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DRUGS, VIOLENCE AND GOVERNABILITY IN THE FUTURE SOUTH AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

South Africa has been warmly welcomed into the international community and is, in turn, open to the world. The benefits of this recently achieved status include increased investor interest, more tourism, and flourishing opportunities for South Africans overseas. There is, unfortunately, a down-side to this new openness: illicit drugs. The growing presence of illicit drugs in South Africa is indirectly a result of the dramatic increase in the number of international flights to the country, relaxed visa requirements for South Africans to travel overseas, movement of large numbers of legal and illegal people across the borders, poorly monitored borders, and ill-equipped customs. South Africa is now gaining a reputation as a 'paradise' emerging market and transit point for illicit drugs.¹

One serious result of the presence of illicit drugs in a country is the violence that usually accompanies it. The relationship between illicit drugs and violence has been documented in countries throughout the world. The level of violence ranges from fighting between rival drug dealing gangs to traffickers intimidating the highest levels of national governments.

With the level of violent crime (in most categories) in South Africa just beginning to level off, it is disturbing that South Africans may potentially be subjected to another escalation in violence as a result of illicit drugs. Illicit drug-related violence, coupled with the incidence of other violent crime can have a detrimental effect on the overall well being of society by undermining the basic tenets of citizens' expectations of a safe and secure life.

Essentially there are two broad domains of the illicit drug phenomenon: supply and demand. Supply refers to the manufacture, cultivation, production, processing, smuggling, distribution and sales of illicit drugs. Demand refers to an individual's desire to consume an illicit drug, or drug use. Violence is associated with both domains. With the increasing availability of illicit drugs in South Africa, a corresponding increase in consumption is probable. Equally important, is the corresponding increase in trafficking and dealing. Thus, it can be inferred that a likely increase in violence related to illicit drugs will follow.

The issue of illicit drugs and violence is not new. It has been debated at length by researchers, policy makers, and practitioners around the world, and the debate goes on. To probe the relationship between illicit drugs and violence in South Africa, it is necessary to begin with a theoretical assumption which will provide a common base to define and comprehend the various components of this relationship.

This paper will endeavour to explain the current and potential situation of illicit drugs and violence in South Africa based on the tripartite conceptual framework, a theory developed by an American researcher, Paul Goldstein, and then conclude with a discussion of the implications for government and policy formulation.

Additionally, the paper will summarise the results of a South African futures research study. The study attempted to determine the likely status of illicit drugs and violence in the next five to ten years based on the opinions of research experts, drug abuse prevention and treatment practitioners, officials from the SA National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA), local SANCA centres, officials from the departments of Correctional Services, Health, Justice, Safety and Security, and Welfare, and the South African Police Services (SAPS), community leaders, other experts with knowledge of drug abuse, violence, and/or crime, and a representative from the community who has no specialised knowledge of the issue.

TRIPARTITE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Goldstein developed the tripartite conceptual framework in 1985 to provide a better understanding of the relationship between illicit drugs and violence. The framework is based on three studies he conducted in New York; a study of prostitution and drug use, an ethnographic study of the economic behaviour of heroin addicts, and a study of the relationship between drug use and violence. An outline of the tripartite conceptual framework theory will be presented here, followed by a discussion of its application to South Africa.

Basically, the tripartite conceptual framework defines three dimensions to explain the relationship between illicit drugs and violence: the psychopharmacological, the economic compulsive, and the systemic. Each dimension will be discussed in detail below.

Psychopharmacological Violence

The psycho-pharmacological dimension "*suggests that some people may act out in a violent fashion or become excitable or irrational as a result of ingesting drugs.*"² It has also been found that drugs are used to increase confidence and minimise nervousness which facilitated criminal activities. Additionally, psycho-pharmacological violence is associated with withdrawal symptoms which can cause an addict to become irritable. Alcohol is a major contributor to psychopharmacological violence, but it is a licit, or legal substance and is not a significant commodity on the black market. For this reason, it will not be discussed in detail here.

A view of psychopharmacological violence from a more biological perspective was presented in *Understanding and Preventing Violence*, a report of the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences in the United States. The presentation was included in a chapter on violence associated with drug and alcohol use. The chapter was later published in two issues of *The Journal*, which are cited here. The discussion of psychopharmacological violence considered the neuro biological relationships between certain psychoactive drugs (including alcohol) and violence.

It is important to realise that each psychoactive drug produces a unique and distinct array of biological changes: their effects on the body of the user are not alike. For any drug, the changes depend on the acute dose level, the long term pattern of drug use and whether the concentrations in the brain and body are rising or falling. How these changes affect aggressive or violent behaviour depend not only on interactions with endocrine, neuro-chemical and genetic mechanisms, but also on interactions with social processes in the environment. Taking the multiple influences of these factors on the user into account, there is no basis for a blanket assertion that ingesting any psychoactive drug causes people to behave violently.³ However, psycho pharmacological violence does exist and its impact on the victims is not to be diminished.

Victims of psychopharmacological violence can be anyone, including spouses, family members, friends, neighbours, strangers, or even the drug users themselves. An episode of psychopharmacological violence can involve drug use by either the victim or the perpetrator. The violence can occur in the home, the workplace, on the street, in public gathering areas, etc.

Monitoring the incidence of psychopharmacological violence is difficult for a number of reasons. Victims often do not report the offence because they were under the influence at the

time and cannot recall the details. Or the victim reports the offence, but does not mention the perpetrator's intoxicated state. And, it is always possible that the victim is unaware of the perpetrator's intoxication, or what drug(s) the perpetrator ingested.

Goldstein also mentions that some drug use appears to lessen violent impulses. This is especially true of heroin and morphine. The use of marijuana and opiates in moderate doses was also found to temporarily inhibit violent and aggressive behaviour in animals and humans.⁴ Further evidence of marijuana having such an effect is supported by basic research conducted with human subjects ingesting the substance in a controlled setting.⁵ Additionally, if used in pure form, marijuana can reduce violence and may have potential in controlling psychiatric patients who suffer from rage attacks and episodic dyscontrol.⁶

Notwithstanding, there is anecdotal evidence that the dagga (marijuana) in South Africa, on occasion, has produced a contrary effect of paranoid psychosis. It is not clear whether there are pre-existing conditions in the user who experiences such effects, or a compound(s) inherent in the dagga grown in South Africa.

Taylor and Chermack also found that amphetamine and cocaine did not increase aggressiveness in controlled settings, although chronic use of opiates, amphetamines, marijuana, or PCP eventually alters the nervous system that disrupts social communication, which may increase the user's involvement in altercations.⁷ The Journal also reported that small doses of amphetamine, cocaine, LSD, and PCP increase competitiveness, volubility, and other socially acceptable aggressive behaviours, but are not known to increase the risk of violent behaviour.

