

WAR ON DRUGS IN LATIN AMERICA-A FAILED WAR? COLOMBIA - THE LEARNED LESSON

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Abstract

This article tries to evaluate the results of the US War on Drugs, to analyze the prohibitionist drug policy implementation in Latin America, especially in Colombia, where the national and regional stability are under the constant threat resulting from drug trafficking and criminal activities.

The drug prohibition policy that relies on the eradication of drug production and on the criminalization of drug use have not provided the expected results, the production and consumption of drugs in Latin America continued to grow at a steady pace, and among the negative effects of these policies we can find the generalization of cross-regional corruption, the loss of human lives, the balloon effect, the creation of new transit routes for drug trafficking. All these elements clearly underscore the inefficiency of these prohibition policies based solely on supply reduction, a vision that has been recently heavily supported by Latin American leaders who have proposed a new global drug paradigm, a more effective, safer and more humane global drug policy. Understanding the importance of interdependence and full international cooperation in order to develop a new global drug paradigm is essential in a highly globalized international environment, in which the drug trafficking threats to the individual, national, regional and global security cannot be dealt with unilaterally.

Keywords: War on drugs, Drug trafficking, Prohibitionist drug policy, Plan Colombia, New global drug paradigm

1. INTRODUCTION

We live in an age of speed and interdependencies in which even the negative phenomena such as organised crime, spreads at an extremely high level and has major influence on the entire world. Globalization determines that the effects generated by the activities of criminal groups (drug trafficking in this case) no longer manifest only at a national or a regional level. Thus, any measures to prevent, combat and counter them, cannot be viewed through the optics of a single State or small group of States, so being necessary the cumulation of efforts at the international level in order to be closer to achieving realistic goals.

The drug trafficking problem was quickly perceived by the countries of Latin America and by the United States. However, the prohibitionist measures adopted failed to achieve their objectives as they were envisioned by the stakeholders in this process of reducing drug trafficking and other related activities. The Colombian narcotraffic evolution is an extremely complex one, surrounded by a very large number of variables in constant transformation. It is very clear that this increased number of external and internal factors have determined the complications relating to halting or slowing down the development of the actual phenomenon of drug trafficking.

Due to the obvious failure of the American initiative to combat narcotraffic in Latin America (*Plan Colombia*), the South American States decided to develop a series of tools and instruments at the regional level, that would meet the exact needs and characteristics of the States on this continent. At the same time, an attempt was made for developing a multilateral and multidimensional approach to the world drug problem in order to be able to permeate every sector of drug trafficking and to develop the required capabilities to be able to cope with the challenges in this regard.

Our work is generated by the following questions, which represent our research hypothesis and to which we will try to answer in this article: *is the War on Drugs in Latin America a failed war? Do the prohibitionist drug policies that have been applied in Colombia offer an important lesson for future policies of combating drug production and trafficking at the regional and even at the international level? Is there a regional consensus in Latin America regarding the global drug policy?*

The research method used is a qualitative one, based mainly on the analysis of written documents. Thus, we will focus our efforts on the interpretation of the data provided through the official reports of the international organisations with authority in this area (UNODC), linking the information with the implications of drug trafficking and the real effects on national and regional security. At the same time, the articles and studies written by experts in the field of cross-border organised crime and drug trafficking have contributed to the development of scenarios regarding the possible methods of combating the global drug trafficking.

2. ORGANIZED CRIME AND DRUG TRAFFICKING. GENERAL ASPECTS. THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION

The organized crime phenomenon has experienced in the last decade, an unprecedented expansion, individualized through increasingly violent actions, with an unusually high risk over security. Carrie Lyn Donigan identified certain attributes of organized crime which delineates it from other criminal activities: *„organized criminal activities go beyond the State's borders to respond to the demand for illegal goods, they support corrupt Governments, posses considerable resources, they have a hierarchical, rigid, or compartmentalized organizational structure that uses internal discipline; they use laundering of proceeds and the legitimate "front" businesses to hide criminal activities, and they have a tendency*

to organize international operations together with other groups of different nationalities." (Donigan, Carrie, 2010, 1656). In the 21st century, we are witnessing the beginning of a new phase of humanity, a stage in which developments in the field of information, technology and communications are perhaps the most important issues for today's society, a stage of progress in the economic and social spheres, a stage characterized by a process of expansion of cross-border economic, socio-cultural and political relations.

