

Global drug solutions: The Green and the White_s

Drug use can be studied pharmacologically, psychologically, sociologically and, as South and Dorn (1990) argue, economically. Just as all other economic processes can be subject to an environmental critique so might the drugs market. This paper seeks to apply a green critique to the UN's global action plan and the anti-drugs action and rhetoric of nation states. It considers the environmental aspects of drug growth, production and interdiction with the aim of contributing to eco-criminology and to asking the first questions about what a green drugs policy would be. As a consequence doubts are thrown on the abolitionist case for legalisation. Drugs are a green issue.

History and Organisations

In 1909 an international drugs conference was held in Shanghai. It laid the ground for international cooperation in drugs control. It was followed by further Conventions in the Hague in 1912, Geneva in 1925 and 1931. The League of Nations actively considered these matters and its successor, the UN, has adopted the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961, amended in 1972), the Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971) and the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988).

Within the UN responsibility for drug control is vested in the United Nations Division of Narcotic Drugs, the International Narcotics Control Board and the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control. The World Health Organisation (WHO), Interpol and UN aid giving agencies are also mobilised in the 'war against drugs' and (UN 1990b, Bruun et al and Hsien Chou Liu).

In addition to the Treaties, UN Agencies and local anti-drug agencies a series of Conferences are held. Opening the World Ministerial Summit to Reduce the Demand for Drugs and to Combat the Cocaine Threat, in a speech replete with military metaphors, Mrs Thatcher (UN 1990f) spoke of the 'enemies' of 'mankind': war, poverty, famine, drought and disease. She said that we have begun to conquer these enemies only to face two new 'threats', the first

environmental pollution "and second the insidious threat to our way of life, and from the evils they bring in their wake...". The unnamed threat is drugs. She went on to say that "we should not neglect the environmental aspects, in particular the damage to rain forests from cutting and clearing ground to cultivate drugs". This claim will be examined.

The earliest international moves against drugs were coordinated by the United States. It can be argued that this was at least partly for economic reasons. The US wanted to challenge Britain's trade monopoly with China. Starting at home the US banned opium in 1906 under the Pure Food and Drug Act (Andrews and Solomon). It was then that Coca Cola switched to using decocainised coca leaf. Germany had resisted early controls on cocaine for economic reasons as it was at the time the world's leading supplier. Cocaine had first been isolated from coca leaf in Germany in 1860 and its use popularised by Sigmund Freud.

The Global Plan

1991-2000 is the United Nations Decade Against Drug Abuse. This involves UN organisations in promoting 'A Global Programme of Action (UN 1990a). Member nations are expected to implement this programme. At the session of the UN which declared the decade against drug abuse a Political Declaration and Global Plan of Action were adopted.

The main points of the Action Programme are the **Prevention and Reduction of Illicit Demand**, the **Treatment, Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration of Drug Addicts**, **Control of Illicit Drug Supplies**, the **Suppression of Illicit Drug Trafficking**, ending **Illegal Financial Flows and Illegal Use of the Banking System by Drug Traffickers**, **Strengthening of Judicial and Legal Systems, Including Law Enforcement** and designing **Measures to Prevent Diversion of Arms and Explosives and Illicit Drug Transport** (UN 1990d).

Each of the main points of the Global Plan has many parts. The whole programme can be, and in part has been, criticised politically and economically. Doubts can be raised about how willing or able some States are to implement the programme. For example there were reports that US UH-1H (Hueys) helicopters using gas-powered weeders on the coca crop (Henman 1990) had to be withdrawn for the Gulf War (Buchanan). Whether the UN has the resources or organisation to implement is of concern to the UN itself. This paper looks mainly at the proposals to Control Illicit Drug Supplies, largely crop eradication and crop substitution programmes.

US Foreign Policy

Just as the Gulf War could be seen as an extension of United States' foreign policy so UN global policy can be seen as an arm of US foreign/economic policy now as it was at Shanghai in 1909. The US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has bases in Latin American countries and drug policy is part of American foreign policy which still follows the Monroe Doctrine, the doctrine that Central, Southern and Caribbean America is the United State's 'backyard', which it is entitled, or under some 'sacred' duty, to police. Bolivia, for example, has now agreed to the posting of US Special Forces, their SAS, as 'trainers' (Long).

