

RA: 4 Roots of Contemporary Issues: Americas Need for Speed (and other drugs) Creates Mexico's War on Drugs

RA 1: Mexico and Drugs

Since the dawn of mankind marijuana, cocaine, opium, and various other drugs have been used to achieve a state of mind that we all know as 'getting high'. Now even though drugs have always been ever present in society it was not until the 1960's do we see a rise in drug culture. A culture that exploded in the 1980's and has caused significant issues in the U.S. but more notably in Mexico due to the violence created by Mexican drug cartels. A British frontline reporter who goes by the name Grillo has been living in Mexico and has been documenting the drug war for over twelve years. During his time in Mexico he has seen many violent acts performed by the infamous cartels. But, it was not until 2006 that he really noticed a huge increase the malevolent crimes committed by these influential gangs. The reason the cartels were created and have grown to such power in these past few decades is mainly due the huge amount of drugs that is consumed by the United States. Its no secret that in 2006 Mexico's former president Felipe Calderon declared a war on drugs in his country. But, as of today Mexico has lost that war and Mexico's current President Enrique Pena Nieto along with the U.S., is trying to find a way to end the reign of drug cartels that doesn't involve using a huge amount of military force. To him it is better to lightly take on the drug trade, rather than to take it head on, which he feels only fuels cartels' violence.

RA 2: Latin America Drug Traffickers Escape Through Bribery

The New York Times sent reporters down to Latin America for two months to gather information on the logistics behind the drug trafficking scene that occurs mostly in what is called the 'silver triangle'. During their time spent in Santa Cruz, Paraguay, and western Brazil reporters caught on to a trail of corruption. It became blatantly apparent that those who were busted for drugs were being let off the hook due to major officials being paid off. Gage provides evidence of this when he writes, "If drug traffickers can't use political influence to stop investigations against them, they . . . have so much available cash, for example in Colombia judges sometimes compete to try major narcotics cases because of the potential payoffs involved." [1] Due to these occurrences practically everyone in the drug trade is considered untouchable. Which creates quite a problem for those officials who are trying to stem the flow of heroin and cocaine into the United States, a problem that has been rising since the end of WWII. But, according to the attitudes of Latin American countries such as Peru, who Gage claims, "The Peruvian Government has no unified policy on coca. Many Ministers feel that cocaine is an American problem and not a Peruvian Responsibility." [1] Although, unlike Peru, other counties have been working hard to rid their land of the insurmountable amount of coca crops being grown, a task that is proving to be redundant, for as fast as the crops are cut down twice as many are replanted. But, as said by police Capt. Theodoro Campo Gomez, "There are too many loopholes in our laws and not enough cooperation between countries," [1] a factor that makes the stamping out the drug scene nearly impossible.

This is primary source is a news article published by The New York Times. The intended audience would be the American people. The purpose of this source is to inform readers the details behind the cocaine and opium scene in Latin America. The historical context would be in the mid-seventies, which was when the drug trafficking from Latin America to the United States was at the highest level anyone had seen during that era. It would be safe to assume that the writer, Nicolas Gage, is American and most likely of European descent and since he works for the U.S.'s most popular newspaper that he is financially well off, which compares considerably to the people of Latin America. For those who live in Latin America tend to have low incomes and generally considered a lower class of people.

RA 3: Title: While America Gets High Mexico Explodes Into a Scene of Drug Trade Induced Crime

Hook: Since the dawn of mankind marijuana, cocaine, opium, and various other drugs have been used to achieve a state of mind that we all know as 'getting high'. Now, even though drugs have always been ever present in society, it was not until the 1960's do we see a rise in drug culture. A culture that exploded in the 1980's and has caused significant issues in the U.S. but more notably in Mexico due to the violence created by Mexican drug cartels. A British frontline reporter who goes by the name Grillo has been living in Mexico and has been documenting the drug war for over twelve years. During his time in Mexico he has seen many violent acts performed by the infamous cartels. [1] But, it was not until 2006 that he really noticed a huge increase the malevolent crimes committed by these influential gangs. The reason the cartels were created and have grown to such power in these past few decades is mainly due the huge amount of drugs that is consumed by the United States. Its no secret that in 2006 Mexico's former president, Felipe Calderon, declared a war on drugs in his country. But, as of today Mexico has lost that war. Mexico's current President Enrique Pena Nieto along with the U.S., is trying to find a way to end the reign of drug cartels that doesn't involve using a huge amount of military force. To him it is better to lightly take on the drug trade, rather than to take it head on, which he feels only fuels cartels' violence. [2]

