

Drug trafficking

Quick summary:

In order to control and counter the drug problem, Member States must enforce regulations and policies. However, it is difficult for some countries to control the flow of illicit substances since they are lacking infrastructure, financial aid and human resources. One of the recurring problems that countries face in the drug war is corruption. Drug cartels are earning a lot of money from drug trafficking and part of that money is invested in politics. Meaning that they are funding political parties and bribing police officers.

Study Guide:

Definition of drug trafficking, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): “drug trafficking is a global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws”.

One of the many side effects to globalization was the urge to simplify free trade and travel across international borders. The world has seen many borders opening because of treaties such as Schengen in Europe, Mercosur in South America and the NAFTA in North America. The exchange of goods has become free-flowing and easier, which also facilitates the flow of illegal substances.

Drug traffickers use different routes in order to distribute the merchandise in areas all over the world. Hereby the criminals have become professional smugglers in their specific area. They use deficits in infrastructure and underpaid staff at the border to find their way into the designated countries. Therefore, corruption flourishes and the drugs can be produced in countries which simply do not have the means to prevent it. The biggest part of the global cocaine production is situated in the Andean region (Columbia, Bolivia and Peru). The stimulant is then shipped to West Africa from where it is distributed to countries in Europe. The same circumstances underline the production



Abb. 1 <https://www.princeton.edu/~ina/drugs/sources.html>

and distribution of heroin, which is mostly produced in Afghanistan and then smuggled through Balkan routes. The lack of infrastructure, financial aid and human resources are definitely compromising any kind of progress in solving the drug problem in these regions.

But moreover, the rise of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and the Taliban make it difficult for the government and police to control the flow of illicit substances. In the worst cases, terrorist groups have control over the population and are even forming relations with the local governments so they can ship the illicit substance even easier.

Considering the example of the United States, another problem of drug trafficking can be illustrated. The USA has been extremely active in order to prevent narcotics from entering their country. Violent crimes related to drug trafficking have risen so the police, trying to get a grip on the situation, went after the drug users. These were easier to catch than the cartel bosses. However this method is showing a certain limit. Prisons are being overcrowded since drug users are convicted for 'small offenses' and directly put in jail. Similar procedures can be observed in countries in South America and Asia. In some countries drug trafficking isn't a small offense and is punishable by the death penalty (China, Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines). But capital punishment isn't the main reason for drug related deaths. The reasons for those deaths are various; many die because of cartel wars and overdoses but infection with HIV is another lethal issue. The mortality rates have skyrocketed in some Asian and African countries and the lack of financial aid and infrastructure makes it difficult to treat drug-users (hospital treatment, social support etc).

Sources/further information

- <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/how-drug-trafficking-operates-corrupts-in-central-america/>
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