US drugs policy is very much a foreign policy with its concentration on the 'threat' posed by external foreign suppliers rather than the demands of its home market. As Brazier (1984) points out the US would strongly object if Thailand blamed Californian Vineyard owners for alcohol problems in Thailand and demanded an export ban or bombed the Napa valley.

The World Economy: Economic Reality in Uncle Sam's backyard

The greatest difficulty that the UN as would-be controller, or of the United States as largest market, is that the demand for drugs presents an enormous economic temptation which individuals and countries cannot easily ignore. The economic calculus admits no morality.

Some producers might say as Jose Vallegos, a Bolivian 'peasant leader', does "Why should we be made to pay for the inadequacies of the rich gringos?" (Rose). Whilst the producer countries had no drug problems such a view might have been more tenable.

Peru's statement to the World Ministerial Summit to Reduce the Demand for Drugs and to Combat the Cocaine Threat (UN 1990e) offers a more sophisticated set of arguments that also touch on the ecological consequences¹ before getting to the economics of the drug market.

Peru's statement calls the past repressive response simplistic and seeks to widen out the scope of action, particularly reminding other countries that it is not their fault that the socio-economic facts are such as they are. At the same time they seek economic assistance. It is their support for the Global Plan that is heard by world leaders, and their bravery lauded, but the complexity of their argument is apparently ignored.

The reality of global power relations is such that despite their criticism of simplistic responses Peru have now signed an anti-drug pact creating a single body to eradicate the coca crop by economic reform, crop substitution, internal security and interdiction. Mr Fujimori, Peru's President, admitted that previous strategies had been a 'complete failure'. Without details it is difficult to see how the planned pact differs from action within the Global Plan or previous bilateral action. What is probably more significant is Mr Fujimori's comment that the pact includes 'the possibility of debt forgiveness' (The Guardian 1991).

Rocha (1991) reports that in *Our Own Agenda*, a Latin American and Caribbean 'committee of notables' including ex-presidents, demands that the agenda for Eco 92 (UN Conference on the Environment and Development) should not ignore Third World poverty. They point out that the 'developed' world developed by running up an 'ecological debt' with the Third World. Brasil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Mexico contain 46% of the world's tropical forest, 8% of its population but only make a 15% contribution to global warming. The trade in drugs follows a similar pattern. The Third World provides the raw materials and buys back refined

¹ One mention in a long list.

products.

Economic difficulties are plain and the UN recognises them (UN 1990c). They point out that international debt, falling world commodity prices, poverty and drug trafficking are connected. Between 1980 and 1988 prices for sugar (64%), cotton (32%), coffee (30%) and wheat (17%) all dropped. Third World countries have increased shortfalls in their budgets as mineral prices dropped too in the same period, tin down 57% and crude oil 53%. This may well have been behind some producers switching to drug growth.

In Bolivia from 1980-85 unemployment doubled. In 1984 inflation was 2,800% and in 1985 ten thousand percent. At which time a 2.2 acre plot could earn the grower \$9,000 against \$500 from citrus fruits. Moreover, coca bushes are hardy, mature quickly and may be harvested six times a year.

For the economic reasons mentioned above crop substitution other than by force is clearly bound to fail. Crop eradication is not a consensual activity and is generally carried out by the State on the crops or persons of that State, often with the assistance of the United States or Britain.

The Netherlands: Bad Neighbours ?

Whilst the TV adverts may concentrate on the 'pathetic junkie' the another body is the body politic in its highest form, the State. The preamble to the United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotics drugs and psychotropic substances states that it is the drug trade and 'other related organised criminal activities which undermine the legitimate economies and *threaten the stability, security and sovereignty of States*' (author's emphasis). Not only are drugs seen to threaten States, other States can, by acts of bad neighbourliness with regard to drugs also appear threatening.

Holland is seen as having 'let the side down' by attempting a local solution to a global problem. Kaplan (1984) calls the Dutch drugs policies 'experimentalist' which he contrasts to the 'prohibitionist' tendencies of the US, UK and UN.

