

Collapse of the Global Order on Drugs

*From UNGASS 2016
to Review 2019*

**Edited by
Axel Klein and
Blaine Stothard**

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Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2018

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78756-488-6 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-78756-487-9 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-78756-489-3 (Epub)



ISOQAR certified
Management System,
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Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Abbreviations

AMMD	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters
AP	Associated Press
ARQ	Annual Report Questionnaire
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATS	Amphetamine-type stimulants
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BRICs	Brazil Russia India China
CBD	Cannabidiol
CDT	Commission for the Dissuasion of Drug Use (Portugal)
CELAC	Community of Latin America and Caribbean States
CICAD	Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CND	Commission on Narcotic Drugs
CNN	Cable News Network
COW	Committee of the Whole
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSTF	Civil Society Task Force
DAINAP	Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration (USA)
DPA	Drug Policy Alliance (USA)
DSG	Deputy Secretary General
ECDD	Expert Committee on Drug Dependence
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EECA	Eastern European and Central Asian countries
ELDD	European Legal Database on Drugs
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EKDF	Eidgenössische Kommission für Drogenfrage (Switzerland)
ENCOD	European Commission for Just and Effective Drug Policies
EU	European Union
FBN	Federal Bureau of Narcotics (USA)
FDCS	Federal Drug Control Service
GCDP	Global Commission on Drug Policy
HDG	Horizontal Drugs Group
HONLEA	Heads of National Law Enforcement Agencies

viii Abbreviations

HRC	Human Rights Council
HRC	Harm Reduction Coalition
iERG	Independent Expert Review Group
IAHPC	International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care
IDPC	International Drug Policy Consortium
IISC	Informal Interactive Stakeholder Consultation
INCB	International Narcotic Control Board
IRCCA	Instituto de Regulación y Control del Cannabis (Uruguay)
ISSDP	International Society for the Study of Drug Policy
MAS	Movimiento al Socialismo (Bolivia)
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NEP	Needle Exchange Programme
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPS	New (or Novel) Psychoactive Substances
NYNGOC	New York NGO Committee on Drugs
OAS	Organisation of American States
OFDT	Observatoire Français des Drogues et des Toxicomanies (France)
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy (USA)
OST	Opiate Substitution Therapy
PGA	President of the General Assembly
PWID	People who inject drugs
PWUD	People who use drugs
SCOPE	Strategy for Coca and Opium Poppy Elimination
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
StatComm	Statistical Commission
THC	Tetrahydro-cannabinols
TNI	Transnational Institute
TRP	Transnational Radical Party
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VNGOC	Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs
WACD	West Africa Commission on Drugs
WACSI	West African Civil Society Institute
WADPN	West Africa Drug Policy Network
WCO	World Customs Organization
WHA	World Health Assembly
WHO	World Health Organisation

About the Editors

Axel Klein is a Researcher and Project Consultant with a long-standing commitment to drug policy reform. Axel has headed the research and international units at DrugScope and been a trustee for Transform, two UK NGOs. His publications include *The Khat Controversy: Stimulating the Debate on Drugs* (2007), *Caribbean Drugs: From Criminalization to Harm Reduction* (2004), and *Drugs and the World* (2009). More recently, Axel has published on cannabis cultivation and the anthropology of drugs. He has been the editor of journal *Drugs and Alcohol Today* since 2007.

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Mike Trace is a former UK Drug Czar, who has held senior drug policy responsibilities at the European Union and the United Nations. He founded and, until 2016, chaired the Board of the International Drug Policy Consortium. Through all of these roles, he has promoted drug policies that are rational, effective and based on principles of human rights and the promotion of positive public and mental health. His reflections in the Epilogue are based on 20 years of close involvement in international diplomacy around drug control and are the author's own views.

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Frank Zobel is a Sociologist and Public Health Researcher. He is Deputy Director at Addiction Switzerland, the largest centre for substance use epidemiology in the country. His former positions were with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) in Lisbon, as Policy Analyst and Coordinator of the European Drug Report, and with the University Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine (ISPM) in Lausanne, as external evaluator of the Swiss drug strategy. Frank is a member of the national advisory board for addiction issues of Switzerland and of the scientific board of the French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (OFDT).

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Foreword

Drug policy is about good and bad governance and government at global, national and local levels. It is about striking the right balance in policies that would ensure both the equality and safety of all and the autonomy/freedom of every citizen, a debate that has been ongoing in our societies from the times of Plato's *Republic* to contemporary politics. Few specific policy areas, however, have been as controversial in this respect as that of drug policy, since the endorsement of the International Drug Control Conventions by United Nations member states over 30 years ago and the subsequent implementation of prohibition-based law enforcement policies across the world.