The phenomenon of globalization is accompanied by the worldwide expansion of organized crime, through capturing the economies of poor countries, money laundering, illegal drug trade, trafficking in human beings, illegal immigration, trafficking of arms and radioactive substances, etc. The combination of „*criminal activity, financial malfeasance and political corruption are just some of the reasons why the illicit political economy is also known as the dark side of globalization.*” (Picarelli, 2008, 457). In the current context of the international security environment, organized crime has assumed a hard to master dynamic, has extended its scope of action and activity, becoming an important reason for the serious unrest of most countries of the world, but particularly for those whose economies are in stalemate or in a transition process, basically due to the legislative systems and the fragile nature of the democratic institutions in those countries. (Dobriansky, 2001). *Corruption, a facilitator of organized crime and drug trafficking, is a serious impediment to the rule of law and sustainable development. It can be a dominant factor driving fragile countries towards failure* (UN General Assembly, Thematic Debate on Drugs and Crime, 2012). The 1999 Human Development Report (Human Development Report, 1999, 5; 42) depicted the „*virulent synergy between globalization and organized crime*” (TNI Crime & Globalisation, 2003) and identified the international illicit drug trade as one of the major earners in the global underground economy.

Drug trafficking is a global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws. The UN believes that drug trafficking has particularly severe implications because „*of the vast illegal profits it generates, and in several drug production and transit regions, criminal groups undermine state authority and the rule of law by fuelling corruption, compromising elections, and hurting the legitimate economy.*” (UN General Assembly Resolution, 2005). The United Nations also recognizes that independent of the efforts made by States, international organizations, civil society, the *world drug problem* represents a real threat to socio-economic and political stability, as well as to sustainable development (UN General Assembly Resolution, 2011). Guilheme Fabre (Fabre, 1999, 5-6) claimed that since the 1980s, there has been an explosion in the production and consumption of „*artificial paradises*”, as the drug trade has benefitted from the „*universal banalization of corruption*” and that „*the financial system as a melting pot for the grey zone of corruption and the black areas of trafficking, has gradually led to the progressive criminalization of the world economy.*” (Fabre, 1999, 5-6).

Drug abuse and illicit trafficking continue to have a profound negative impact on development and stability across the world. The billions of dollars generated from illegal drugs fuel terrorist activities and abet other crimes such as human trafficking and the smuggling of arms and people and „*the impunity with which they go about their business causes tremendous fear and disillusion sows with governance at all levels.*” (UN Secretary-General’s Statement, 2012).

The results of drug production and trafficking are manifold, but the most important are those that have an impact on the economy, society, political system, environment. Thus, drug production generates a certain rate of employment in the countries that produce drugs, the money coming from drug-related activities dampen inflationary pressures, distort monetary and fiscal policies. The macro-economic impact of drug money is felt upon the foreign exchange flows, aggregate demand and inflation, and, indeed, economic growth in general. In terms of health issues, drug users affect indirectly the society as health costs grow. Environmental damage related to illicit drugs “*is caused in the producing countries by the clearing of forests, growing of crops as monocultures, processing of harvested plants into drugs and the use of environmentally dangerous chemicals without the necessary precautions being taken. Illegal drug funds, laundered or otherwise, may infiltrate the formal economy and subsequently the political system, endangering the foundation and the proper functioning of civil society and leading to social disintegration and anarchy.*” (UNODC Report, 1998, 39-40). Since the drug economy is more profitable than legal production, requiring less security and infrastructure, and imposing smaller transaction costs, the local population is often disinterested or incapable to participate in other types of legal economic activity (Williams, Felbab-Brown, 2012, 13).

3. DRUG TRAFFICKING IN LATIN AMERICA

3.1. PROHIBITIONIST POLICIES TOWARDS DRUGS

Drug trafficking is by far the most important „*current financial engine of the main criminal organizations in the world and without a doubt in the Latin American region.*” (Vivares, 2014, 164). Transnational crime has reached an unprecedented level, and this is especially noticeable in Latin America mainly because of the economic crisis left as a legacy by the fiscal adjustment plans and the privatization of the public sector and by external debt. Legislative gaps, lack of state capacity, corruption and the existence of a considerable sector of society that has no access to the formal economy favored the expansion of illegal activities (Butcher, 2014). Drug trafficking, money laundering, arms trafficking have represented the ideal opportunities for guerilla groups and corrupt officials to fund the insurgency, to significantly increase their profits, and to destabilize the region's economic resources (Nagle, 2002, 1649).