Particularly sharp have been the complaints of the German State about the experiment in Enschede of a house-dealer system. Kaplan points out that the same system existed in Amsterdam, only an hours drive from the German border, but without exciting any particular complaint. Enschede is on the border, a short walk from Gronau in Germany. This was seen as threatening the German prohibitionist culture, so fundamentalist that it made no distinction between cannabis and heroin.

He also makes the point that prohibitionist tendencies in the US, the predominant element in drugs policy world-wide, form part of a progressive project such as brought women the vote. This is the converse of the European tradition where progressivist ideas are associated with the left. Perhaps modernist is a better description of American confidence in the capacity of scientists, bureaucrats and politicians to solve these matters with a Global Plan. Greens are more suspicious of these claims and of the efficacy or ethics of such top-down solutions.

Green criticisms

Many of the treaties, UN publications and Mrs Thatcher mention the need to protect the environment. Paragraph 2 of Article 14 of the Convention against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances ensures that the measures taken to eradicate coca bushes, opium poppies and cannabis plants "shall respect fundamental human rights and shall take due account of traditional licit uses, where there is historic evidence of such use, as well as the protection of the environment". The environment is clearly relevant to greens, the fate of indigenous peoples is too as they often embody the small scale, sustainable and bio-regional aspects of other green policies. Both will be looked at.

The terms of the Convention, regarding the environment, did not prevent the US Agricultural Research Service being ready to supply large numbers of malumbia caterpillars to narcotics teams in South America. These caterpillars are already native to the region and cause some crop losses. It seems that they were not used in the end because only a loss of one crop could be expected not the destruction of the whole bush. As Henman (1990) points out the reaction of the growers might have been to spray the bushes with pesticides. Such actions aimed at interdiction could have environmental consequences for the region, on the native users of coca-leaf and end-users of cocaine elsewhere.

Rosa del Olmo found forcible crop eradication programmes in eleven Latin and Caribbean countries and in 1983 Brasil's agricultural research agency EMBRAPA received \$3 million to develop coca specific biological agents such as insects, viruses or bacteria. (Henman 1985, 1990).

If only for pragmatic reasons most drug crops will have been organically grown. This will not always remain the case. Pressures to meet expanded demand and to compress the growing season, to reduce the chances of discovery, may lead to the use of agrochemicals. Many harmful chemicals are already used in the production of cocaine base and cocaine. This is an example of the ecological effects of drug growth and production which the UN mentions, toxic waste products from processing coca paste into cocaine are dumped in rivers (UN 1990c). This ecological charge is repeated in Mrs Thatcher's speech and in *Our Own Agenda*.

The ecological balance may well have been disturbed in drug growing regions. However, this is no different to coffee or tobacco growing regions. Whilst each drug plant may be native more of each of all the drug plants are now grown, organically or not, than might have been naturally, or at subsistence level. Pressure to clear forested areas comes both from the need to grow more drugs and the need to keep one step ahead of the law. Thus the prevention of crime in the Andes may lead to displacement to the Amazon Basin, where it is more

difficult to deal with and more ecologically dangerous. Licit and illicit drugs grown as cash crops have environmental and economic affects.

However, the majority of coca and opium is grown in poor soil away from rainforests. In the case of coca it is mostly grown at an altitude that will not support rain forests. The greatest threat to the rainforest is logging and ranching. The demand for mahogany and beefburgers are a greater threat than drugs in this respect.

One of the officially propounded reasons for protecting the natural environment, particularly the rainforest, is the need to preserve a wide biological diversity. Yet the untapped resources of rainforest must include these natively-used drugs as well as those that can be patented by the pharmaceutical giants.

The toxic effects of the chemicals used to release cocaine from coca leaf are obviously dangerous but do not approach the damage wrought to the Rhine by pharmaceutical companies nor the affect that can be anticipated when the Amazon basin is industrialised.