Economic Compulsive Violence

The economic compulsive dimension of violence considers economic crime committed to obtain funds to purchase drugs for personal use that has a component of violence. Drug users who engage in economic crime are not driven to act out violently. Their sole purpose in committing a crime is to secure money for drugs. The violence is generally the result of some extraneous event(s), such as the perpetrator's nervousness, unexpected reaction of the victim(s), intervening of bystanders, and the presence of weapons on either the perpetrator and/or victim.

Heroin and cocaine are the most relevant drugs in this category, because they are expensive and used in a compulsive manner. However, a number of studies conducted in the US have shown that drug users who engage in acquisitive crime tend to select criminal activities that are non-violent, notably when non-violent alternatives exist.⁸ This is especially true of heroin addicts.⁹ Many of these studies have indicated that acquisitive crime committed by drug users frequently include prostitution, shoplifting, theft of unattended property, car break-ins, drug dealing and fraud.¹⁰

Generally, a drug user's choice of criminal activity is guided by a number of factors. These factors include the amount of cash or value of the acquired good, the likelihood of success and avoidance of capture, potential involvement of bystanders, and the urgency for currency. It is often the case that the victims of economic compulsive violence are people living in the same area as the perpetrator, or in areas of frequent drug dealing. It is not at all unusual for victims themselves to be engaged in drug dealing or other illicit activities. It is also true that the perpetrator of economic compulsive violence can also be a victim.

Systemic Violence

The systemic dimension of violence is violence that is intrinsic to the lifestyles and business methods of those in the illicit drug market. Systemic violence can occur at the simplest level of transaction, such as a dispute between two users sharing a drug and violence ensues when one thinks the other is taking more than his or her share. Goldstein provides other examples of systemic violence:

- disputes over territory between rival drug dealers;
- assaults and homicides committed within drug dealing hierarchies as a means of enforcing normative codes;

- robberies of drug dealers and the violent retaliation by the dealer or the dealer's overseer;
- elimination of informants;
- punishment for selling adulterated or fake drugs;
- punishment for not paying one's debts;
- disputes over drugs or drug paraphernalia; and
- robbery related to the social ecology of the cropping/ production areas.

Systemic violence is plainly the result of legislating the profitable economic activity of drug dealing as illegal. The consequence of such legislation is that the economic activity of drug dealing goes underground creating a black market. The function of a black market is to circumvent regulation of a proscribed economic activity.

As a result, the demanders and suppliers in a black market are denied access to established legal institutions to resolve disagreements, collect debts, control the quality of goods, or impose some order or regulation on the market. Overall, the illicit drug market is a US\$ 100 billion a year transnational industry.¹¹ Clearly, this is a lucrative economic activity, thus the competition for a share of the market at all levels is very intense. It is because of this competition for market share that the incidence of violence is so acute.

It is not unusual in the illicit drug market for entrepreneurs, or suppliers, to resort to intimidation, extortion, bribing, physical violence or whatever is necessary to maintain and expand market share. This translates into territorial disputes between rival dealers, assaults and homicides committed to enforce normative codes within a drug dealing operation, robberies of drug dealers, executions of police informants, retaliations for selling adulterated or bogus drugs, and assaults and homicides to collect drug-related debts.¹²

It is also the unfortunate situation, that the very activity of dealing in illicit drugs is a work programme. Drug dealing provides employment for those who are unemployed and under-educated. This has been observed in large cities in the US, especially in the inner city areas. For example, in the 1980s, the expansion of illicit drug sales in New York City paralleled the decrease in legitimate economic opportunities.¹³ Because of the low level of skills and resources needed to enter the market, there are many candidates. Since the dealers have little control over the bottom line price of the illicit drugs they sell, the competition for buyers is fierce.¹⁴ The successful dealer either attracts buyers from the competition or eliminates it. This leads to the competition arming themselves for protection, thus the potential for violence escalates.

Victims of systemic violence are typically those involved in the illicit drug trade, both suppliers and demanders. There are, however, victims of systemic violence who are not involved in the trade. Included here are the people caught in the crossfire of shoot outs between rival drug dealers or between drug dealers and the police. This was the case in 1993 in Washington, DC, when four people were killed during shoot-outs in separate incidents on the same day.¹⁵ One of the victims was a four year old child. There are also victims of systemic violence who are family and/or friends of drug dealers or traffickers who are physically assaulted or executed by other dealers or traffickers over distribution disputes.

Establishing the incidence of systemic violence is confounded by many factors. Victims of systemic violence, who are part of the drug market, tend not to report the crime to the police because of the potential risk of arrest for engaging in the illegal act of purchasing or selling illicit drugs. If the police insist on questioning the victim, (s)he may lie about the details or deny her or his victimisation altogether. Victims of systemic violence who are not connected with the illicit drug trade will not necessarily know the reason for being assaulted. If they do know the reason, they are often disinclined to report it to the police for fear of reprisal.

Another countenance of systemic violence is the viciousness of the violence. Hospital emergency rooms will occasionally identify distinct patterns of injury related to drug dealing such as drug runners who appear with gunshot wounds to the legs and knees.¹⁶ Another style of assault described by De La Rosa is 'pithing'. Pithing is the intentional cutting of the victim's spinal cord. This leaves the victim alive, but paraplegic. It is also not unusual for disputes between traffickers to escalate to the point that assassins are hired to kill a

competitor's entire family.

Zahn further points out the prevalence of violence within the context of the illicit drug market. Zahn suggests that *"closer attention be paid to the connection between markets for illegal goods and the overall rate of homicide violence. It seems possible, if not likely, that establishing and maintaining a market for illegal goods (booze in the 1920s and early 1930s; heroin and cocaine in the late 1960s and 1970s) may involve controlling and/or reducing the competition, solving disputes between alternate suppliers or eliminating dissatisfied customers. The use of guns in illegal markets may also be triggered by the constant fear of being caught either by a rival or by the police. Such fear may increase the perceived need for protection, i.e., a gun, thus may increase the arming of these populations and a resulting increased likelihood of use. For the overall society this may mean a high homicide rate."*¹⁷

Of the three dimensions of the tripartite conceptual framework characterising the relationship of illicit drug use to violence, it appears that in the US most illicit drug related violence is systemic.¹⁸ This is not surprising, since violence has historically been associated with the trafficking and dealing of illicit drugs, in particularly heroin¹⁹ and cocaine.²⁰ It is still unsettling to realise that the illicit drug trade is the leading cause of death by homicide in the US.²¹ In Colombia, murders related to the drug business are the primary cause of death among men ages 20 and 45.²²

TRIPARTITE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

The application of the tripartite conceptual framework to the South African situation is difficult. In the US a significant body of research supports the relevance of the tripartite concept in explaining illicit drug-related violence. In South Africa, research or monitoring initiatives do not exist to sufficiently explain the application of the tripartite concept to the situation in the country. This clearly demonstrates the need to develop mechanisms for monitoring the incidence of violence in South Africa that is associated with illicit drugs to at least provide some insight into the problem. To compensate for this shortcoming, the explanation presented here will rely on press clippings, research conducted on related topics, and anecdotal information.

