

Breaking a Bi-Regional Addiction

Theories for the Reduction of the Coca/Cocaine Trade

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Introduction

The West¹ once regarded cocaine as a benign, but exhilarating powder. Around the turn of the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud prescribed it as a medical miracle, the pope awarded a medal of honor for a cocaine-infused wine, and the drug was considered a fashionable addition to high society. Now, cocaine is seen as wholly detrimental, and the US War on Drugs is meant to eradicate it. However, this Western problem stretches beyond Western borders, deep into the Andean jungles, to *coca*—the benign leaf from which cocaine is derived.

Coca in many ways is not so easily vilified as cocaine, as it is an ancient part of the indigenous Andean culture, and is as benign as coffee. Coca is so deeply ingrained in this culture that it features in prehistoric cave paintings, Incan rituals, and was once used to measure distance (with relation to how long it took to finish chewing a wad of coca). Furthermore, Andean peasants extol the leaf for its abilities to cure hunger pangs and altitude sickness. It figures in Bolivian divination, supplication to supernatural forces, traditional medicine, dietary supplementation, and as a mild stimulant (Streatfield). However, despite the licit uses of coca, the current majority of coca production is inextricably linked to that of cocaine. “Between 80 and 90 percent of coca growers...also make coca paste—the first stage of the cocaine processing procedure” (Malamud-Goti 3). This paper cannot consider the cocaine problem in a vacuum; therefore, while taking pains not to disparage the coca leaf in and of itself, I will refer to the situation as a *joint coca/cocaine* problem.

Resting on the assumption that the coca/cocaine trade is indeed a problem for both the Western and Andean regions, this paper carefully examines two prominent theories for its

¹ Although it is somewhat misleading to distinguish between the “Andean Region” and “The West” due to the fact that the Andes is located geographically in the Western hemisphere, the term refers to Western European and Western European-settled countries, with a specific focus on the United States for this paper.

eradication: supply and demand side theories. These two theories propose contrasting points of departure from the dependency cycle of the coca/cocaine trade by targeting for eradication either Andean coca cultivation or Western cocaine consumption. However, neither proposed departure takes into account the needs of the targeted region. My analysis uses holistic standards to assess these eradication techniques, thereby rejecting biased or one-sided plans. The second portion of my paper finds that supply- and demand-side eradication attempts thus far have been one-sided due to the overt favoring of the non-targeted region in each instance. The final segment of my paper proves that alternative crop development provides for the needs of the targeted group while retaining benefits for the non-targeted region, emerging as the only hope for a sustainable departure from the coca/cocaine cycle.

To validate terming the coca/cocaine trade a “problem,” this paper first seeks to prove the trade’s detrimental effects on *both* the Western and Andean regions. The addiction and crime resulting from the Western cocaine scourge leaves little question of the coca/cocaine trade’s negative effects in this region. Its effects in the Andes are more ambiguous, since the coca/cocaine trade is currently supporting much of the Andean economy. However, because of the illegal nature of this economy, the Andean region is rife with corruption, including governmental payoffs and government-sponsored trafficking. Furthermore, the underground nature of the cocaine-making process results in atrocious working conditions due to a lack of labor standards and regulation. Finally, coca cultivation operates under a system of monocropping that is economically risky and environmentally hazardous. Analyzing the effects on both regions is important because there exists a misconception that the coca/cocaine situation entirely *benefits* the Andes (while wreaking utter havoc on the West). If this were true, eradication of the coca/cocaine trade could be seen as a Western victory at the expense of the

Andes. However, because the situation is damaging to both regions, this analysis rests on the holistic assumption that eradication of the coca/cocaine trade is in the best interest of *both* regions.

Because the coca/cocaine trade is a two-region system, it perpetuates through mutual encouragement. Demand encourages supply, and supply encourages demand, persisting in a circle of dependence that must be broken somewhere for eradication to succeed. The central question is: what is the best point of departure from the circle of dependence? Two prominent theories, known as supply-side theory and demand-side theory, exist in the attempt to answer this pressing question. Supply-side theory advocates the eradication of coca cultivation by targeting Andean coca growers, whereas demand-side theory targets the West, mandating eradication of the cocaine trade and cocaine addiction. I have chosen the case study of Bolivia because it has seen both supply- and demand-side theories applied to eradication efforts, both unsuccessfully.

Bolivian supply-side eradication is represented by two Andean initiatives: DIRECO and Plan Dignidad. Due to the one-sided nature of supply-side eradication, these plans cater to the West, which theoretically benefits from a decrease in cocaine without having to take the initiative to remove it. On the other hand, it is detrimental to the Bolivian interest, inflicting draconian eradication policies on coca growers and leaving them with poorly-implemented alternatives. Since supply-side initiatives have consistently failed to provide the targeted (Bolivian peasant) group with adequate alternative crops, they have been uncooperative and even hostile towards eradication attempts. As a result, supply-side programs have been inherently unsustainable.