The US, through the important influence it had on the international scene after the end of World War II, has shaped the international drugs policy, being a true Chief Architect of the international control of drugs (Youngers, 2011, 11). In 1971, President Richard Nixon stated that „*the illicit drugs were America’s public*

enemy number one." The UN's approach to drug control „limits the flexibility of responses at a member-states level because it effectively rules out any possible experimentation with decriminalization and/or legalization." (Bagley, 2013, 115).

The main strategies for drug control policy elaborated by the US are: „combating the production of drugs at the source; combating the flow of drugs in transit, dismantling illicit drug networks, and creating incentives for international cooperation on drug control." (Sun, 2013, 26). The main focus of the international policy of drug control is on financing inefficient, but costly strategies of supply reduction, meanwhile, another equally important and essential component of the international drug policy, the demand reduction is being left aside. Prohibitionist policies are based on the idea that „on the „supply side", enforcement will reduce or eliminate production and supply, thereby driving up prices so that drugs become less attractive to users on the "demand side", punitive enforcement against users will reduce levels of drug consumption by acting as a major deterrent, and will support health and prevention initiatives by "sending a message" about the unacceptability and risks of drug use." (Transform Drug Policy Foundation, 54).

The aim of the prohibition of the production and trafficking of drugs was creating in the end, a „drug-free society" as it was mentioned in the 1998 United Nations Drug Control Programme: „A Drug Free World: We Can Do It." The failure of this approach has generated a wave of reactions towards the U.S. strategy, especially in Latin America, from where the idea of a debate on alternatives to American prohibitionist approaches, was born. (Bagley, 2013, 116). Among the main trends that characterize the evolution of drug trafficking and organized crime in the Americas in the last quarter of the 20th century we find „the globalization of drug consumption, the limited or partial victories and the unintended consequences of the war against drugs headed by the U.S., especially in the Andes; the proliferation of drug cultivation areas and drug smuggling routes through the entire hemisphere, the balloon effect; the dispersion and fragmentation of organized criminal groups or networks in countries in the region; the failure of political reform and construction of the State, ineffective drug control policies on regional or international; the increase in support for harm reduction, decriminalization and alternative policies of legalization, drug legalization debate." (Bagley, 2013, 116)

Ted Galen claimed in his book, „Bad Neighbor Policy: Washington's Futile War on Drugs in Latin America" that the prohibitionist strategy in the American drug policy has not contributed to a „decrease in supply or drug consumption in the United States, Europe, or elsewhere" (Carpenter, 2003, 165). The promotion of strategies to decrease the drug supply was doomed because, as long as there will be demand on the market, the supply will keep coming, and making an analysis of the war on drugs in terms of its consequences, and not its proposed goals, **the war on drugs can be considered a complete failure**. Anti-drug policies based solely on supply reduction have exacerbated social unrest throughout the hemisphere, the process of militarization of the anti-drug policy heightened the intensity of drug related violence, the levels of corruption are very

high, new shifts in drug consumption patterns in the Hemisphere appeared, there is an increased prevalence of drug use, violence affecting the most vulnerable segments of society, and there also exists a growing demand for health care services to treat addictions. (Organization of American States General Secretariat, 2013). Thus, the element that triggered so many problems it's represented not by the consumption of drugs or trade drug, but „*by the incentive structures created by the prohibitionist strategy combined with the harsh measures employed to enforce the drug laws.*” (Carpenter, 2003).

Drug-related violence has produced many victims, and the existing anti-narcotics policies have denied drug users access to treatment programs, „*targeted farmers with no other means of survival, caught citizens in the crossfire of confrontations with violent traffickers, crowded prisons with non-violent offenders, fostered or tolerated abusive police and military practices, and overwhelmed criminal justice systems.*” (Isacson, Haugaard, Poe, Kinoshian, Withers, 2013, 2). In 2008, The UN Office on Drugs and Crime, which oversees the global policy on drugs, has identified five negative unintended consequences of the current international system: 1. *Huge criminal black market*; 2. *Policy Displacement*; 3. *The “balloon effect”*; 4. *Substance Displacement*; 5. *Stigmatization and discrimination.* (UNODC World Drug Report, Chapter 2.5, 2008)