Pharmaceutical companies have an interest in keeping plant drugs and their derivatives illegal so that their synthetic products remain profitably saleable. Those products either replace natural ones or are offered as a cure for the natural ones. For example Imipramine is a cocaine substitute (Henman 1985) and naltrexone an opiate antagonist, much like antabuse which causes nausea to alcohol users (Brewer). Bolivian peasant leaders, such as Jose Vallegos, have sought to argue that the coca industry be developed into a competitor to the big pharmaceutical companies (Rose). It might be expected that this too might have environmental consequences.

The concern of world leaders and organisations for the environment seems partial and politically motivated. They seek to press the language of ecology into service in their war against drugs. This is not to say that drugs are eco-friendly even if drug users might be more environmentally conscious. The damage to the environment is real but should be seen in

perspective.

The Green and the White

Weil (1975), an ethnobotanist, describes his travels about South America in *The Green and The White*. He chews coca leaf, smokes cocaine base and snorts cocaine. He argues that the mind is capable of producing the effects of licit and illicit drugs without resort to pharmacological assistance but that it would be unfair to deny the pleasure and assistance given by them.

He does, however, draw a distinction between cocaine, the refined product and coca leaf. This is based on his experience of both and his liberal theoretico-political standpoint. Whilst cocaine can be injected or more usually smoked or snorted coca leaf requires chewing with lime or ash over a period of an hour. He makes the point that direct injection or inhalation bypasses the natural protection offered by ingestion. It is this gastronomic point that causes Weil to favour the green of coca over the white, of cocaine.

Pursuing this distinction between the green and the white he also points out that refined sugar is abused and that those who only have access to cane sugar do not suffer the obesity or diabetes associated with white sugar. Indeed in this country a popular diet/nutrition book in the 70s was called *Pure, White and Deadly* (Yudkin). Published today you might presume it was about the dangers of drugs.

Weil explains the time taken over and the reverence given to the preparation and consumption of 'Mama Coca'. He suggests that cocaine users might be educated towards the use of coca leaf. He feels this would overcome what he sees as the objections to cocaine namely that it lets you down too quick and is too expensive to make eating it a viable proposition.

Cocaine is only one of 14 alkaloids present in coca leaf. Refining removes not only the other alkaloids but also the thiamine, riboflavin and Vitamin C. Moreover, impurities can occur in the production and later distribution process, hydrochloric acid is not always adequately washed from the base and on the street cocaine will be adulterated with other white powder alternatives such as amphetamine, synthetic 'caines' or borax. Weil is also concerned that the possibly beneficial effects of the other alkaloids alone or in complex interaction has been ignored in seeking to protect users from the bad effects of the isolated cocaine.

Weil's critique of current drug thinking is implicitly green. An explicitly green perspective raises some further points which might build on his conclusions but would not necessarily lead to the sort of policies that he favours. A greener way to analyse drugs may not be between 'hard' and 'soft' but refined and natural, Weil's green and white.

Refined and Natural Drugs

Weil's 'natural' critique might be extended to fast food, medicine and pre-digested refined news, to the whole of modern/post-modern life. The scope for educating people to chew coca leaf, as Weil suggests, must be slim at present amongst those who have only time for a calorie-controlled TV dinner or those who have to fight for dinner and sleeping space. It seems unlikely that those who take drugs to distort or blank out the Spectacle would be attracted by the prospect of slowing down and using something less effective, and therefore less damaging to the internal human environment.

Drugs like crack and heroin give a quick fix and lead to long-term problems unless you can afford good quality products and are assured of income and status. This could be a metaphor for life on earth today where the answer to all problems is the short-term techno-fix, where even the pollution arising from previous fixes is to be fixed by another yet more powerful fix¹.

¹ The hypodermic/hyperactive attempts of Government's to fix world problems with an injection of arms, aid and slogans mirrors the actions of their desperate and bored citizens.

It would though be romantically Manichean to think that the division of drugs into natural and refined equated to good and bad. They would have different impacts on the personal environment of users and of the earth and a green analysis would show the bad effects of even green or natural drugs. Many poisons are completely natural, unrefined or green.