On the other hand, the policies of current Bolivian president and former *cocalero*, Evo Morales, represent the Andean promotion of demand-side eradication. Favored by Andean

theorists, this plan theoretically allows Andean *cocaleros* to continue coca cultivation without the fear that it will be put to illicit uses. This theory is twofold, as it targets both Western cocaine addicts and cocaine production and trafficking for eradication. Morales argues that Bolivian coca should continue to be grown as long as its sale is regulated to licit markets (for chewing and making into tea, bread, toothpaste, etc). However, the failure of Western anti-drug campaigns thus far, coupled with the fact that profits from illicit production far outstrip licit profits, has meant that the plausibility of Morales's claim for increased licit production and decreased illicit production is at odds with basic free market principles of incentive. Given that much of the increased coca is not restricted to licit markets, the West is forced to cure a readily satisfied addiction for which temptation is never in short supply. Currently, demand reduction initiatives are inflicted punitively on users and sellers, failing to account for their needs. Thus, demand-side policies prove themselves doubtful, insufficient, and often harmful.

These current (supply- and demand-side) eradication theories seem to favor *either* Western *or* Andean interests—the non-targeted group benefiting at the expense of the targeted group. Unless the needs of both regions are taken into account, the desperation in one region or the other will continue to fuel the trade. It is not coincidental that the primary proponent and sole beneficiary of each respective theory is the non-targeted region: Andean leaders urge the West to eradicate their “cocaine problem,” while the West advocates (and even assists in) eradicating Andean coca crops. It seems that each region would rather the other take responsibility for the eradication of their joint problem. This reluctance is an indication that the needs of the targeted group aren't a priority for the proponents of either theory. Supply-side theory (predominantly supported by Western theorists and benefiting the Western War on Drugs) leaves Andean coca farmers and the entire Andean economy stripped of their most viable commodity without

adequate compensation. On the other hand, Andean-supported demand-side eradication burdens the West with the impossible goal of curing an addiction that is simultaneously being fueled by continued supply of the raw material. The primary problem with current eradication is that it is largely conducted by way of punishment and repression. Demand-side eradication of Western drug use is predominantly attempted through incarceration and fines while supply-side coca eradication implements incarceration, threats, and militarized crop removal. This neglect of the targeted group inevitably leads to resistance of eradication, rendering eradication as it is currently practiced both inhumane and unsustainable. Alternatively, if the interests of the targeted group were accounted for in the practice of eradication, both parties would ultimately benefit.

This paper makes the case that alternative crop development in the Andean region is the best way to retain the benefit of the non-target group and account for the needs of the targeted region. Essentially, alternative crop development is a version of supply-side eradication, altered to benefit the targeted Andean coca growers by providing viable replacement crops for coca. Alternative crop development would benefit the Andean region by allowing Bolivian farmers to voluntarily eradicate coca without being driven into unlivable poverty or forced to secretly relocate their coca patches. Furthermore, the Bolivian economy would be freed from its currently unstable one-crop economy. Ensuring benefits for former coca growers is not only a humanitarian agenda, but also reduces resistance to eradication (currently manifested in *cocalero* strikes and secret relocation of crops). Alternative crop development is also in the interest of the (non-targeted) West, as it is essentially the supply-side technique that the West has always advocated. Specifically, the West would benefit because decreased supply would necessitate decreased usage. Of course, the actual process of weaning oneself from an addiction is far less

simple than merely lacking the drug and quitting. Nonetheless, a reduction of the addictive substance would certainly assist the rehabilitation process. Overall, both regions would benefit from the sustainable departure from the coca/cocaine dependency cycle.

On the topic of alternative development, there is debate as to whether alternative crop solutions or general alternative development (addressing issues of Bolivian poverty) should take priority. “Inside Bolivia, foreign-financed development programs are viewed with deep suspicion. They are frustrated by...immediate-impact projects, like schools and clinics, at the expense of funding for alternative crops—[reporting], ‘schools and clinics are very nice, but we can’t eat them’” (Hargreaves 51). Therefore, this analysis will focus solely on alternative *crop* development, acknowledging that other forms of development are, of course, necessary. Despite the fact that alternative crop development has failed to solve the Bolivian coca dependence thus far, a close examination will reveal that the specific failures are in no way inevitably doomed to be repeated. In examining several Bolivian alternative crop development attempts, failures appear as a result of mistakes and incompetent leadership. If specific implementation is amended according to the lessons of previous failures, alternative crop development may be the key to eradicating the coca/cocaine trade.

Specific Torments of the Coca/Cocaine Trade on

Western and Andean Regions

The West is plagued by cocaine addiction, which leads indirectly to violence, neglect, and poverty across the Western world. Despite cocaine’s history of social acceptance and its original benign reputation, it has been banned since December 1914 with the passage of the Harrison Act (ONDCP). A study conducted in the late 1960s proved that cocaine is even more addictive than heroin. In this study, two lab rats were placed in two separate environments with unlimited

access to heroin and cocaine, respectively. At the end of the one-month trial, “all of the heroin rats had developed serious drug habits, but were, otherwise, relatively healthy...all of the cocaine rats were dead” (Streatfeild 88). Furthermore, “cocaine continues to be the most frequently mentioned illicit substance reported to the Drug Abuse Warning Network by hospital emergency departments nationwide” (ONDCP). With the advent of crack cocaine (a significantly cheaper derivative of cocaine, which is meant to be smoked), the drug became much more prevalent on Western streets. Crack cocaine is considerably more addictive than powdered cocaine, due to the heightened rush of smoking it coupled with the brevity of the high (Streatfeild 275). The US Drug Enforcement Agency reports on the potential ill health effects of cocaine use, including tremors, vertigo, muscle twitches, paranoia, toxic reactions, and potentially fatal cardiac arrest or seizures (DEA).