The most frequent activity of organized crime groups in South America is indeed drug trafficking. The main corridors for organized criminal activities include the border regions of Colombia and Ecuador, Brazil and Venezuela and the tri-border region of Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina. When we talk about narcotraffic, Central America continues to be a transit and a resending area of illicit drugs, mainly cocaine, from South America, mainly from Colombia, and having the United States and Europe as destination. It is estimated that 88% of the cocaine that enters the United States passed through this region. In the transit of these substances, the territory of Guatemala is used as a landing area for private aircraft transporting cocaine from Colombia surreptitiously to the United States, as an area of resending cocaine transiting across the sea towards Europe and as a drug storage area that goes to Mexico.

The globalization of drug use is an essential element in understanding the necessity of reanalyzing the global policy on drugs. Thus, if indeed for decades, the U.S. was the largest market for consumers of illegal drugs on the planet, with the value of drugs coming from Latin America, the Caribbean, into the US annually reaching even \$150 billion, the situation has changed in recent year and there was a strong increase in the use of illegal drugs in the European Union. In Latin American were consumed almost 200 metric tons of cocaine in 2010, and Brazil was considered to be the world's second largest market for cocaine. (Bagley, 2013, 101) These evolutions have contributed to the development of *new routes of global illicit drug traffic*, because the global demand for illicit drugs grew, and it had to be fulfilled by the by the drug trafficking networks.

3.2.COLOMBIA- A LEARNED LESSON

Not often, Colombia was accused of being a *narco-democracy* because some of the State's GDP came from illegal drug exports. It seems, however, that the figures of the profits generated by the drug trafficking that *sneaks* in the State budget are shrinking, and some experts are no longer agreeing with this tag assigned to Colombia, saying that it no longer can be called a *narcodemocracy*, and suggesting that the strategy to combat drug trafficking launched in cooperation with the United States of America (Plan Colombia) pays off on the medium and long term (Pezzino, 2003, 119).

In Colombia, in the early 1990s, the U.S. has supported the Government in fighting an all-out war against the drug lord Pablo Escobar and the Medellin and Cali Cartel, both being dismantled and causing a conflict regarding territorial control over the growth and processing of coca leaves between Colombia's leftwing Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC guerrillas and rightwing United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, or AUC paramilitary militias. So, as a direct result „*levels of drug-fueled violence in Colombia spiraled out of control in the late 1990s and during much of the first decade of the 2000, Colombia became one of the most dangerous and violent countries in the world.*” (Bagley, 2013, 103).

At the national level, the risks are fairly easy to identify, but extremely difficult to combat. The Colombian economy is the first sector clearly affected by this type of criminal activity, in the sense that the illegal revenues from narcotraffic are subsequently *injected* on the market, becoming a destabilizing factor at the macro-economic level. Also at the national level, criminal groups involved in this vicious cycle of narcotic drug trafficking generate extremely violent actions in their fight for customers and suppliers, but also for control of routes. There are countless examples of this, from the assassination of the candidate for presidential elections of 1989, Luis Carlos Galan, to the regular fighting between the rival groups, which annually caused thousands of victims in Colombia (Grillo, 2010). This violent manifestation of criminal organizations also threatens regional security, and here we can talk about the people who take refuge in the neighboring four States: Venezuela, Brazil, Peru and Ecuador. National and regional Security is also jeopardized by the fact that drug trafficking is the most simple and viable source of funding for other illegal activities carried out by Colombian organized crime organizations (Mazur, 2013). In other words, proceeds from narcotraffic are diverted to *promote* other illegal activities, such as trafficking in human beings, intellectual rights piracy, illicit traffic of arms and last but not least terrorism. All these do nothing but to increase the level of insecurity within the Colombian society, but also outside it. But this has not prevented the Colombian drug producers and traffickers to relocate their activities in the neighboring territories of Peru and Ecuador, causing instability and violence at these states borders (Lyons, 2012).