Thesis Statement: America's demand for drugs from the 1930's to the late 1970's fueled Mexico's drug issue to the point where "the war on drugs" became inevitable [3] [4]

Paragraph 3: A look back at the part drugs played in Mexico pre-1960's era. [3]

Paragraph 4: How the usage of drugs significantly increased in America between 1960- 1970. How/what policies were set in place to control the usage spike. [4] [5]

Paragraph 5: How the crack down on drugs in America directly relates to the emergence of Mexican drug cartels and their increasing power. [7]

Paragraph 6: The New York Times sent reporters down to Latin America for two months to gather information on the logistics behind the drug trafficking scene that occurs mostly in what is called the 'silver triangle'. During their time spent in Santa Cruz, Paraguay, and western Brazil reporters

caught on to a trail of corruption. It became blatantly apparent that those who were busted for drugs were being let off the hook due to major officials being paid off. Gage provides evidence of this when he writes, "If drug traffickers can't use political influence to stop investigations against them, they. . . have so much available cash, for example in Colombia judges sometimes compete to try major narcotics cases because of the potential payoffs involved." [6] Due to these occurrences practically everyone in the drug trade is considered untouchable. Which creates quite a problem for those officials who are trying to stem the flow of heroin and cocaine into the United States, a problem that has been rising since the end of WWII. But, according to the attitudes of Latin American countries such as Peru, who Gage claims, "The Peruvian Government has no unified policy on coca. Many Ministers feel that cocaine is an American problem and not a Peruvian Responsibility." [6] Although, unlike Peru, other countries have been working hard to rid their land of the insurmountable amount of coca crops being grown, a task that is proving to be redundant, for as fast as the crops are cut down twice as many are replanted. But, as said by police Capt. Theodoro Campo Gomez, "There are too many loopholes in our laws and not enough cooperation between countries," [6] a factor that makes the stamping out the drug scene nearly impossible.

Paragraph 7: Further elaboration on how drug cartel violence escalated even further until it ultimately lead to the start of the "War on Drugs" in the 1980's. [7]

Paragraph 8: A summary tying all the above events together.

Conclusion: How the above events compare and contrast to the drug situation in Mexico and America today. [1]

RA 4: Roots of Contemporary Issues: Americas Need for Speed (and other drugs) Creates Mexico's War on Drugs

Since the dawn of mankind marijuana, cocaine, opium, and various other drugs have been used to achieve a state of mind that we all know as 'getting high'. Now, even though drugs have always been ever present in society, it was not until the 1960's do we see a rise in drug culture. A culture that exploded in the 1980's and has caused significant issues in the United States, but more notably in Mexico where drug crime is now integral to the countries identity. Mexico is America's number one drug supplier, for hundreds of thousands of pounds of cocaine, marijuana, and heroin cross the Mexican border yearly. This illegal trade of these highly demanded pleasure inducing substances to the United States has caused a vast amount of crime and grief in the country. Today the war on drugs is still being fought in America, at the border, and more largely, in Mexico. A British frontline reporter who goes by the name Grillo has been living in Mexico and has been documenting the drug war for over twelve years. During his time in Mexico he has seen many violent acts performed by the infamous cartels. [1] But, it was not until 2006 that he noticed a huge increase in the malevolent crimes committed by these influential gangs. The reason the cartels

were created and have grown to such power in these past few decades is mainly due the huge amount of drugs that is being illegally trafficked to the United States. Mexico's current state of unruliness begs the historical question of how narcotics became powerful and dangerous enough to cause a full-scale war in Mexico. [2]

Thesis: To find the root of an issue that has prevailed throughout the years, one has dig deep through all the layers of information before finally striking the initial cause. When it comes to the Drug war in Mexico there are a lot of layers, but each one contains vital information that sheds light on what events were the embers that eventually sparked the blazing fire that is Mexico's war on drugs. After sifting through all the information it can be seen that the United States of America plays a crucial role in the cause of the war on drugs. Their role being comprised of multiple factors that include not only its high demand for narcotics, but also the policies that were set in place to combat the increasing demand. The 1920's is where this effect can first be seen when prohibition was set in place. Although, this law dealt with the illegalization of consumption of alcohol it opened the door for many American's to turn to drug usage. Speakeasies infamous to the roaring '20's scene were a popular place for cocaine and marijuana users. [3] In the 1930's American officials started to recognize the expansion of the drug scene, mainly that of marijuana, and taxes and laws were set in place in an attempt to slow and eventually stamp out the use of cannabis. But, despite their efforts marijuana usage continued to grow [4].