Furthermore, desperate dependence on these drugs has led to adverse effects on society, including “disruption of the family unit, crime, automobile and job-related accidents, as well as lost production from absenteeism, tardiness, and workers leaving the labor force” (Bryant, Samaranayake, and Wilhite 659). Indeed, there have been direct empirical connections drawn between drug use and crime. “The Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program found that approximately 60% of all arrestees test positive for illicit drug use, not including alcohol” (Zanis et al 1). The disastrous effects of cocaine use inspire the West to mandate the eradication of cocaine cultivation and coca production in the Andes.

Eradication of the coca/cocaine trade is beneficial to both regions involved. Although the War on Drugs was originally waged to mitigate the Western cocaine problem, evidence suggests that coca/cocaine eradication would benefit the Andean region as well. In Bolivia, the coca/cocaine trade has resulted in hazardous labor practices, environmental degradation,

economic instability, and various social concerns. Due to the underground nature of coca refinement, labor conditions are neither monitored nor regulated. The creation of cocaine paste (an intermediate, unrefined form of coca known as *pasta básica*), occurs in Bolivian jungle labs. It requires young laborers known as *pisadores* (stompers) to spend night after night in large vats of kerosene, acid, and coca, treading repeatedly upon the mixture. These caustic chemicals “cause damage to the workers’ feet and may pose other, as yet unknown, health risks” (US Congress 49). Once the cocaine has been refined, the responsibility for transportation lies in the hands of the *hormiga* (ant) and the *mula* (mule), nicknames given to various types of traffickers. These jobs are dangerous as a result of potential legal repercussions and health threats. The drug mules are made to swallow pellets of the drug so as to secretly transport them to the West. Often poorly packaged, these pellets have been known to rupture within the mules, causing fatal gastric poisoning (Koehler 1).

Cocaine is also beginning to infiltrate Bolivian society. Many laborers are paid not with money but with *pitillos* (cigarettes filled with *pasta básica*). *Pitillos* have now made their way onto the streets of Bolivia, and into the hands of Bolivian children. “The children, some as old as six years old, are paying the terrible price of Bolivia’s cocaine boom. Most begin by using cocaine, but once addicted are forced to turn to selling and stealing to finance their habit” (Hargreaves 126). This particular incarnation of cocaine, when smoked, has detrimental health effects similar to those of crack cocaine. Moreover, due to its unrefined nature, *pasta básica* contains additional toxic chemicals, adding additional health hazards (US Congress 3). Anthropologist Jack Weatherford found that many *pisadores* demonstrate adverse psychological reactions to the *pitillos* including uncharacteristic levels of violence and irrationality such as “wife beating” (Leóns 157).

While coca has proven itself to be an extremely lucrative asset for Bolivia, it contains the hidden potential to inflict economic destruction. First of all, developing nations in the global political economy such as Bolivia rely heavily on civil relations with donor countries. According to Mario De Franco, “drugs spoil Bolivia's relations with advanced industrial nations and, through them, with the financial community” (399). Another Bolivian economic risk of the coca/cocaine trade relates to agricultural and market stability. Since coca has become a prominent export, coca cultivation has developed into a more intensive system of monocropping in which only one crop is pursued on a given plot of land. As a result of this one-crop system, coca’s reliability is relatively precarious, “making Bolivia, at least at the macroeconomic level, exceedingly dependent on a single commodity, rendering the country vulnerable to the vagaries of the market, nature and international drug policies” (De Franco 398). Although coca has always been cultivated in this region, such concentrated cultivation as is currently practiced is not traditional. In a paper presented at the Environmental and Social Effects and Sustainable Alternatives Conference, Kumrab Phanthong and Dave Patterson connect the proliferation of market-based coca monocropping with the loss of traditional indigenous diversified horticulture. Therefore, proponents of increased coca cultivation who cite coca’s traditional role in Bolivian society are failing to acknowledge that coca cultivation as it is currently employed bears little resemblance to original cultivation methods and cannot be promoted on these grounds.

The Bolivian natural environment is also suffering as a result of monocropping. Monocultures such as coca are more susceptible to diseases and soil degradation than diversified crops. Furthermore, “monocrops deplete soil of key nutrients and billions of microorganisms that help keep plants disease-free, reducing soil productivity 18 times faster than natural processes can rebuild it on average” (Roslin 1). Historically, monocrop susceptibility to disease has caused

catastrophic events such as the Irish Famine and the devastation of the wine industry in Europe in the late 19th century. Due to monoculture's lack of crop rotation, environmental degradation has been another consequence, documented as the primary cause of the American Dust Bowl. Finally, as a result of this increased disease susceptibility and nutrient deprivation, fertilizers and pesticides are being used to compensate, resulting in chemical leaching into surface and groundwater (US Congress 3).

The crude cocaine-refining process is even more environmentally abrasive. Taking place in clandestine jungle labs, the situation is one of poor infrastructure, cheap crude chemicals, and lack of waste depository. Once cocaine has been refined, large quantities of kerosene, sulfuric acid, lime, calcium carbide, acetone, toluene, ethyl ether, and hydrochloric acid are left over. Without proper infrastructure or waste receptacles, dumping chemicals into nearby rivers is a common practice, inflicting further damage on the environment such as increased pH, reduced oxygen availability, and acute and chronic poisoning of fish (US Congress 3).