With regard to the psychopharmacological dimension of violence in South Africa, the National Trauma Research Programme at the Medical Research Council (MRC) conducted a surveillance research of trauma units in Cape Town and found clear evidence between alcohol use and violence-related injuries.²³ Illicit drug use was not included in the study. However, the MRC research group plans to conduct a similar study, but on a pilot basis, investigating injuries related to the use of illicit drugs. The pilot study will determine the feasibility of collecting data on an annual basis to study the incidence of psychopharmacological violence and for inclusion in the South African Community Epidemiology Network of Drug Use.

A study of attitudes towards alcohol and drug abuse in an urban black community in KwaZulu-Natal found that respondents, when asked how drugs and alcohol use cause trouble in the community, identified health problems first and violence second.²⁴ In support of this, a social worker at People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) commented that *"[s]urprisingly, substance abuse plays a minimal role to 'women abuse' and the most dangerous abusers are invariably non-drinkers or non-drug takers."*²⁵ In a review of the medical records of 25 patients in drug abuse treatment, who had histories of neglecting or abusing children, it was found that there were reasons other than the use of drugs that accounted for the neglect or abuse.²⁶ Additionally, a psychologist at a treatment programme in Johannesburg commented in a recent article that *"[i]t is too simplistic to say smoking crack makes you violent. Smoking crack certainly makes you manic but the violence stems from the dealing and procuring of the drug."*²⁷ Essentially, the psychologist has recognised that violence is associated with crack cocaine, but has observed that the violence is connected with trafficking and dealing, in other words systemic violence.

With regard to the economic compulsive dimension of violence, the actual incidence of such violence in South Africa is probably low, although there have been incidents. One example was the attack on Mr Justice Arthur Chaskalson in August 1996 in Sandton.²⁸ During the

attack Mr Chaskalson's credit card was stolen. The card was eventually found along with US travellers cheques and savings books in a Sea Point house during a drug raid. It could be assumed that stolen property in a house that the police raid for drugs, landed there through an exchange for drugs. The actual transaction of stolen property for drugs could have occurred almost anywhere, and the more valuable property gone to a higher level dealer or trafficker.

Economic compulsive violence is usually connected to cocaine and heroin use, since both substances are ordinarily expensive and used in a compulsive manner. Currently, the prevalence of heroin use in South Africa appears minimal while the prevalence of cocaine use is likely increasing. The increase in cocaine use could inevitably lead to a noticeable escalation in economic compulsive violence, although a monitoring system to reliably measure such a change is not yet in place.

The systemic dimension of violence seems the most appropriate in explaining the threat of illicit drug-related violence in South Africa. To illustrate more fully the application of the systemic dimension, the following premise is proposed which defines the difference between the trafficking and dealing of illicit drugs.

Generally, dealing refers to the activity engaged in by individuals who sell illicit drugs directly to the consumers. This would include selling to strangers from street corners, clubs, shebeens, and hotels, people selling illicit drugs from their home to people they know, juveniles acting as runners or go-betweens, and those who package the illicit drugs in amounts for personal consumption. Trafficking encompasses the larger scale distribution of illicit drugs. That is the movement of the illicit drugs from the source(s) to the point of local distribution to the consumers. Another way of viewing this distinction between dealers and traffickers is to think of traffickers as wholesale and dealers as retail operations.

DRUG TRAFFICKERS, VIOLENCE, OTHER GOVERNMENTS AND SOUTH AFRICA

The trafficking of illicit drugs is creating consternation among governments around the world, particularly the trafficking of cocaine and heroin which are the more lucrative commodities of the illicit drug trade. Robert Gelbard, US Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs commented during a visit to South Africa that "[t]he rapid globalisation of the drug trade over the past decade virtually assures that no country is immune to the threat. The increasing ability of traffickers to market drugs anywhere, anytime is part of the danger. To succeed, traffickers must be confident they can operate with minimal or no government interference, and that they can convert cash into tangible assets - two conditions that drive them to penetrate and corrupt political and economic institutions. And the deeper this penetration sinks, the more at risk is the very governability of the state."²⁹

The outcome of the trafficking threat Gelbard describes, appears to have occurred in South Africa under the former Government. The trafficker was confident that it could operate with no government interference and could convert cash into tangible assets. What is so startling about the trafficker in this instance is that it appears to have been the South African Government itself. In the 14 February 1997 issue of the *New Nation*, Jennifer Wild, an advocate based in KwaZulu-Natal, reported that "*[k]ey elements in the South African military, police, and foreign affairs department of the apartheid regime have created an organised crime syndicate, the commodities of which appear to be nuclear technology and components, arms and weapons, drugs, ivory and rhino horn.*"³⁰

Moreover, the disclosure of the Steyn report suggests, at the very least, that prohibited narcotics have been a commodity in covert apartheid operations.³¹ It is conceivable to interpret this revelation to mean that the former Government of South Africa was competing with international traffickers for a share of the illicit drug market, and in doing so, engaged in the same trafficker methods of doing business, such as corrupting political and economic institutions. Thus, while one hand of the former Government was involved in drug trafficking, at the same time it slapped away the other hand and prevented it to investigate the activities. It is a curious, but dangerous notion that members of a ruling government would attempt to corrupt and intimidate other members of the same government with the people having to

suffer the consequences.

Major General W Grove, chief, Specialist Units of the SAPS also raised concerns regarding traffickers and criminal organisations in a presentation at the Security '94 conference at the University of Pretoria. *"The growing capacity of traffickers and criminal organisations to operate internationally has become a real treat to the socio economic and political order of every country in the world. The illicit drug trade besides being one of the most dangerous enterprises in the world, is also one of the most corrupt."*[32](#)

Traffickers have the financial resources and the firearms to corrupt and terrorise even the best intentioned officials. This is exemplified by a corruption scandal in Switzerland. The husband of the Swiss minister of Justice, Elisabeth Kopp, the leading candidate for prime minister of the Swiss Federation was alleged to have participated in a scheme to launder funds for the Medellin cartel and the Turkish mafia.[33](#)

In his keynote address to the joint Southern African Development Community and European Union Conference, Justice Minister Dullah Omar warned that drug lords and organised crime could become powerful enough to influence Southern African governments. *"They are setting up big businesses through their sophisticated schemes, they are preparing to get appointed to high-profile positions and they have the proceeds of their deeds to finance any project they want to."*[34](#)

Additionally, Grove noted that the majority of producer and consumer countries involved in the illicit drug trade, are characterised by social disorder. Such disorder creates mass anxiety among the people in the society which can lead to political consequences. There is also the susceptibility of state institutions to corruption and intimidation which ultimately undermines public faith in democratic institutions. Finally, as a consequence of social disorder in a society, the political authority of the state is compromised by the development of activities beyond the government's control. This problem can be provoked by the existence and involvement of revolutionary and insurgency movements.