Maybe the most important initiative of countering drug trafficking in Columbia was *Plan Columbia*. It was proposed by the colombian president Andres

Pastrana Arango in 1999 and it was supported by the American administration. A six-year plan, concluding in 2005, to end the country's decades-long armed conflict, eliminate drug trafficking, and promote economic and social development. The plan aimed to curb trafficking activity and reduce coca cultivation in Colombia by 50% over the next six years. Although Plan Colombia had impressive results, the Colombian government managed to regain control over the vast majority of the state territory from guerrillas, paramilitary forces, and drug lords, and decisively reduce armed violence against its citizens and although now it can not accurately be described, as was the case a decade ago, *„as a country „on the brink,” with the real possibility of becoming a “failed state”* (Shifter, 2010), *„in 2010 Colombia remained a principal source of coca leaf and refined cocaine in the Andes and drug-related violence and criminality appeared to be once again on the rise.”* (Bagley, 2013, 103). Even though the original goal was to reduce coca cultivation by some 50 percent in Colombia, *„the availability and price of illicit drugs consumed in the United States have changed little throughout the decade, despite the enormous effort and investment in resources. A 2008 report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes show an increase in coca cultivation in previous years.”* (Shifter, 2010). The main illicit crop, coca, and the main drug, cocaine, were not in fact reduced by 50%.

A direct result of the intense counternarcotics activities in Colombia was the movement of drug trafficking criminal organizations in the north, in Mexico where they could control the smuggling operations of the cocaine to the United States, the conflicts between the various Mexican drug trafficking organizations generating a strong regional instability. The opinion of Bruce Bagley, who believes that *„Mexico's current drug-related bloodbath is, in part, directly attributable to the partial victory in the war on drugs achieved in Colombia in recent years via Plan Colombia”* (Bagley, 2013, 104) is extremely interesting and helpful in understanding the reasons that determined the Latin American leaders to walk away from the prohibitionist policies and their adverse effects on regional stability.

Colombia could be considered a failure regarding the repressive policies advanced at the global level by the United States (Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy, 2009, 3) since it has implemented along the decade, all the necessary measures to counter drug trade, but the benefits have not been commensurate with the amount of resources invested, the human costs involved. The members of the Commission on Drugs and Democracy believe that the Colombian experience *„has useful reference for countries not to make the mistake of adopting the US prohibitionist policies and to move forward in the search for innovative alternatives; the long-term solution for the drug problem is to reduce drastically the demand for drugs in the main consumer countries.”* (Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy, 2009, 3). Bagley strengthens this view, arguing that *„the price that Colombia has paid for its role in the war on drugs has been high in both blood and treasure.”* (Bagley, 2013, 116).

Anti-drug policies that supported aerial spraying with insecticides, the removal and crop substitution have had a comparatively limited impact on the

growth and production of cocaine, heroin and marijuana in Latin America. Despite efforts by the U.S. and the international community to support governments like the ones in Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, coca-growing and cocaine producing trends remained stable over the last decade. The well-known *balloon effect* which allowed during the 1990s the shift of coca cultivation from Bolivia and Peru in Colombia, continues today to operate similar, coca cultivation shifting in the late 2000 from Colombia back in Peru and Bolivia.

Similar to the Plan Colombia, the 2006 *Merida Initiative* of the Mexican President Felipe Calderón, with Washington's active assistance has allowed the Mexican state to wage an intense military campaign against major drug cartels in Mexico, actions that resulted in their movement especially in Guatemala and Honduras, weak states that could serve as the basis for further criminal activities and smuggling operations.

Policies to combat the production and trafficking of drugs, their militarization and the ability of drug traffickers to adapt constantly to the changing environment, caused only partial victories in the war on drugs, and they were „*proved unable to disrupt seriously, much less stop permanently, either production or trafficking in the hemisphere.*” (Bagley, 2013, 108).

The enforcement of some severe laws for drug offences has resulted in a massive surge of court caseloads, overcrowded prisons, and the attitude towards drug traffickers and consumers also resulted in an over reliance on penalties and repression that have sometimes contributed to violations of fundamental human rights (Szabo de Carvalho, 2003, 1). *The failed war on drugs* has contributed to the growth of „*Latin America as one of the most violent regions of the planet, measured by levels of homicidal violence and executions, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention and denial of basic health services.*” (Szabo de Carvalho, 2003, 1)