Finally, the Bolivian cocaine trade has created a hotbed of governmental corruption. This is, perhaps, inevitable as long as Bolivia's prominent export continues to be illicit. As its name suggests, the "coca-dollar coup" that brought General García Meza into political power was financed through illegal cocaine profits. Other Bolivian political officials have been caught maintaining suspicious connections to the drug elites, as well. "Videogate," for example, is the name given to the scandal that ensued when a video revealed that prominent Bolivian officials had requested financial aid from Roberto Suárez Gómez, Bolivia's most prominent drug lord (Streatfeild 393). Gómez has a history of dubious friendship with Bolivia's government, culminating in his offer to pay off two-thirds of the country's foreign debt in exchange for legal impunity (Kurtz-Phelan 103). As long as government corruption continues, it is inevitable that

Bolivian economic profits will be predominantly retained by Bolivian drug and political elites, only increasing peasant poverty.

Eradication Theories

Supply-Side Theory

Supply-side eradication has been the preferred Western tactic in the War on Drugs. In President George H.W. Bush's Andean Strategy, almost seventy per cent of the budget was allocated to repression abroad, as opposed to the three other categories: repression at home, prevention at home, and prevention abroad (Hargreaves 18). As supply-side architects and proponents have been Western, the benefits of supply-side methods favor the West and fail to account for the Andean interests. Although Bolivian leaders such as President Banzer have publicly supported this supply-side eradication tactic, it is important to keep in mind that the U.S. is both the "largest bilateral donor in Bolivia" (Gamarra 40) and its most significant trade partner, raising doubts about the motivations prompting such Bolivian compliance. In fact, DIRECO and Plan Dignidad, two Bolivian supply-side eradication programs, have not been in the best interest of Bolivia. DIRECO was a program of voluntary eradication, whereas Plan Dignidad enacted military force against unwilling *cocaleros*. DIRECO indisputably failed, yet Plan Dignidad was originally announced to be a success. However, this success has proven unsustainable with the huge coca resurgence in the last five years. Both plans ultimately failed because the needs of the coca growers were neglected. This neglect was manifested in the practice of targeting small growers instead of traffickers and trafficking routes, the largely unsuccessful attempts to quell the Western demand, and the lack of adequate alternative crop opportunities. Such failures to account for growers' needs inevitably resulted in the balloon

effect (a name given to the secret relocation of coca crops after eradication, a harbinger of unsustainability).

A: DIRECO

DIRECO was one failed Bolivian program meant to provide monetary compensation to peasants in exchange for voluntary coca crop eradication. This program paid 2,000 dollars for each hectare of coca voluntarily removed. However, given the profitable nature of coca, 2,000 dollars was far from adequate compensation (Hargreaves 45). Under the dictates of the policy, coca growers had to request government personnel to come measure their coca field, for which they were charged a significant fee. The coca grower was then allotted a certain amount of time to uproot their coca plants before being checked up on. However, managerial competence was lacking, and the government-sponsored development program meant to oversee eradication frequently failed to do so. In the absence of government follow-through, peasants “did not feel bound to carry their end of the deal” (Léons 149). For those who *were* checked up on, they were often subjected to “coercion, arbitrary arrests, physical abuses, threats and intimidations, confiscations of personal belongings, cash, and coca, and a variety of other actions carried out with near impunity by the narcotics police, members of...DIRECO” (Sanabria 177). In a way, DIRECO’s failure was almost inevitable. Had eradication efforts been successful, the paltry monetary compensation could not have sustained the majority of peasants, leaving a choice of starvation or the recultivation of coca. As demonstrated with the eventual failure of Plan Dignidad: in the face of high demand, reduction of supply without viable alternatives is unsustainable.

B: Plan Dignidad

Plan Dignidad, a “zero coca,” US-backed eradication program enacted from 1998 to 2002, proved detrimental to Bolivian society and economy, as well as ineffective. Unlike DIRECO, Plan Dignidad did not profess to be voluntary, but was forcefully enacted in the dense coca-producing Chapare region, often at the expense of human rights. At its 2002 conclusion, it was deemed a success by US and Bolivian governments alike. However, in the five-year aftermath of Plan Dignidad, Bolivia has regressed back to heavy coca cultivation. While the US government suggests that this regression was a result of the coca-friendly policies of current Bolivian president Evo Morales, there are structurally unsustainable elements to supply-side theories such as Plan Dignidad that supersede the Morales regime. Furthermore, it is likely that Morales’s electoral victory (on a platform opposing forceful eradication) derived from citizens’ unrest over the negative effects of Plan Dignidad; therefore he is as much an effect as he is a cause. The specific detriments of Plan Dignidad for the targeted group include the use of violence, imprisonment, the targeting of insignificant actors in the trade, and a lack of alternatives.

Rather than increasing compliance with eradication, Plan Dignidad’s use of violence resulted in increased resistance and further impoverishment of the desperate, coca-growing communities. A concentrated effort in late 2001 prompted security authorities to increase their use of force and coercion, killing ten *cocaleros* and injuring or detaining more than 350 (McGuire 6). Plan Dignidad also enacted the draconian guilty-till-proven-innocent Law 1008 which authorized further violence against and imprisonment of peasants. “In 2004, 40 percent of people in Bolivia’s jails were imprisoned under Law 1008, and 77 per cent of them remained uncharged with any crime, this even after a 1999 reform” (Gordon 16). “Women (particularly

poor women of indigenous descent) as well as children suffer grave effects of the war on drugs due to their respective social and economic positions. The Cochabamba woman's prison, like many in Bolivia, is filled with the prisoners' youngest children" (Streatfield).