The process described by Grove appears to be under way in South Africa. South Africa is both a producer (cultivating and exporting dagga) and consumer country. South Africa is experiencing social disorder as demonstrated by increasing vigilantism. Though there is no evidence of illicit drug-related corruption among senior level South African officials, it does appear that low-level corruption may occur at the border areas allowing smuggling activities.[35](#)

However, in Cape Town, *"... police corruption is of major proportion according to SANAB, and it is believed that some of this corruption has stymied the success of some of their investigations."*[36](#) Baynham suggests that drug dealers have already infiltrated SAPS ranks and government institutions, and are currently assisting the international organised crime syndicates and trafficking cartels by providing legal documents and permits. This corruption of law-enforcement officials has serious ramifications for national security, with the consequence that their capacity for effective action is undermined, and individuals and groups become inclined to resort to vigilante tactics.[37](#)

This could well explain the involvement of People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD). PAGAD is an organisation developed by people residing in the Rylands/Gatesville community in Cape Town in October 1995. Their motivation for organising the group was to root out gangsterism, drug dealing and the associated violence that was overwhelming the community. The police were seen as ineffective and disinterested in the community, which ultimately left the responsibility for policing to the residents.[38](#)

Activities PAGAD engaged in to meet their objectives included mass demonstrations in front of the houses of alleged drug dealers, attempts to intimidate the dealers to leave the community, harassment of potential drug buyers, and high profile marches in public areas of Cape Town. It was during the demonstrations that the former Hard Livings gang leader Rashied Staggie was killed. These activities occasionally brought about confrontations with the SAPS, but eventually PAGAD leaders initiated meetings with SAPS and the Department

of Justice.

Since the inception of PAGAD, numerous community action groups have emerged across the country. Another group in Cape Town launched a Saturday protest with 2 000 Muslims demonstrating against drugs, drug laws and gangsterism. Chants from this group included "*No to drugs. Kill the merchants*", and the demonstrators also warned they would take the law into their own hands as the Government was not doing enough to combat crime.³⁹ This is further evidence of Griffith's point that when the public's trust in law enforcement is undermined, there is a movement to vigilantism.

The outcome of a survey of greater Cape Town, conducted by the Public Opinion Service of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) lends additional support to Griffith's assumption of groups becoming inclined to vigilante actions. The results of the survey have found the majority of respondents support citizen participation in activities which are illegal, dangerous and pose a serious threat to the rule of law and democracy. When asked about PAGAD, a large majority, 59 per cent, felt that PAGAD was very effective thus far and could be effective in future.⁴⁰

On the topic of law enforcement, most of the respondents (55%) disapprove of and are dissatisfied with the performance of SAPS and the courts (52%). There was a widespread perception among many of the respondents (75%) of at least some corruption and collusion with criminals among police officers, and to a lesser extent (52%) among judges and prosecutors.

On the trafficking front in South Africa, Giorgio Giacomelli, executive director of the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) described South Africa at a Johannesburg media briefing as almost a laboratory example of what drug traffickers find attractive for business. The country is conveniently located between the main drug producing areas of South East Asia and South America, has a terrific infrastructure of airports and harbours and attracts investment from all over the world. All these create a highly attractive market for the influx of drugs.⁴¹

It is already known that international organised crime syndicates and trafficking cartels have discovered that South Africa is ready for exploitation. And it is fairly well documented that they have been exploiting the poorly monitored borders in South Africa, inadequate customs control at airports and harbours, and recruiting South Africans who are looking to get rich quickly or who are naive, to move illicit drugs and other contraband in and out of the country. Desperate and unemployed South Africans are being lured by syndicates with promises of easy money into becoming drug couriers.⁴²

In July 1996, Assistant Commissioner C J D Venter of SAPS estimated that at that date there were 136 drug syndicates, 112 vehicle-related syndicates, 85 commercial/fraud rackets, and 171 diamond and gold-related syndicates in South Africa.⁴³ The syndicates and cartels are attracted by the conditions generated by a sudden boom in free trade on the international front, the movement (legally and illegally) of large numbers of people across the borders and an inadequate bureaucracy, ill-prepared to cope with the new challenges.⁴⁴

South Africa emerged as a major transshipment point for trafficking in the early 1990s after the transition to democracy ended international isolation. Cocaine from Latin America transits through to Europe, and heroin from the Far East passes through South Africa on to Europe and the US.⁴⁵ During the political transition in the country, Chinese triads saw South Africa as 'virgin' territory and came to exploit it.⁴⁶ According to SAPS Colonel Raymond Dowd, the triads specialise in smuggling abalone, drugs, prostitution, credit card fraud, extortion, ivory smuggling, the importation of illegal immigrants and import/export tax evasion.⁴⁷

Special Agent Mary Turner, a unit chief for the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) commented at a DEA training seminar held in South Africa that "*[h]istorically countries undergoing political and social change fall victim to an upsurge in drug trafficking as drug lords seize their opportunities to expand into new markets. Depending on how South Africa develops in the future drugs are going to appear on the market in even larger quantities.*"⁴⁸

South Africa, along with Namibia, Kenya, Swaziland, Angola, Tanzania and Uganda are now on the major cocaine trafficking routes. Additionally, Colombian cocaine drug lords are in the process of moving their operations into South Africa which allows them easier access to Europe. More recently, the cartels have established contacts with Asian and Far Eastern producers to use South Africa as a conduit for smuggling hash, heroin, and opium to Europe and the US.⁴⁹

Experts at the Centre for the Analysis and Interpretation of Crime Information of SAPS, attribute the relative ease with which illicit drugs are moved across the borders to insufficient border patrols and an internal capital flow that makes drug smuggling profitable.

Both dealing and trafficking of illicit drugs are strongly linked with violence, but it is trafficking that appears to present the greatest threat to South Africa. More specifically, the routine business operations by traffickers to consolidate their market and protect their interests could potentially jeopardise the sovereignty of the free and democratically elected Government of South Africa. The incursion could come about rather subtly through bribery, corruption and the infiltration of key government institutions with allies of the traffickers, or through a campaign of violence launched by narco-terrorists contracted by traffickers.

