How to win the war on drugs

By F.N. Peters

Foreword:

This book is written by an economist and its arguments are largely based on economic models, mathematical sources, and common logic. To flesh out the book, other fields such as history, psychology, sociology, and biology are included, but I have not gone into too much depth on these topics due to my limited knowledge. Wherever possible I have used unbiased sources, no easy feat due to the contention regarding this topic. The factors of these biases have been limited by using a plethora of perspectives on these issues, but since scientists are not in consensus it is impossible to make claims with absolute certainty. Throughout the book I will refer to the *Narcotics Market*, this market encompasses all the transactions that happen with regards to illegal substances.

The book largely focusses on the situation in the USA because most sources focus on this country and not without reason. America is the origin of most of the conflict and has

been the largest drug user in the world, at least in the previous decades.

It is, furthermore, important to note that, although I have tried to include all the important details, some simplifications still had to be made. The Drug War is a complex issue with many personal, societal, and economic factors. Despite these simplifications this book intends to shed a fresh light on this massive conflict, and I hope that this book will contribute toward the eventual end of the war on drugs. This book is meant to entertain and broaden people's perspective on the conflict and not as a definitive guide to solve the war. I don't offer absolute certainty, just another perspective. Have a pleasant read.

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Introduction

Before we can discuss the aptly title of the book This book is named it is important to know who the enemy is and why we are fighting it. As British general Montgomery stated in WW2: "It is vital that each soldier knows how his contributions are helping the greater good" This is remains true to this day, so let us examine the who's and why's.

According to some the real enemy are the cartels, others say it are the gangs in the US themselves and according to others the meth-producers should be included as well. All these terms are exclusive, and I think that we can best approach the war on drugs from an economic perspective, for the drug market is the most regulated unregulated free market in the world. The market encompasses producers, wholesalers, merchants, logistical operators, and the end-users. I will be using this economic approach to describe the conflict. The goal of winning the war on drugs is to disrupt and diminish

this market. As established prior, the market for drugs is the enemy, this is quite a broad group but let us not forget that the conflict involves thousands of different participants who are all involved in this market for their own economic incentives.

Now that we have an idea we can deal with the why's. Why is it important that we diminish this market? Two of the most important ones are firstly, the violence that this market brings with it. Each year thousands get killed in this conflict. Secondly, the rampant drug usage has become a massive burden to the national healthcare system and should therefore be dealt with.

In this book I will analyze the drug market and give several strategies to disrupt and reduce it.

The war on drugs is not lost

That the war on drugs has been lost is a common misconception. Many politicians have stated that "*the war on drugs is lost*", yet I would argue that making such a claim before the war is over is a bit bold. There are indeed many indicators that the war is not going as planned, such as the rising overdose rate in the USA and that major victories have been quite rare, with exceptions such as the capture of Pablo Escobar, the man who changed the game.

History teaches a few things about war however, and one of them is that war is not an exact science. Many mathematicians have argued otherwise in cases such as the second world war, where it was "*obvious*" that the Japanese would lose, yet they forget to remember the Polish who, although greatly outnumbered and half starving, still managed to crush the Soviets at the Vistula, in the first Russo-Polish war in 1921, and they would go on to push the Soviets completely out of

their land. Other examples such as the victory of the Mongols against the Chinese, the incredibly swift conquest of France by the Germans in 1940 and even the victory of the Americans against the British all was not logical. The losing party often had the advantage in numbers and even technology, yet their counterparts managed to overcome these disadvantages by creative and innovative tactics.

This has also been the case in the beginning of the drug war. The USA with all its military might seemed to be able to win this conflict swiftly and decisively. The people expected another war like World War 2, where the American involvement had led to swift collapses of the Italian, Japanese and German dictatorships. Yet times had changed, and the politicians should have learned to temper their expectations after Vietnam, an example where the involvement of the USA did not give the desired outcome.

The war on drugs was first declared by Richard Nixon in 1971. The war however, did

not gain traction until 1973 when the **D**rug **E**nforcement **A**gency, was founded. This special branch was given special authority to stop the inflow and distribution of Drugs into the USA. Although their activities are mostly found in the US and southern America, they also have branches in nations in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Without knowing it Nixon came close to solving the drug crisis during his presidency, but unfortunately his brilliant plan never came to fruition, but more about that later. The war on drugs soon turned into a gruesome affair with many similarities to the war in Vietnam. The States were up against a supposedly inferior enemy, yet this enemy proved to be craftier than they anticipated. The high expectations were thus soon shattered, and it is logical that many people feel as if we have lost the war.

"*The war on drugs has been lost*", a misconception based on three main underlying misconceptions which ought to be addressed. The first major, and perhaps the most important misconception is that "*Drugs*

are not that bad". This is a statement often made by progressive politicians. Almost all illegal drugs have major bad side effects for their users. Something often overlooked by those politicians who are pro decriminalization and pro legalization, is that drugs may not always cause a lot of physical harm, but they almost always do cause mental harm. Drugs do not contain chemicals that <u>create</u> the joyous effect it has, but <u>releases</u> the dopamine hormones in your brain, and that causes the user to feel good. This is however just borrowing happiness from tomorrow with interest.

How this works exactly is an entire field of research on its own and if the reader is interested, I would refer to a dedicated work, but I will try to explain the basics using the following graph. The blue line shows the dopamine level. The orange line shows the dopamine baseline level of the user. As you can see the user has higher highs yet also deeper lows than a normal person would have. This on its own is not even that bad. It