Peasants are positioned in the coca/cocaine system to bear the brunt of any supply-side eradication efforts, further increasing poverty and desperation. According to Anthropology professor Harry Sanabria, this has been deliberately constructed by trafficking elites to "shift disproportionate risks" by leaving most of the coca cultivation in the hands of smallholders as opposed to trying to control it (14). Under the dictates of Law 1008, freedom from incarceration can be bought. Therefore, prominent cocaine producers and traffickers, when caught, were wealthy enough to attain their freedom, whereas impoverished peasants continued to flood Bolivian prisons. As Santos reports, "the penalties of the law are felt most harshly by the underclass that produces or transports small quantities of cocaine" (4). Eradicating the coca/cocaine trade would free peasants from an illegal system.

Finally, under Plan Dignidad, alternative development was not taken seriously. The plan included a theoretical promise for replacement crops; however, these "were not enacted soon enough, leaving peasants who had already destroyed their coca leaves with little means of subsistence" (McGuire 5). This neglect of the target group inevitably resulted in the "balloon effect," a phenomenon reminiscent of squeezing air out of one part of a balloon and seeing it pop out somewhere else. In the context of coca cultivation, this translates to: "push down on supply in one place, and it pops up somewhere else to meet demand" (Kurtz-Phelan 103). The balloon effect is not a result of sly disobedience, but of desperation.

Demand-Side Theory

The demand-side platform of Evo Morales advocates an increase of licit coca production in conjunction with decreases in cocaine production and trafficking. This has been proposed under the condition that the West assume responsibility for the elimination of Western use, addiction, and trafficking. The success of demand-side theories is unpromising on two accounts. For one, a demand based on addiction is particularly difficult to eradicate, especially when the targeted groups (consisting of drug addicts and traffickers) are being dealt with punitively and therefore unsustainably, since imprisonment only serves to temporarily remove the offender from participation in the cocaine trade rather than strike at the root of the problem—and fines are even less effective. Secondly, critics are skeptical of Evo Morales's promise that Bolivia will attempt to regulate coca sale to licit markets.

Turning our attention to Western eradication attempts, we find that US efforts to reduce demand take several approaches. The most prominent approach is that of criminal prohibition. According to the US Office of National Drug Control Policy, “arrests for drug abuse violations represented 11.6% of all State and local arrests reported to the FBI during 2001, with 1,586,902 drug arrests reported” (ONDCP). Criminal prohibition is a punitive treatment, thereby failing to account for the needs of the (targeted) addicts. Certain critics cite the fact that there are no cocaine-specific detoxification programs to aid recovering cocaine addicts; as Connecticut Governor Jodi Rell reported, “I was disturbed to learn that Connecticut has no established detoxification protocol for the residential treatment of substance abuse related solely to cocaine” (Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Weekly). In addition to the failure of incarceration to stem drug use, this method has contributed to a host of other problems including the break up of communities and prison overcrowding.

Furthermore, discrepancy in punishment for crack cocaine users versus cocaine powder users has ignited racially tinged controversy. With the 1986 passage of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, the concept of a mandatory minimum sentence was introduced to the American legal system, which designated the minimum number of years a drug offender would be required to serve in prison, relative to the assumed destructiveness of the specific drug in question. Under this act, crack cocaine and powdered cocaine were placed in different categories and assigned wildly disparate penalties. According to current FDA policy, manufacture, distribution, or dispensation of at least 50 grams of crack cocaine warrants a minimum of ten years imprisonment. The same penalty takes effect with 5,000 grams of powdered cocaine. Known as the “hundred to one ratio” (Marks 1), this policy implies that cocaine’s powdered form is one hundred times less “criminal” than crack cocaine. Certain rationalization is given for this discrepancy, including the greater addictive potential of crack cocaine and the medical potential of powdered cocaine. Protestors claim, however, that the significantly more severe crack penalties represent a form of structural racism because stigmas that surround the two drugs have distinctly racial associations. Crack cocaine is associated with minority populations, specifically African American and Hispanic, whereas cocaine is characterized as the “rich white man’s drug” (Alcohol and Drug Weekly). Statistics demonstrate that there have been disproportionate crackdowns on African American drug users since the institution of mandatory minimum sentences. “For drug offenses, the African American proportion of arrests increased from 24% in 1980 to 39% in 1993, even though African Americans comprise only 13% of monthly drug users” (Angeli 1).

While the West is the chief “targeted region” of demand-side plans, the Andean region has promised to do its part as well. However, the idea of regulating coca distribution to licit markets while simultaneously increasing hectareage allowed for cultivation from 12,000 to 20,000

(Ledebur 4) has been met by a skeptical response. “Despite assurances from the Bolivians that much of the increased production will be ‘industrialized’ and incorporated into such products as tea, medicine, and shampoo, some U.S. officials doubt the reliability of the government’s plans” (Gamarra 30). Simply put, licit uses of coca are not what make the crop profitable; licit coca products are sold at a much lower price and the market for these products is currently confined to Bolivia (Forero 3). Confining the market in such a way limits the sector of consumers to the smaller, relatively impoverished Bolivian population and leaves serious doubts about the economic feasibility of reliance on exclusively licit production.