Narco-terrorism is a new phenomenon that came about because of stricter legislative and law enforcement measures around the world. The phenomenon of narco-terrorism developed mainly because the traffickers took advantage of available structures and training of terrorist or revolutionary groups, which, in turn, were attracted to the large amount of money offered. The increased use of violence by drug producers and traffickers against drug control initiatives, in addition to the dealing of drugs for arms and the financing of terrorist groups, are now seen to pose extreme threats to the security and stability of nations.⁵⁰ In *The Drug Trade as a National and International Threat*, a Centre for the Analysis and Interpretation of Crime Information document, narco terrorism is defined as "*[t]he real or potential ability of drug traffickers to impair a government's ability to enforce and maintain its authority, be it for financial gain and/or ideologically inspired aims.*"⁵¹

There is compelling relevance of this phenomenon for South Africa. At a press conference, Justice Minister Dullah Omar spoke about a Third Force involved in activities aimed at undermining the government and South Africa's democracy. He further commented that "*[w]hen at high levels there is participation in crimes of gun running, drug-trafficking, gangsterism – and when investigations into violence are undermined, evidence is prevented from coming to court and cases are derailed – I think there's sufficient evidence of Third Force Activity.*"⁵²

In South Africa, it is believed that there are at least five extremist groups operating and it is known that they have established an underground network.⁵³ Members of these groups have been arrested for possession of large amounts of firearms and attempting to break into ammunition stores at a military base which indicates their interest in acquiring arms. While there is no apparent evidence, it is quite conceivable that these groups are linked to the Third Force and/or to international traffickers or criminal organisations. Such a linkage would provide these groups more funds to further their cause and additional access to firearms.

As mentioned earlier, Grove discussed the problem of the existence or involvement of insurgency movements in provoking social disorder which can interfere with government's political authority. This linkage concept of a Third Force with right-wing groups also fits the Centre for the Analysis and Interpretation of Crime Information's view of the aim of narco-terrorism which is to impair government's ability to maintain its authority. This observation is particularly relevant when considering that a plot was discovered to assassinate Gauteng premier Tokyo Sexwale for his stand against drugs.⁵⁴

DRUG DEALERS AND VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Up until this point, the discussion of systemic violence in South Africa has focused on trafficking, but violence is also strongly linked to drug dealing. One important concern about the dealing of illicit drugs and associated violence is the impact on local communities, as

touched upon in the earlier discussion of PAGAD. Some of the problems confronted by PAGAD in Cape Town are occurring elsewhere. In Eersterust, Pretoria, there have been six gang-related killings in a two month period over competition for the Mandrax market.⁵⁵ Recently a 'war' erupted between local gangsters and Nigerian drug dealers in the Hillbrow and Berea areas of Johannesburg.⁵⁶

In the Hillbrow and Berea area over a two month period, 28 Nigerians were kidnapped, and in the past year ten Nigerians have died in street killings. In response the Nigerians are reported to have been setting up heavily armed mobile response teams to protect key dealers. "We are worried that the criminals are going to fight it out on the streets," commented Senior Superintendent David Botha of the Hillbrow police. "If it comes to that, innocent people will die in the crossfire."⁵⁷

The majority of Nigerians in South Africa are here legally and are not involved in the illicit drug trade, but as a result of a few, the Nigerian community is wrongly seen as the source of the drug problem. This situation has critical ramifications for the always changing illicit drug trade.

Accepting that the Nigerians are currently less than welcome in South Africa, an interesting evolution in the South African illicit drug dealing market can be hypothesised. It can be assumed that the Nigerians who deal drugs will keep a low profile, but will still be at risk for extortion, robbery or attacks by South African gangsters and arrest by police. It is also unlikely that they would go to the police to report any transgression that has been committed by the gangsters. Given the ease with which gangsters can rob and extort the Nigerian drug dealers without interference from the police, the incidence would probably escalate over time, thus increasing the Nigerian dealers' liability for profit loss to the traffickers and criminal organisations supplying the drugs.

This liability comes about through the robbery of dealers, of both drugs and cash. The confiscation of drugs and money by the police is usually calculated as a cost of doing business and the loss usually falls within an acceptable range, but the additional loss to gangsters is out of range. The Nigerian drug dealers will likely arm themselves for protection, which could lead to violent confrontations on the street with the gangsters, such as described in above by Senior Superintendent Botha. Nevertheless, one consequence that the Nigerians face and not the South African gangsters, aside from incarceration, is deportation, which is another liability the traffickers must contend with.

Applying a basic business principle, the international traffickers and criminal organisations supplying the drugs, several of which are Nigerian, must protect their profit margins. It is in their best interest to conduct more business directly with South Africans rather than local Nigerians. Because of uncertain employment opportunities in the country and the potential to make large amounts of money, many South Africans will be attracted. This is a point recognised by Superintendent Peter Buchner, head of the East London SANAB, who commented about the high unemployment figure in this country and how drug trafficking is quick and easy money.⁵⁸

The movement to use South Africans has already begun resulting in West Africans being used less as couriers to Europe and southern Africa, and ordinary South Africans, of either sex and age 20 to 60, who are in need of spare cash replacing them.⁵⁹ A downside for South Africans going overseas as couriers is the risk of getting caught and facing harsh sentences, which include death and life imprisonment.⁶⁰

Among the advantages of using South Africans, is that they are citizens and can travel freely in and out of the country. South Africans also have the necessary identification to open bank accounts and to undertake complex financial transactions which can facilitate the laundering of drug profits without arousing suspicion. Lastly, South Africans who engage in drug dealing could well have grown up together in the same communities as some of the officers of the SAPS. They could have gone to the same schools, had the same friends, and played the same sports. The Nigerian dealers cannot readily approach an SAPS officer with the aim of corrupting him or her, but a fellow South African possibly, known to the officer, may have a much better chance.

Continuing with this hypothesised evolution of the drug market, after South African gangsters take over the local dealing of cocaine and heroin from the Nigerians, the next phase for them is to move up through the trafficking hierarchy. To move into the ranks of trafficking requires a certain level of expertise which can be learned as one advances, although there are already South Africans who have the expertise in trafficking acquired from distributing dagga. With some refinement, this expertise is easily transferable to the more sophisticated trafficking of cocaine and heroin.

Additionally, South Africans who have successfully worked as couriers can use their knowledge to facilitate trafficking activities. Eventually, South African trafficking syndicates operating internationally will emerge. These new syndicates will nonetheless have to compete on two fronts to sustain their existence. They will need to compete with other international syndicates and criminal organisations, but in most instances will reach a co-operative agreement for some share of the market. More importantly, the South African syndicates must compete with up and coming syndicates at home in order to maintain dominance. The competition with the up and coming syndicates in South Africa will not likely be resolved with negotiated agreements, but rather lay the ground for ongoing violence between the various syndicates and police. Although ultimately, South Africa could overtake Nigeria as the trafficking centre of Africa and South African trafficking syndicates could join the ranks of the most notorious in the world.

Once some semblance of stability is established among the South African syndicates, the question arises of how much influence they will have with the Government. Will South Africa be subjected to an experience similar to the one in Colombia cited below, despite having a more politically peaceful government?