I warmly welcome Axel Klein and Blaine Stothard's initiative, together with a broad circle of experts, to review the current tensions in the field, ahead of the 2019 UN summit aimed at assessing the 10-year achievements of the 2009 political declaration and action plan on drugs.

The tensions are many, exemplified throughout this volume through the analysis of country contexts, issues relating to specific substances, access to controlled medicines, metrics and human rights.

The first and obvious tension resides in the contraposition between the steady increase in illicit drug availability and consumption documented in the last 10 years; and the original aim set up by the Political declaration to 'eliminate or significantly reduce illicit drug supply and demand and the diversion and trafficking of precursors'. One may wonder for how long a number of governments will refuse to admit the simple reality that demand for psychoactive substances will always be there; that as long as prohibition will remain, supply will come from parallel criminal sources; and that prohibition-based policies have not only failed in their own objectives of decreasing illicit drug production and use but have actually proven harmful for the health and rights of people and fuelled a criminal economy.

Another tension of the current debate resides between governments and theorists who wish to stick to the outdated/unrealistic political orientation of 2009 and those who will promote a fresh and modernised look at drug policies based on evidence, building on the progressive language adopted at the 2016 UNGASS on drugs, the follow up of which is a mandate of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in the 2016–2019 interval.

The major tension – it seems to me – is more fundamental: whether the debate should be about the governance of substances or about the welfare of people. Clearly, there remains a huge gap between the original objective of the

Conventions to ensure ‘the health and welfare of mankind’ and the reality that prohibition-based policies have generated for people on the ground: a ‘war on drugs’ that turned into a war against people who use drugs; an international black market that fuels corruption, spreads violence and insecurity for citizens; mass incarceration of people who use drugs; the spread of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C; epidemics of overdose; stigmatisation and marginalisation of people who use drugs across the world, who continue to live under the threat of arrest and face often unsurmountable obstacles to access services and treatment.

The latter tension pertains to the interference of government and policies with human life and to ways by which political power, here based on enforcement of prohibition of certain substances, has regulated/prohibited conducts and behaviours, something that Michel Foucault referred to as ‘biopower’ and ‘biopolitics’.

The 2019 debate on drug policy should, however, go beyond the question of regulating behaviours based on the pretext of regulating a substance. It should start from restoring the value of the lives of people who use drugs and their dignity. People who use drugs are criminalised and discriminated against on a daily basis in almost every country of the world, and repressive prohibition policies impact on their health, life expectancy and quality of life. The issue here is about how governments and policies at all levels address human lives and put different price tags on different lives; it is about policies that target certain groups of the population whose lives have less value to governments; it is about the fundamental tension between global ethics that promote the universal value of human life and the reality of political management of lives in the frame of repressive drug policies.

Mike Trace’s analysis in this volume rightly states that the lack of international consensus at the 2016 UNGASS should be seen as a positive development and the end of an era during which member states have worked hard to maintain unity behind a single global strategy of widespread punishment of consumers and suppliers. A consensus that was based on considering illicit drugs as ‘evil’ rather than focussing on people.

It is now time to shift the debate from substances to people; start the discussion on policies with a people’s perspective, people’s fundamental liberties and rights and people’s health. This will be the main challenge for debating the future of drug policy in Vienna next year and the next 10 years’ plan of action.

Michel Kazatchkine

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Acknowledgements

Putting together a book like this is a collective undertaking that could never have been realised without the support of many friends and colleagues. We would like to thank all the people with whom we have been talking about drug policy for longer than we care to remember. It is to the credit of all who continue to engage in this field in spite of setbacks, frustration and tedium. We are particularly indebted to David Bewley-Taylor, Khalid Tinasti and Chris Hallam for their generous support from the outset of this project, helping to give it shape and suggesting authors. The input from Vicky Hanson, Marcus Day, Isidor Obot, Bia Labate and Esbjörn Hörnberg was invaluable in moving the process forward. We also want to mention Mike Ashton, John Collins, Maik Dunnbier, Chris Ford, Willem Scholten, Alexander Soderholm and John Witton for taking a critical interest and sharing their ideas throughout the process. We were greatly encouraged by the support and inspiring leadership of Ruth Dreifuss and Michel Kazatchine from the Global Commission on Drug Policy, to whose work this volume will, we hope, contribute. Most of all, of course, we want to thank our authors, who in these straitened times have contributed their energy and genius in writing a remarkable collection of papers. Although we will get the printed credit as editors, we hope that this collection will also serve as a testament to professionalism, collegiality and co-operation.