An important role in initiating the debate on the reform of global drug policy in Latin America was played by the Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy, launched in 2008 as an initiative of 17 Latin American leaders. The goal was to trigger the debate through a balanced assessment of the effectiveness and impact of drug trafficking in the region and contribute to the building of „*safer, more effective and more human policies.*” (Latin American Commission on drugs and Democracy, 2009). In 2009, the Commission presented the main proposals and conclusions in the „*Report on Drugs and democracy: toward a paradigm shift*” an approach based on three basic principles: „*1) treating drug use as a public health issue; (2) reducing drug consumption through information, education and prevention; and (3) directing away from users and repression towards organized crime*”. The Commission has concluded that ***the war on drugs is a failed war*** “*because the prohibitionist policies based on the eradication of production and on the disruption of drug flows as well as on the criminalization of consumption have not yielded the expected results*” (Latin American Commission on drugs and Democracy, 2009), since Latin America remains the major global exporter of cocaine and cannabis, has become a growing

producer of opium and heroin, and is developing the capacity to produce synthetic drugs.

In June 2011, the Global Commission on Drug Policy (Global Commission on Drug Policy, 2014) has published its first report entitled the War on Drugs which also concluded that: *„the global war against drugs has failed, with devastating consequences to individuals and companies around the world and that fundamental reforms in national and global drug control policies are urgently needed”*. The Global Commission has drafted some recommendations for an alternative approach to the global drug policy: *„acknowledge the failure of the war on drugs and its disastrous impact on human rights, violence and corruption; replace the criminalization and punishment of people who use drugs with the offer of health and treatment services to those who need them; and encourage governments to experiment with models of legal regulation to undermine the power of organized crime and safeguard people's health and security, starting with cannabis.”* (Global Commission on Drug Policy, 2011).

Among the supporters of this important new paradigm we find the Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos, who has openly challenged the global drug regime and called for a *“rethinking of the global war on drugs”*. While adopting a more cautious tone, former president Felipe Calderón of Mexico also argued that *„if the consumption of drugs could not be limited, then decision-makers must seek solutions including market alternatives-in order to reduce the astronomical earnings of criminal organizations”*. Latin American leaders presented their new paradigm of thinking the global drug problem in front of the UN General Assembly in September 2012. There, the presidents Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia, Felipe Calderon of Mexico and Molina of Guatemala openly criticized the war on drugs and requested that a serious debate should begin within the international community for exploring the alternatives.

An essential role in developing this new approach towards the global drug policy also belongs to two major regional organizations, namely the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Union of South American Nations. Regarding the role of the OAS in the problem of drug abuse and drug trafficking, the Inter-American drug abuse control Commission has been created in 1986 to implement projects and programs in the field of prevention, treatment and control of illicit drugs. The OAS has tried to address the world drug problem through an *Anti-drug Strategy in the Hemisphere* (Organization of American States, 2011) and a *Hemispheric Plan of Action against Drugs 2011-2015*, which suggested: institutional strengthening, demand reduction, supply reduction, control measures, international cooperation (Organization of American States, 2011). Another important regional forum for addressing regional security in Latin America is UNASUR (UNASUR, 2008), which in 2009 decided to create a *South American Council for the Global Drug Problem*, and in 2010 adopted an *Action Plan* which, similar to the action plan of the OAS proposed demand reduction, alternative and preventive development, supply reduction and control measures.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The main research question from which we started this article was: *is the War on Drugs in Latin America a failed war?* By illustrating both the national and regional adverse effects of the implementation of Plan Colombia, a prohibitionist drug policy based on eradicating drug production, the disruption of drug flows and the criminalization of drug use, we have shown quite clearly that the answer to our research question is affirmative. The US War on Drugs in Latin America was a failure, which caused more instability and insecurity in the countries of this region, reasons exhibited by the main South American leaders as the essential motivation for changing global prohibitionist drug policy and promotion of a new global, multidimensional and multilateral drug paradigm that should bring together the entire international community since drug trafficking, and drug-trafficking related violence and other criminal activities are now internationalized and affect all the security dimensions, from the individual to the state.

It is important to notice that although South American leaders were the ones who took the initiative of opening a dialogue for the promotion of a new global policy approach to drugs based on a more efficient, safer, more humane policy, a relative consensus appears on the stage of the international life, this new approach being supported by other countries such as the U.S., or being promoted and supported as an essential debate within the UN. The recognition from major global forums like the UN and from some essential regional forums like the OAS as well as UNASUR of the need of officially admitting that the War on Drugs has failed, of admitting its negative impact on fundamental human rights, on the internal and regional institutional stability represents a recognition of the important interdependence that exists between all actors of the international life, in a heavily globalized and constantly evolving environment.

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