In the 1980s, the Medellin Cartel, which controlled the world cocaine market wanted the Colombian government to end an extradition treaty with the US. The Cartel launched an assault against the Government to force the change and in the process killed politicians, members of the judiciary, and government officials who opposed their agenda.⁶¹ After several murders and assassinations, the Colombian Government ultimately abandoned the treaty and set up a programme whereby traffickers turned themselves in to serve relatively short sentences in prisons that were more like hotels.

Still continuing with the hypothesised evolution in the illicit drug market, on the local level, with the high unemployment in the country and the observed success of the up and coming South Africans in the drug market, there will likely be great interest in entering the market from individuals who would otherwise not get involved. This a problem faced in the war on drugs, the hero-status afforded to dealers in some communities.⁶² This surge of interest in dealing will also come from immigrants in the country, legally or otherwise. The situation of large numbers of street level dealers competing for the market is now a reality, and the conditions are set for the potential of violence at the levels seen in the US and Colombia. As Major-General Venter commented, "*South Africa could face gang wars similar to America's ...*"⁶³

DIRECTIONS FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT

After this attempt to explain the current and potential situation of illicit drugs and violence in South Africa, the next step is to discuss the implications for policies to minimise or at least control the violence related to illicit drugs. The discussion will be in the context of supply and demand reduction. The rationale for defining the context in such a manner is that it is the supply and demand of illicit drugs that drives the violence. As mentioned earlier, supply refers to the dealing and trafficking of illicit drugs and demand to an individual's consumption.

The Government must confront the looming problem of illicit drug-related violence, and the problem of illicit drugs, urgently. This is not something that will go away on its own. If left unattended, the problem will fester and manifest itself throughout society. When supply and distribution conduits are well developed, class and other social factors have diminished significance in predicting the onset and spread of drug use.⁶⁴ Illicit drug use will pervade all spheres of society. The use will no longer be confined to easily identified subgroups. Government's response to the drug problem, thus far, has been fragmented and poorly

funded with no co-ordination between reactive and proactive programmes.⁶⁵

The large trafficking organisations have vast resources at their command and an almost unlimited capacity to corrupt. The more entrenched the drug trafficking organisation, the better its chances to corrupt. Such corruption has crept into the highest levels of the governments in Colombia and Mexico. The reality is that the drug trade will press at every opportunity, since its survival depends upon the right combination of government impotence, neglect, and complicity.⁶⁶

The main goals of any strategy to address the problem of illicit drugs and violence is to reduce the supply and diminish the demand for illicit drugs. To take on drug-related violence effectively, a multidimensional approach, demanding multi-professional assistance is the answer.⁶⁷ The approach of regarding drug production and distribution exclusively as a law enforcement issue has not stopped or even slowed down drug use.⁶⁸ In other words, there should be a close relationship between all parties involved in the control of drug trafficking, the treatment of drug abusers, as well as those involved in research and law enforcement. This collaboration must be based on the collective and individual responsibility, direct or indirect, of each party or actor involved in the prevention of drug abuse.⁶⁹

Quite obviously, the Government must give illicit drugs top priority. As a start, the National Crime Prevention Strategy should be amended to include provisions addressing demand and supply reduction efforts appropriate to the departments of Correctional Services, Justice, Safety and Security, Welfare, and the South African Police Services, with the Department of Welfare taking the lead. Demand reduction is typically translated into prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes. Supply reduction programmes usually cover law enforcement initiatives directed at dealers, traffickers, and on occasion buyers of illicit drugs, and interdiction.

Next, the Government should have a national drug master plan. Such a plan would enable Government to summarise national policies, define priorities and assign responsibilities, and include drug abuse control measures in the general framework of the country's social and economic development programme.⁷⁰ A co-ordinating body is clearly needed to implement a national plan. Ideally, this body would have a full-time head and a secretariat. It would have fully staffed sections dealing with interdiction, prevention, treatment, research and evaluation, and policy.⁷¹ This co-ordinating body would have the authority at the presidential level to monitor all departments to ensure the implementation of drug control strategies devised by the body. Additionally, the co-ordinating body would be guided by regular input from the local and provincial level governments, communities, non-government organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), and professional associations.⁷²

With regard to communities, little attention has been given to establish the community and social control necessary to intervene effectively in the processes that determine the continuing existence of drug trafficking, use and abuse.⁷³ For this reason it is critical that, in formulating prevention policy and strategies on controlling drug abuse in South Africa, communities are involved in the design and implementation of indigenised and culturally relevant community-based prevention and education programmes. In addition, it is important that the human, technical and financial resources are made available to ensure that the CBOs are empowered and equipped to undertake prevention and education programmes.⁷⁴ Designing and implementing prevention programmes that are acceptable and accessible to those targeted cannot be overstated.⁷⁵

The Drug Advisory Board of the Department of Welfare has explored some aspects of the co-ordinating activities, but the Board itself does not have the appropriate composition, resources or powers to take on the implementation.⁷⁶ The Drug Advisory Board was established under The Prevention and Treatment of Drugs Dependency Act, 1992, to advise the Minister of Welfare on issues of drug and alcohol abuse. The Board could also plan, co-ordinate and promote measures relating to the prevention of drug abuse and the treatment of persons dependent on drugs. It can also plan and recommend to the Minister any research relating to the abuse of drugs and arrange conferences.⁷⁷ The Drug Advisory Board, unfortunately, has been hampered by a lack of funds and government recognition.

For Government to develop effective strategies for the prevention and control of illicit drug-related violence, it is necessary to have insight into the causes, correlates, and consequences of the phenomenon. Research plays a critical role in this task by assessing the nature and extent of the problem, formulating scientific, technical, and informational bases for relevant public policies, and evaluating interventions and initiatives.

For instance, it is difficult to ascertain with any degree of confidence the actual fluctuation in the supply of illicit drugs in South Africa. Most estimates are based on SAPS seizure figures which can reflect a change in the amount or type of illicit drugs coming in, or through the country, or the figures could indicate that the SAPS has become more or less effective in finding the drugs. Based on the South African Narcotic Bureau (SANAB) data, Neels Venter estimates that only about ten to fifteen per cent of all drugs coming in or transiting through the country are confiscated.⁷⁸ However, these statistics are totally inadequate, and it is not possible to determine the full extent of the drug problem in South Africa by relying on quantities of drugs seized annually and estimates of what is not. That is looking at the drug problem from the supply side only.⁷⁹

It was found by the Research and Statistics Directorate of the British Government Home Office that changes in drug seizures do not necessarily imply a similar change in the prevalence of illicit drugs. The numbers of seizures and offenders dealt with are both affected by changes in the amount, direction, and effectiveness of enforcement efforts and by changes in recording procedures.⁸⁰

What is needed in South Africa is the establishment of a valid and reliable surveillance system for monitoring the nature and extent of drug abuse in the country and the various risk factors.⁸¹ A surveillance study of the use of illicit drugs among members of the general population supplemented with the SAPS drug confiscation figures would render a much more detailed picture of the situation for all segments of society in the country. Currently, there is no ongoing surveillance system to monitor substance use trends in South Africa.⁸² The Mental Health and Substance Abuse Division of the MRC, however, has recently launched the South African Community Epidemiological Network of Drug Use (SACENDU). SACENDU is part of a larger substance abuse initiative being co-ordinated by the South African Alliance for the Prevention of Substance Abuse (SAAPSA). The objective of SACENDU is to develop a network of local stakeholders in the drug abuse area to share information and data about drug use trends in a particular community. SACENDU is operating in Cape Town and development is under way for implementation in Durban.⁸³ Additionally, there are plans to expand SACENDU to Johannesburg and SADC countries.

