must give a valid reason as to why their services were cut. Additionally, providing women, elderly people and minorities access to social security services to protect them from the aforementioned human rights violations.

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