The likelihood that the coca/cocaine trade will be diminished in the face of increased coca production is contingent on Morales’s second promise to increase Bolivian interdiction of cocaine refinement and trafficking. Certain officials doubt the reliability and plausibility of this undertaking, as one congressional aid in Washington characterized Morales’s policy as a “naïve, pie-in-the-sky approach to let the flower bloom but interdict the bouquet” (Forero 2). In slightly more sophisticated terms, the idea of monitoring which products are licit and illicit is virtually futile in the dense jungles with fragmented chains of command and small, informal sectors. According to Lt. Col. Julio Cruz and his Bolivian police unit, current attempts to interdict cocaine involve monitored checkpoints. However, “after this checkpoint, the police say, they have no way to know how much is diverted for illegal purposes. ‘The leaf comes out legally,’ Colonel Cruz said. ‘But once out, it goes to labs for cocaine. We cannot escort every truck to market’” (Forero 3). Furthermore, the drug-fighting team that carries out these inspections is not entirely impartial since “President Morales named a coca grower as Bolivia’s drug czar (Gamarra 28). However, many of these issues of accountability remain to be assessed. Due to the current nature of this particular analysis, the US and Bolivian governments are taking a “wait and

see" (Gordon 20) approach. One piece of historical evidence *is* available: Bolivia's Paz Zamora regime undertook a similar effort that was known as "Coca Diplomacy." This project proved licit increase and illicit decrease unfeasible (Gamarra 29). Ultimately, it is an issue of market principles: unless demand for cocaine decreases, it is illogical not to funnel the increased production of coca into the more profitable cocaine market. That being said, as long as demand is being fueled by supply, and cocaine offenders are dealt with punitively, demand has little chance of diminishing. Thus, the cycle perpetuates.

Alternative Crop Development

As discussed theoretically in the introduction, alternative crop development is the most viable place to sustainably break the coca/cocaine cycle, as it offers the necessary social and economic protection of the targeted group. First, however, a disclaimer must be inserted to dampen any unrealistic idealism that alternative crop development is an easy process. As it stands, coca is the most reliable crop (although the profits are still extremely low for coca-growing peasants). Coca has many merits as an agricultural product: it can be harvested up to six times a year, resulting in an unusually high output; and zones of cultivation span a wide range of pH and altitude levels that may not otherwise support crops. Furthermore, from a logistical standpoint, coca transportation is proportionally easier due to the light weight of dried leaves (US Congress 40). Finally, on the global market, coca enjoys an extreme Western demand without Western competition. That being said, there is positive evidence that alternative crop development would enjoy support from Andean peasants, as well as demonstrating potential in the Bolivian market.

One clarification must be made regarding the relationship between alternative crop development and coca eradication. While alternative crop development is essentially a modified

supply-side theory, it is not necessarily a modified version of supply-side *eradication*. Instead, effective alternative crop development works toward supply-side *reduction*. Despite the fact that Andean culture is historically wedded to the coca plant and small-scale cultivation, coca is not traditionally a cash crop, only assuming that position in the 1980s with the cocaine boom. Therefore, the objective of alternative development should be to *reduce* coca cultivation to its condition prior to the cocaine boom, rather than stringently enforce the “zero coca” goal of many eradication projects. Although this paper talks in terms of eradication, it is eradication of the coca/cocaine trade rather than all coca in general that I am advocating. While this statement may seem similar to Evo Morales’s call for licit coca cultivation, it diverges from Morales’s plan in two significant areas. Unlike Morales, I am not suggesting that Bolivia try to rely economically on licit coca products. Instead, my proposal predominantly advocates alternative crop development, relegating coca to traditional sectors but not eliminating it completely. Of course, this leaves many policy decisions unformulated. For instance: how much can the existence of viable alternative crops lead to an inevitable peasant switch from coca to alternatives, or to what extent should alternative development be mandated? To what extent should crop reduction be regulated? Although it is outside my realm of expertise to make these particular stipulations of alternative crop development, it is clear that alternative crop development (conducted in the least coercive way possible) is the key to breaking the dependency cycle.

To help determine how alternative development would benefit the targeted group, we must examine the limited research conducted on Andean peasant reactions to alternative development. It is commonly believed that Bolivian peasants are deeply attached to growing coca as a cash crop due to the coca plant’s importance in Bolivian culture. In fact this is a misconception—though as a supplemental crop used for traditional purposes, coca will retain its

significance in Bolivian everyday life, as a cash crop, coca receives an ambivalent response from Bolivian growers who seem much more concerned with sheer profitability. In the words of one farmer: ‘I’m willing to plant other crops if I can sell them, but if not, what’s the point?’ (McFarren). Indeed, history demonstrates that Bolivian affinity for growing coca is directly related to its profit. In 1985, alternative development became extremely popular when coca prices dropped (Léons 154). Coca-producing peasants have even expressed a desire to be rid of illegal coca production. According to Gretchen Gordon, “the communities that produce coca are well aware of the negative repercussions within the community of production for the illegal drug market” (18). What’s more, current coca unions in the Chapare often expel union members found to be producing illegal coca (18). This being said, licit coca production cannot earn a living, thereby necessitating some sort of alternative crop development.