Although, the U.S. was not alone when it came to setting policies in place that restricted the flow of drugs across the border. In 1923 Mexico placed their own set of restrictions that banned the importation of narcotics into Mexico. Then in 1927 the exportation of heroin and marijuana was also made illegal. [5] In 1948 Mexico finally decided to enact, "Mexico's first "national eradication campaign," also called La Gran Campaña (the Great Campaign)." [6] This campaign took the burden out of the hands of the Mexican police force, who proved to be unaffected, and placed it onto the shoulders of the country's military. The military's job was to do their best to remove all opium and marijuana fields from Mexico's land through burning and stamping methods. Unfortunately, the combination of the U.S.'s and Mexico's "clever" restriction policies only accomplished the raising of the price of the highly demanded narcotics. With such a considerable profit to be made underground operations began to flourish, for marijuana and opium cultivators simply turned to the murder or bribery of Mexican officials to keep their production amounts flowing. [7]

Policies remained relatively the same in both America and Mexico until the 1960's where it became evident that the current set of eradication methods were proving to be unsuccessful. By 1967 thirteen percent of Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five confessed to have consumed marijuana, a number that rose ten percent in a matter of only five years. Undoubtedly, the hippie scene spurred by the Vietnam War defiantly contributed to the rising demand of narcotics in the United States. [8] To combat the drug scene that still seemed to be growing, the Mexican and U.S. government decided to work together to implement Operation Condor. Operation Condor involved Mexico using the U.S.'s aerial surveillance technology to

target opium, cocaine, and marijuana crops by spraying them with herbicides. [9] This proved to be a successful tactic and soon the three crops were reduced significantly, for on an annual basis around fifteen-thousand acres of marijuana and thirty thousand acres of opium were effectively destroyed.[10] But, this was not achieved without consequences, for, “. . .stiffer antidrug law enforcement, particularly eradication and interdiction programs, tend to have a "cartelization" effect on the market, in the sense that they push less daring and smaller traffickers out of the business and thus benefit the most powerful and organized”. [11] These more ‘powerful and organized’ groups are the equivalent to the drug cartels that we know today. They manage to boost their production of narcotics by increasing the number of officials they pay off or the amount of violent forces used to defy officials.

Evidence of the ‘cartelization effect’ can be seen in countries just south of Mexico. In 1975 The New York Times sent reporters down to Latin America for two months to gather information on the logistics behind the drug trafficking scene that occurred mostly in what was called the ‘silver triangle’. During their time spent in Santa Cruz, Paraguay, and western Brazil, reporters caught on to the trail of corruption. It became blatantly apparent that those who were busted for drugs were being let off the hook due to major officials being paid off. Gage provides evidence of this when he writes, “If drug traffickers can’t use political influence to stop investigations against them, they. . .have so much available cash, for example in Colombia judges sometimes compete to try major narcotics cases because of the potential payoffs involved.”[12] Due to these occurrences practically everyone in the drug trade is considered untouchable. Which creates quite a problem for those officials who are trying to stem the flow of heroin and cocaine into the United States, a problem that has been rising since the end of WWII. But, according to the attitudes of Latin American countries such as Peru, who Gage claims, “The Peruvian Government has no unified policy on coca. Many Ministers feel that cocaine is an American problem and not a Peruvian Responsibility.” [13] Although, unlike Peru, other countries have been working hard to rid their land of the insurmountable amount of coca crops being grown, a task that is proving to be redundant, for as fast as the crops are cut down twice as many are replanted. But, as said by police Capt. Theodoro Campo Gomez, “There are too many loopholes in our laws and not enough cooperation between countries,”[14] a factor that makes the stamping out of the drug scene close to impossible.