As suggested earlier the growth of substantial amounts of drug plants to feed the demands of world markets can have an environmental impact. It is unnecessary to grow such plants in rainforests. The soil fertility of rainforests is low and the ecological function of the rainforest lies in the diversity of its flora and fauna. Weil's account suggests that their is low key, possibly sustainable, native cultivation of coca in the Amazon basin. It seems though that the UN is unable to accept this as a traditional licit use.

Culture: Traditional licit use

The treaties and agreements recognise traditional drug use. However, it is seen as a mark of 'civilisation' to be drug free. Evidence exists of controlled, civilised, native use. The majority of abuse exists in the 'civilised world'. That abuse is sometimes seen as the eruption of a cancer within those societies. Drugs are seen to be allopathic within the body of society. The possibility that drug abuse is iatrogenic is less popular with the physicians of the State.

Care has to be taken not to fall into a romantic trap of assuming the 'earthwise' nobility of the 'savage'. Accounts of native drug use often paint an idyll of rural bliss where drugs are used recreationally or in religious practices for centuries without detrimental effects to the health of the individual, society or environment.

Drugs are often pictured as the cement of such societies. These accounts note, without apparent irony, that it is men who indulge these habits not women. It is as plausible that

women are the cement of these societies and that it is their labour, visible but discounted, that enables men the luxury of their recreation and religion. It can be no coincidence that coca is perceived as "Mama" - the sustainer, the comforter.

It is clear that the culture, or cultural environment as we might call it, in which drugs are taken has an effect. It is a common place that GIs in Vietnam consumed drugs noted for their addictive qualities yet on return the majority kicked the habit without problem.

In Thailand Suwanwela and Poshyachinda (1983) noted the differences in drug use between hill tribes, those lower down the valley and in the city. The Hmong and the Yao grow poppies in the hills. They sell much, making them comparatively wealthy, but keep back enough for private recreational and therapeutic purposes. Cannabis grows wild in the area yet is only used to make fibre for fabric. Opium dependence was 8-18% of the (male?) population over ten.

The Karen lived in areas where opium did not grow well and they had to rely on rice-growing and increasingly wage labouring. They showed dependence rates of 10-38%. In rural villages there was greater poverty, a wider range of drugs and greater dependence including some heroin use. In the cities they encountered the first signs of poly drug use.

The contrast between opium as home-grown and bought product is made and it is clear that there is a relationship between the way people live and their drug use. This would accord with green expectations that the way you interact with your environment and how you let that environment interact with you through drug use or the food you eat. It is for these reasons, among others, that Weil's suggestion of a switch to coca chewing is unlikely to work.

In the Andes users select coca leaves for qualities other than their cocaine content (Weil). This is much as a wine drinker chooses wine for qualities other than alcoholic strength. Negrete (1983) records that Inca tradition valorised productivity. Coca use was seen to give

strength and courage, whereas cocaine is more normally associated now with cheating footballers and yuppies and crack with psycho killers. However, in modern Bolivia it is as likely that coca is chewed to pass the day or get through a shift in the tin mines, 96% of miners use coca (New Internationalist). Cultural practices transplant less well in time and space than the flora that support them. The Andes has not caught up with New Times (Marxism Today) or post-modernism.

Post-modern drugs?

Cannabis is like coca leaf or opium a more natural, less refined drug. Its naturalness fits the ethic of rasta, that of old hippies and of the much touted New Age. Drugs might like much else from architecture to a zed and two noughts be associated with modernism or post-modernism. If heroin and cocaine are modernist and coca leaf, opium and cannabis are anti or pre-modern what might constitute a post-modern drug?

'Designer' drugs might suggest themselves as post-modern. Their synthetic nature and novelty is not sufficient to meet the specification that might be demanded of a truly post-modern drug¹. It may be that computer generated 'virtual reality' may become the post-modern drug.

Conclusion

The UN concluded, but does not follow up on its own conclusion, that Bolivian communities were best able to resist submersion in the cocaine economy where they had strong local organisations (UN 1990c). This is the sort of solidarity that Hulsman (1984), following Galtung, sees as requiring a 'greener' developmental approach. Coca leaf use will have formed part of the culture that strengthened the people against cocaine.