Diversification of crops through alternative development reduces the dangers associated with monocropping, “[providing] greater security for farmers compared with drug-crop monoculture” (US Congress 7). As discussed in a previous section, monocrop dependence is economically risky as well as environmentally draining. In a study conducted by the Bolivian Ministry of Agriculture, “surveyors found that more diversified coca farmers enjoyed higher income than less diversified coca farmers. For different sub-regions of the Chapare surveyors measured household income, population and the share of coca in agricultural GDP. The survey showed that more diversified farmers earned an agricultural income of US\$373 per person, whereas the agricultural income per person among less diversified farmers was only US\$332” (De Franco 397). Ultimately, alternative crop development creates a diversification of the agricultural sector, ensuring a level of economic security. Coca’s security lies in its capacity for year-round harvesting, as mentioned. A diverse agricultural sector retains year-round crop yield

through the practical implementation of different crops that may be individually harvested at various points throughout the year. Although the yield of each diversified crop may be less than that of a monocrop, the security is priceless (US Congress 110). In addition to theoretical benefits of alternative crop development in Bolivia, research has found that there is certainly room for market expansion into these alternative sectors. Currently, Bolivia exports only 7 percent of alternative crops, which results in an annual income of only 5.6 million USD. There are potential markets for palm hearts, pineapple, banana, passion fruit, and orange crops (Gamarra). A study conducted by the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University found hearts of palm and pineapple to be the most promising alternative crops. “Hearts of palm are suited to the regions’ climate and soils and are considered of excellent quality, capable of competing on international markets...In addition to hearts of palm, pineapple has also proven to be a viable alternative crop” (Ball et al 16). In addition to reducing dependence on an illegal crop, the opportunity for diversification provided by alternative development is itself a strong benefit for Bolivia.

Understanding Failed Projects

There have been numerous attempts at alternative development. Many of them have failed due to circumstances both within and outside the control of the plans’ architects. I will examine the Agroyungas and Chapare Regional Development Program (CRDP) projects, noting failures to be a result of unfortunate circumstances and poor management. The important thing to keep in mind is that these flaws of past alternative development projects are in no way intrinsic. While flaws of supply- and demand-side eradication attempts result from their very natures as one-sided programs, every criticism of alternative development delineated in the following

section can be amended accordingly, although crafting a specific plan exceeds the limitations of this paper.

A: background

The Yungas and Chapare are the two prominent coca-producing regions in Bolivia. As signified by their names, the Agroyungas and Chapare Regional Development Program were two programs that targeted these two regions respectively. The Chapare Regional Development Program was established as early as 1983 (although it did not go into effect until 1984 due to political turmoil), while the Agroyungas project began one year later in 1985. Although both ultimately failed to provide alternative crop security, certain failures were simply a result of unfortunate occurrences. For instance, the international coffee agreement collapsed a year into the Agroyungas project, which was meant to provide alternative coffee crops to the Yungas Valley. Furthermore, an unforeseen disease known as *broca* infested 90% of crops in certain areas. More significantly, however, Agroyungas and CRDP show parallel failures as a result of their overall approach, inadequate preliminary research and planning, poor collaboration with local governments, and misappropriation of funds.

B: overall approach

From the start, the projects were structurally flawed because they did not focus on viable alternatives but rather on coca eradication and creating the illusion that alternative development projects were achieving success. The approach of Agroyungas and CRDP made alternative development subservient to the conditionality of *absolute* coca eradication. As previously discussed, “zero coca” is an unnecessarily harsh take on the goal of eradicating the coca/cocaine trade and is also incompatible with fostering the trust of peasants being asked to modify their crops. Described as a “carrot-and-stick” approach, the technique of dangling a favorable policy

such as alternative development in front of the harsh eradication policy was recognizably manipulative. The Agroyungas and CRDP policies “stipulated that the farmers agree up-front not to plant new coca fields” (Lupu 408). This directly conflicted with the fact that coca growers wanted to “eradicate only some of their existing crops, maintaining some coca for income security purposes” (Lupa 414). As a result, critics such as Ramiro Fernández, referring to alternative development as “show development” felt that alternative development projects under the will of forced eradication were not true development but actually a type of control program (Léons 150). Harry Sanabria confirms this criticism, reporting, “Alternative development programs did not have as their primary and ultimate goal to enhance living standards of the rural peasantry” (4). This is evident in the case of Agroyungas where “aid became concentrated in areas that already produced far less coca and where farmers were already far better off than those where coca was the primary source of subsistence. Of the 56 agreements Agroyungas signed, not one was in the areas of dense coca cultivation” (Léons 151), implying that the motive was to create the illusion of success instead of actually aiding those most in need. Not only were such misplaced motives damaging to the overall success of alternative development, but the resultant distrust that runs rampant in Bolivian communities is seriously crippling current attempts at alternative development.

C: inadequate knowledge and planning

As a result of inadequate research, a significant amount of misinformation was distributed. For instance, farmers under the Agroyungas program were told that if they implemented alternative coffee, they could earn “4,862 dollars more than someone growing the native Creole coffee” (Léons 158). It is unclear where this statistic came from, but it was simply false. There was also a significant lack of research into existing infrastructure in Bolivia. In an

example of particular incompetence, the CRDP invested 9,000 US dollars in the construction of a market, only to find afterward that the town already had a permanent market with 125 open stalls (Lupu 413). Many similar reports abound, telling the same story of managerial ineptitude over and over again.