As seen above drug cartels hold the most power in the drug scene, even more so than that of the United States and Mexican governments. Whenever a stricter law is set in place, the cartels are able to rapidly adjust and continue on with business as usual. For instance, when Operation Condor was enacted, cartels responded by spreading out crops to make them hard to locate from the air.[15] When authorities would get on the trail of cartels spies would tip off the cartels allowing them to get away at the last second. It seems as if it doesn’t matter how severe the laws become, for as determined as drug traffickers are, they always seem to find a loophole. [16] Although, sometimes its not the traffickers them selves finding a way out of being convicted. For instance it can be the judges who reside on the bench who let the cartels off. This can be because they were bribed or it can also be a result of the judges finding the punishment to not fit the crime. This can be seen in 1956 when the U.S. set in place a mandatory death penalty for those who were twenty

one and over and convicted of selling drugs to a minor. Most judges thought this to be too harsh of a law, so they would more often then not find the defended not guilty [7].

Conclusion: How the above events compare/contrast/lead to the drug situation in Mexico and America today. ((Depending on if its the right direction))

Endnotes:

[1] Billy Briggs, "FRONT LINE MEXICO," Sunday Mail, October 6, 2013, from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1439564475?accountid=14902> (accessed January 20, 2017).

[2] Billy Briggs, "FRONT LINE MEXICO," Sunday Mail, October 6, 2013, from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1439564475?accountid=14902> (accessed January 20, 2017).

[3] Isralowitz, Richard. 2002. Drug Use, Policy, and Management. Westport, US: Greenwood Press.

[4]Isralowitz, Richard. 2002. Drug Use, Policy, and Management. Westport, US: Greenwood Press.

[5]Isralowitz, Richard. 2002. Drug Use, Policy, and Management. Westport, US: Greenwood Press.

[6] Mari?a Celia Toro, Mexico's 'war' on Drugs : Causes and Consequences, (Boulder : Lynne Rienner Publishers,1995)

[7]Mari?a Celia Toro, Mexico's 'war' on Drugs : Causes and Consequences, (Boulder : Lynne Rienner Publishers,1995)

[8]Mari?a Celia Toro, Mexico's 'war' on Drugs : Causes and Consequences, (Boulder : Lynne Rienner Publishers,1995)

[9] Craig, Richard. "Operation Condor: Mexico's Antidrug Campaign Enters a New Era." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 22, no. 3 (1980): 345-63. doi:10.2307/165493

[10] JAMES M. "Earlier Efforts and Errors in War on Drugs." New York Times, Jan 06, 1973, 1.

[11] Mari?a Celia Toro, Mexico's 'war' on Drugs : Causes and Consequences, (Boulder : Lynne Rienner Publishers,1995)

[12] Nicholas Gage, "Latins now leaders of hard-drug trade", New York Times, April 21, 1975, 61.

[13] Nicholas Gage, "Latins now leaders of hard-drug trade", New York Times, April 21, 1975, 61.

- [14] Nicholas Gage, "Latins now leaders of hard-drug trade", *New York Times*, April 21, 1975, 61.
- [15] Craig, Richard. "Operation Condor: Mexico's Antidrug Campaign Enters a New Era." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 22, no. 3 (1980): 345-63. doi:10.2307/165493
- [16] Felix Belair, "Drug Drive Opens At Mexico Border", *New York Times*, September 22 1969, 1.
- [17] Payan, Tony, Staudt, Kathleen, and Kruszewski, Z. Anthony, eds. 2013. *A War that Can't Be Won : Binational Perspectives on the War on Drugs*. Tucson, US: University of Arizona Press.

Geographic Focus: Mexico, U.S.A

Search Terms: Mexic* AND drug*, Mexic* drug trade, drug* Latin America, heroin in Mexico, Mexica* Cocaine, drug war, Marijuana U.S. Popularity, U.S. Drug Timeline, Foriegn Relation* AND drug*, drug* AND 1960's, Mexic* drug cartel*

Primary Source Data Base: New York Times

Primary Source Date Limiter: 1900-1979

Historical Research Questions: How did the usage of drugs in America impact the increase in drug related crimes in mexico? What did the Mexican Government do to try and stop the increase in Crime, did it help? How did the drug crime get so out of hand in Mexico? What did the U.S. do to help?