¹ for instance feeling like Baudrillard for half an hour, becoming a parody of oneself or catching a sight of Lord Lacan in a mirror at the semi-opticians.

Despite finding that local solidarity was the best protection against 'drugs' the UN and nation states insist on global top down solutions. These have not proved effective against drugs or environmental degradation. Global problems do not necessarily require global solutions.

Green policies emphasise the small scale: the decentralised. Where strong local communities are bravely defying drug cartels they may also be resisting the more corrosive effects of consumer culture that advertises cigarettes that they cannot grow for themselves and impugns coca which they can. Worse, cocaine as a product is touted as a better product than the old fashioned coca.¹

The latest round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (another global plan) will result in a ban on the banning of cigarette advertising as an unfair restraint on trade. US cigarette firms are in the forefront of ensuring that their products, like British opium in China, is preferred to the local product. The GATT talks are an example of what Galtung (1981) calls one-dimensional (economic in this instance) macro development, consistent with a red or blue (bureaucratic or entrepreneurial) approach rather than a green one. The greener approach operates at the micro-level on multiple dimensions, or holistically.

As suggested earlier a green view of drugs should be similar to that taken to food, tobacco or beverages. Thus drug plants, organically grown, would be favoured over refined products and also in line with Weil's suggestions be taken by the safest method and in moderation. However, even if it was economic and developmentally sound to import coca leaf in bulk their must be green objections to the transport of what might be cultural or practical necessities in one country to another where they might become luxury goods. Greens might be expected to approve more of the 'Mutual Societies' or 'Trading Charities' that Dorn and South (1990) postulate as two of the seven types of drug distributor in Britain.

Conversely a 'green puritanism' might arise in some circumstances. This can arise from

¹ Why kill yourself with American cigarettes, imagining yourself a cowboy, when you can kill yourself with what Hollywood really takes?

internal green ideology or politics, or, externally from those seeking to use green rhetoric against drugs like Mrs Thatcher or the UN. A green puritanism might add a healthy world to the old tag about healthy bodies and healthy minds. Being green is not necessarily about being 'pure', less still purged, it is about balancing society and nature, the internal environment and the external environment. Greens should ask of drugs the same questions they ask of food. Where did it come from? Was it produced without exploiting the environment or workers?

There is a strong libertarian/abolitionist strand within green thinking. Accordingly there are good grounds for green doubts about how appropriate legalisation would be in current world economic circumstances.

Arguments for legalisation are that it would remove organised crime's influence on the production, transport and consumption of drugs in the same way that the ending of Prohibition in the US ended the grip of organised crime on the drinks industry. Hulsman (1984) in particular emphasises the negative effects of secondary drug problems for the user and for the Criminal Justice System. Leaving aside the entrenched nature of organised crime and its capacity to switch products greens would want to consider more than just the pleasant prospect of their own drug of choice being legalised.

Current proposals for legalisation are Eurocentric, concentrating on the pleasures and pains attendant on consumption. A green 'global' policy needs to give greater weight to producers too. It for such reasons that Hulsman's 'green' approach is insufficiently green.

As this paper has suggested drugs production, transport, consumption, destruction and illegal status all have interconnecting effects on the environment. Legalisation of refined drugs or their antecedent plants in the current circumstances might have potentially damaging effects on the environment and on the cultures of the areas in which they are grown.

A green criminology needs to be critical of current policies of drug interdiction or legalisation. It may also need to be self-critical of green ideologies or spiritual beliefs that may see drugs as the gifts of Gaia.

This paper has highlighted the economic reasons behind increased drug plant growth. Both that increased output and attempts to eradicate it have real environmental effects for which they can be criticised. The ecological concern of world leaders about drug growth is one sided. They seek to push the blame for drugs and ecological damage onto the poorer members of Third World countries; the same countries to which they already owe an ecological debt. First World development having benefited from exploiting the bodies of Third World workers and the land that might have sustained them. This structural criticism of world drug economics does not, however, enable western users to evade their responsibilities. Drug use has ecological consequences from abandoned syringes to soil erosion in the Amazon Basin.

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