From a marketing perspective, Agroyungas and CRDP failed to ensure (prior to implementation) that the specific alternative crops were promised viable market outlets, referred to as “established export channels” (Lupu). According to Madeline Barbara Léons, “marketing has always been the weak link in plans to replace coca with other crops. There has been *no* failure to identify crops that could grow well in the semi-tropics of the Yungas and the Chapare. The difficulty lies in marketing those crops and getting a good price for them.” In the CRDP, “little attention was paid to where and if farmers would be able to sell their new crops” (US Congress 86). Once again, this lack of foresight was prevalent throughout both projects.

Bolivia’s alternative development projects also failed from an agricultural perspective. Although one of alternative development’s most becoming features is its ability to provide diversification security, this was not capitalized upon in the case of Agroyungas. Agroyungas focused solely on the implementations of new coffee varieties (Léons 157). What coca had afforded, with its multiple harvest periods, was a level of year round security, as mentioned. Luckily, this particular benefit of coca can easily be replicated with alternative development as long as crops with diverse harvesting periods are selected. However, replacing one monocrop with another, as was the practice of Agroyungas, is completely counterintuitive to achieving diversification security.

D: misappropriation of funds

In allocating funds to various components of the alternative development projects, exorbitant amounts of money were funneled in to unnecessary projects, while basic infrastructural and technological needs went unfunded. The CRDP funded projects such as the expansion of a local prison, even though this undertaking clearly did nothing to facilitate alternative crop development (Lupu 413). In the Agroyungas project, alternative development was halted by a lack of funding for necessary equipment: pig production seemed promising until it was discovered that there was a lack of adequate refrigeration facilities, and the coffee strains were ineffective because fertilizer was not provided. Due to administrative failure (discussed in the subsequent section), funds were also misappropriated into the salaries of the program managers. “One former regional environmentalist said much of the funding ‘simply disappears’ because of administrative overheads and expensive consultants” (Lupu 414). Furthermore, misappropriation of funds was a direct result of CRDP’s strict eradication conditionality. While conditionality for alternative crop funding should have been based on the existence of viable land, it was instead based solely on the promise of absolute eradication. As a result, towns such as Villa Nueva that vowed to eradicate all coca crops received hefty sums of 250,000 USD despite the fact that they were not situated on agriculturally viable land and this funding was ultimately wasted.

E: implementation of projects on an administrative and political level

Politically, the projects failed to correctly mobilize local leadership for the purposes of fostering local trust and compliance, ultimately creating unsustainable leadership and a lack of networking within regions that would have been necessary for creating economies of scale. Recipients of alternative development have complained widely about the “paternalistic” and

“outsider” approach taken by the project leaders. These “mostly middle-class foreigners were headquartered in tourist accommodations in the region’s larger towns and were provided with transportation: their lifestyles were scarcely that of the farmers they were trying to work with” (Lupu 409). Furthermore, project leaders made no efforts to cooperate with local Bolivian leadership. Bolivia has one of the strongest coca unions, or *sindicados*, in the Andean region, yet alternative development projects refused to work with them because they would have threatened the auxiliary eradication agenda. Failing to tap into these “local avenues of leadership and community cooperation” (US Congress 10) was a huge mistake, resulting in chaos and unrest.

Fragmentation of networking within regions was another downfall of these projects. Part of the reason that Bolivia’s products have not been competitive is due to the fact that most Andean peasants are smallholders, and therefore cannot generate economies of scale. A solution presented by Noam Lupu suggests “pooling farmer resources across communities and working in conjunction with already existing farmer unions can help create economies of scale that can reduce transaction costs” (417). Once again, this kind of networking takes strong, sustainable community organization and leadership that was not present.

Conclusion

Alternative crop development represents the ideal starting point from which to feasibly and sustainably depart from the coca/cocaine cycle. It provides for the needs of the targeted and non-targeted regions in order to relieve the dependence that has fueled the trade for so long. The mistakes of current supply- and demand-side eradication projects are chronic. No matter how many times a drug addict is incarcerated or a coca field is forcefully eradicated, the punitive treatment of the targeted group will never bring about sustainability. On the other hand, the managerial ineptitude and unforeseen circumstances of alternative development projects—*these*

failures are in no way inevitable. Alternative crop development programs must be significantly reformed. In the words of Noam Lupu, “alternative development is not a panacea. But if lessons learned from past experiences are deployed in new, strictly socio-economic alternative development programs, we may begin to see the successful reduction of coca cultivation” (416). In practice, reforms must soften eradication conditionalities and work with local political groups to create regional cooperation and sustainable leadership that transcends the project’s time frame. Markets must be ensured, infrastructure provided, and funds allocated to necessary sources.

Although alternative crop development is the necessary starting point in efforts to break the cycle of Western/Andean dependence, it must be accompanied by broader international market reforms. While Latin America has long striven to secure equal footing in the international market economy, it remains a “peripheral” region. Despite efforts such as the push for a “New International Economic Order,” Latin America has been repeatedly denied fair minimum prices for raw material exports. Furthermore, market interests of the core nations have continually suppressed Bolivia’s ability to compete in the global market, in some cases directly undermining alternative development. For instance, “legislation pending in the US Congress that would have provided the technical assistance to Bolivian farmers to grow [alternative soybean and citrus] crops was rejected in 1991 as a result of the efforts of powerful US soybean and citrus grower lobby groups” (Léons 26). Although Western interests, especially those of the United States, seem to provide formidable obstacles against Bolivian alternative development success, we must recall that US interests also include the eradication of the coca/cocaine trade. As such, Bolivian agricultural interests can be effectively incorporated into the Western agenda, to the benefit of both regions.

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