

Improving Global Drug Policy: Comparative Perspectives on Counternarcotics Regimes and UNGASS 2016

The Brookings Institution
1775 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC
Saul/Zilkha Rooms
October 16, 2014
9:00am -5:30pm

The global counternarcotics regime is facing profound challenges. Increasingly, some countries in Latin America and Western Europe are of the view that the current approach, predominantly focused on coercive suppression of production, flows and demand for narcotics, has failed in its stated objectives. Yet drug policy reform proponents face major challenges at the 2016 UNGASS and beyond. Some countries do not share the reformers' assessment that the regime has failed as a result of an erroneous policy design. These countries instead believe that policy failures are the result of insufficiently diligent enforcement. Russia and China are pushing for an even more rigid approach to combating narcotics. Many in East Asia prefer the existing design, even as they have emerged as new supplier and demand countries. By and large, African countries have not yet decided how to deal with the trade mushrooming in their regions.

The debate is further shaped by ongoing shifts in illicit narcotics trafficking networks and the changing threats and harms that many countries are experiencing. Traditional labels of "supply," "transshipment," and "demand" countries often fail to easily apply, and many former drug exporters are now struggling with drug use epidemics. In addition, the actual intensity and types of harm and threats posed by the drug trade and drug policies continue to vary greatly across the world. Thus, while there is as much drug trafficking in East Asia as in Latin America, for example, the drug trade in East Asia is as nonviolent as in Western Europe. The shifting and uneven distribution of costs and harms associated with the trade makes it difficult for the world and any new counternarcotics regime to formulate a single approach that easily fits all states.

Thus, the approaching 2016 UNGASS and the meetings that will follow provide an important opportunity to reexamine the existing regime and improve global drug policy through robust policy evaluations and improvements. It also allows us to assess the prospect of intensifying disagreements among states that might further fragment the global counternarcotics regime, despite the problematic spillover effects that would result. Experts will present papers evaluating trends in drug production, trafficking and use in key countries; emerging harms and threats; and country-level perceptions of the effectiveness of national and global drug policies, both within governments and among the general population. This will provide context in which to consider how countries think about the desirability of reform of the global drug policy regime and what the obstacles to such a future reform effort might be.

AGENDA

October 15th

7:00 pm **Welcome Dinner** (Brookings, St. Louis room)

October 16th

9:00 am – 9:15 am **Introductory Remarks**

9:15 am – 10:45 am **Panel 1: Approaches to and Implications of Drug Policy Reform Scenarios**

John Walsh, Washington Office on Latin America

Uruguay

Mark Kleiman, University of California, Los Angeles

Colorado and Washington Marijuana Regimes

Caroline Chatwin, University of Kent

The Netherlands and Sweden

Jonathan Caulkins, Carnegie Mellon University

Drug Legalization Breakout Scenario

11:00 am – 12:30 pm **Panel 2: Trends and Policies in Latin America and West Africa**

Lansana Gberie, West Africa Commission on Drugs

Mali and Guinea

Paula Miraglia, Independent Consultant

Brazil

Daniel Mejia, Universidad de los Andes

Colombia

Alejandro Hope, Mexican Institute for Competitiveness

Mexico

12:30 pm – 1:45 pm **Catered Lunch** (Brookings, St. Louis room)

1:45 pm – 3:15 pm

Panel 3: Trends and Policies in Asia

Vanda Felbab-Brown, Brookings Institution

Afghanistan

James Windle, University of East London

Thailand and Vietnam

Tom Kramer, Transnational Institute

Burma

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Panel 4: Trends in and Perspectives of the Major Influencers of the Counternarcotics Regime

Mark Galeotti, New York University

Russia

Sheldon Zhang, San Diego State University

China

Beau Kilmer, RAND Corporation

United States

Martin Jelsma, Transnational Institute

United Nations Treaties Reform

5:00 pm – 5:30 pm

Wrap-up and Concluding Remarks