SACENDU would ideally complement a national epidemiological study conducted annually that is scientifically valid and reliable, and draws a truly representative sample of the South African population. The study would be scientifically designed and based on a representative sample of the population. The benefits of such a study would include identifying the demographics of drug users and their patterns of illicit drug use. And, because of the ongoing nature of such a study, emerging drug use trends could be determined, the appearance of new illicit drugs catalogued, and the impact of various initiatives and interventions directed at drug abuse evaluated. The data provided by such a study are useful for planning prevention and treatment initiatives, devising law enforcement strategies and for developing government policy.

Very few national epidemiological studies have been conducted on substance abuse in South Africa, and some of the epidemiological research that has been conducted has been unco-ordinated and tends to have taken place in an ad hoc manner.⁸⁴ It has also been noted that detailed national baseline data regarding drug intake among South African youth are lacking.⁸⁵ Furthermore, matters are complicated by the fact that the longitudinal and multifaceted information needed for effective prevention of drug-related problems in South Africa is largely lacking.⁸⁶ There is a general insufficiency of knowledge on substance abuse. Research must be prioritised within communities and more funds allocated.⁸⁷ The lack of scientific research on drug use in schools has resulted in considerable speculation as to the reasons for drug use among pupils.⁸⁸ It is critical that alcohol and drug abuse prevention

programmes should be research driven, an aspect which does not receive the attention it deserves from the majority of service organisations.[89](#)

Nonetheless, to study trends and patterns of drug abuse in South Africa is to review customs, values, cultural differences and mores. If anything, with its mix of different community groups, different cultural values and extreme differences in socio-economic development, it presents a formidable task in South Africa.[90](#)

SOUTH AFRICAN FUTURES RESEARCH STUDY

The South African futures research study is not a substitute for an epidemiological surveillance system, or other studies of drug use, but instead is a policy research initiative to provide direction to Government to formulate policy in a more proactive manner. It would allow Government to move away from a reactive mode to confront illicit drug problems and to rather have strategies in place ready to implement as indications of the problems are first observed.

A futures research study relies on the perceptions of participants about what future events may occur and their interaction. The South African futures research study is based on questionnaires completed by some thirty stakeholders in the field of illicit drugs, and a member of the community, who were asked to assess the conditional probabilities of possible events related to illicit drugs and violence that can occur in five to ten years. The study design involved two rounds of questionnaires.

Questionnaire A was submitted to all participants with the objective of creating an initial bank of possible events for use with Questionnaire B. Questionnaire B was developed based on the responses to Questionnaire A, the bank of initial events, and it consisted of two parts. Part one examined the cross-impact of each pair of future events. Twenty-nine future events, derived from the responses elicited from Questionnaire A, were evaluated. Specifically, the participants were asked to evaluate the likelihood of each of the 29 events occurring in five to ten years. The participants evaluated the future events by assuming one of the events will occur in five to ten years and then assigning a score of 0 to 10 to indicate the probability for each of the other 28 events co-occurring. The process is repeated for all 29 future events. Part two probed the steps Government could take in 1997 to anticipate the illicit drug situation in five to ten years in South Africa. Participants were again asked to evaluate the likelihood for each of the 29 future events occurring in five to ten years, but this time assuming a specific action or step Government will take in 1997 in anticipation of the future events. For analysis purposes a dataset of 50 000 observations (distinct futures) was created using a Monte Carlo simulation algorithm and the convergence of one scenario is described by means of classical statistical inference techniques.

'Monte Carlo' is the name of a technique that includes random chance in the forecast by including random sampling. It is often used in operations research in the analysis of problems that cannot be modelled in closed form. In a Monte Carlo simulation, the values of independent variables are selected randomly and the equations in which these variables appear are run to achieve a single result. The process is repeated many times, each time with a new random selection of the values of the independent variables. This process produces a range of results of the dependent variables. In this study, the range of random values was defined by the variance in experts' opinions on probabilities that one drug-related event will trigger another.

An important finding of the analysis shows the convergence of several events to structure one likely scenario. The most likely scenario chain that emerged was determined on the basis of probabilities that each future event will trigger any other future event. The 'increase in illicit drug use' was chosen as the first event in the chain and the scenario is compiled under the assumption that the desired resolution is the 'decrease in illicit drug use'.

Beginning with the 'increase in illicit drug use' event, the chain then goes to 'confrontation with dealers intensifies', continuing with 'political and community leaders against drugs' and 'decrease in illicit drug supply', and ending at the 'decrease in illicit drug use' event (see chart on page 11).

The outcome of the analysis of Questionnaire B, Part two, 'the steps Government could take in 1997 ...' identified five items that had a major impact on the 'confrontation with dealers intensifies' event:

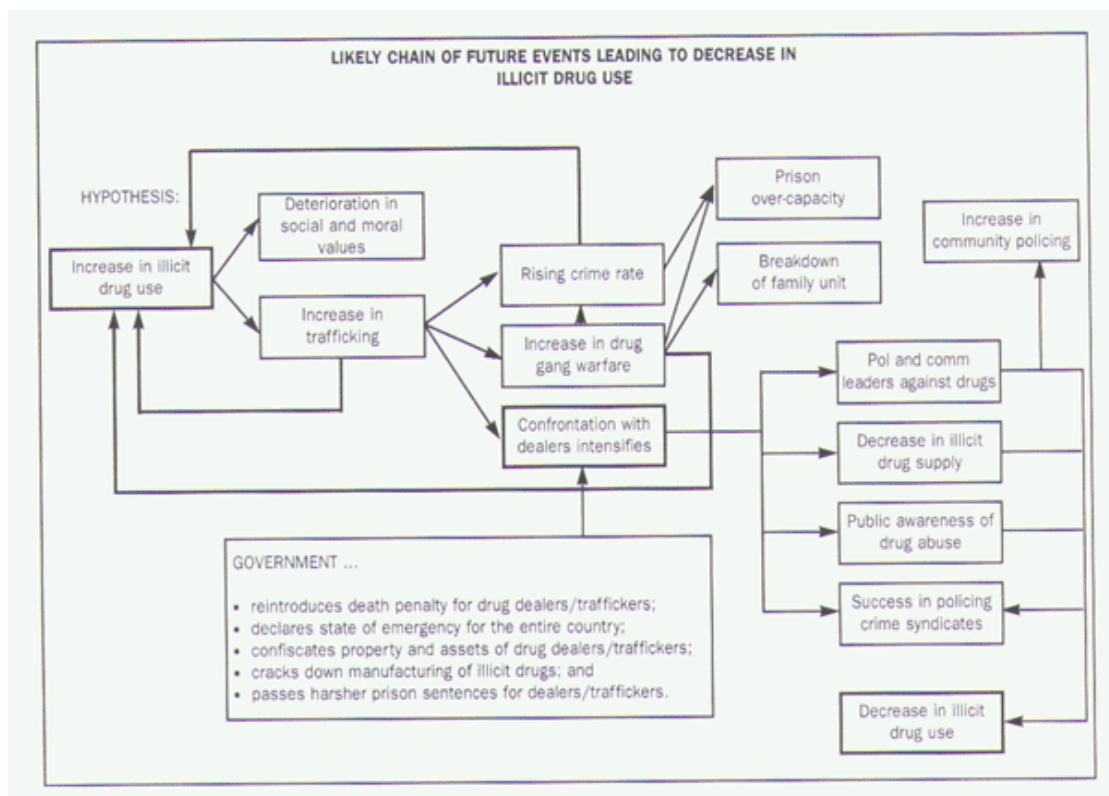
- reintroduction of the death penalty for drug dealers/traffickers;
- declaration of a state of emergency for the entire country;
- confiscation of property and assets of drug dealers/traffickers;
- crack down on the manufacturing of illicit drugs; and
- passage of harsher prison sentences for traffickers/dealers.

The complete chain is presented in a flow chart format. The more detailed results of the study are presented in a supplemental document.

It is important to note that not all of the possible future events will 'chain' all possible events. A number of scenarios will be exhausted before reaching the desired resolution. One pessimistic scenario might have most of the 'undesirable' events triggering one another, creating a negative synergetic effect and ending in an indefinite loop. Increased use of illicit drugs causes increase in trafficking, which causes increased use of illicit drugs.

The same way, a marginal number of future scenarios might have a relatively short path in which the increase in the use of illicit drugs triggers swift action from authorities and offers an immediate resolution. The likelihood of these optimistic scenarios seems to be hidden behind the fact that the increase in the use of illicit drugs is not apparent *per se* (other effects are) and that the premise for any action coming from Government is a critical amount of attention from the public.

The 'main stream' of 50 000 simulated future scenarios offers five global elements which are outlined in the flow chart and defined below.



Increase in Illicit Drug Use

This is hardly an event in a strict sense. The use of illicit drugs is difficult to measure, and there has been no reliable research conducted in the country. Even if a comprehensive research project is performed now, it would be only one 'snapshot' that does not capture the

developing aspects of the situation (trends, development of the specific markets related to different illicit drugs, etc.), thus the need for ongoing epidemiological research. The increase in illicit drug use might be the main problem, but that alone does not have any potential to directly motivate any action by Government or offer any resolution. What instead becomes apparent, are the various consequences of the increase in illicit drug use.

Consequences of Increased Use of Illicit Drugs

Increases in drug trafficking, shoot-outs between rival drug gangs, deterioration of social values, breakdown of the family unit, corruption – all these events are far more apparent and much easier to measure than illicit drug use. The scenario outlined in the flow chart, therefore, does not offer any resolution that would not include all these consequential events. The cynic would be tempted to say – the worse, the better. On close inspection of the scenario, one would clearly conclude that the main issue is not the use of illicit drugs, but rather the consequences of use. Government is alerted to this by heightened public awareness of the consequences.

The Bridging Factor – Confrontation with Dealers Intensifies

The increase in illicit drug use does not have any potential to mobilise the public and cause action. Can we expect more evident events like increase in trafficking, increase in general, or drug-related crime, together with deterioration in social values to be the key motivating factors for authorities? Based on the results of the study, the surprising answer is no. Of course, the different government departments will more or less successfully deal with the different consequences, but the main cause of the problem will be left untouched. There is a missing element that will trigger a series of more positive events, such as increased public awareness, organisational changes and increased co-operation between different government departments, clarity of policy decisions, action plans and the action itself. Interestingly, that missing element is open and apparent confrontation; that is confrontation of police and community groups on one side with dealers and traffickers on the other. The results show that the most likely future scenario will have the following flow.

Drug Abuse – Various Consequences – Confrontation – Awareness – Action

Again, the cynic would say that confrontation means action and that *post hoc* policy decisions do not have any other purpose but to offer some comfort for the various stakeholders in the drug abuse arena who would gladly jump into the bandwagon and join the winners. A metaphoric picture suggests a group of people sitting around the table. The table is skewed and the glass of water is slowly sliding toward the edge. Who will react first? Whoever reacts, the entire group will say: "*Hoera, I helped fix it!*"

Public Awareness and Policy Decisions

Once the confrontation with drug dealers and traffickers gains momentum and captures the fascination of the media, the critical amount of attention that is created will allow serious policy planning and a better co-ordinated strategic action for the first time. Funding will probably be made available for primary research of drug use, and government departments will receive additional funding to take on the burden of co ordinating their activities with policy planners and implementing strategies that emerge.

Action that Leads to the Final Resolution

In the same way that the series of negative events has its own synergy, the group of positive events (right side of the flow chart) has its own feedback loops where one positive event leads to another and together they all contribute to the common goal of decreased use of illicit drugs.

Let us assume that all policy decisions are in place, the necessary organisational changes have already been made and that every involved government department is linked and has its own co-ordinated, fully defined mandate and functional role. How is the success measured? If the targeted event is defined as 'decrease in illicit drug use', then the evident decrease in drug trafficking, decreased numbers of recorded violent incidences as defined by the tripartite

conceptual framework, and a decreased rate of recorded drug-related crimes would need to serve as sufficient proof that the main cause of the problem is successfully dealt with. Confrontation will certainly lessen, the public and the media will focus on another 'hot issue', and the concealed, presumably less serious level of illicit drug use will continue.

POLICY OPTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

The need for action on drugs was raised in a speech by the former Minister of Welfare, Mr Abe Williams, at the annual Drug Advisory Board meeting. At the meeting, Mr Williams requested the Board to implement its drug-prevention strategy as soon as possible with certain aspects receiving special attention.⁹¹ These aspects were:

- the involvement of all stakeholders in the community, churches, CBOs and other government departments in prevention activities;
- the promotion and support of healthy lifestyle programmes in pre-schools, primary and secondary schools;
- the involvement of the media in bringing about a change in attitudes towards drug abuse and trafficking; and
- close liaison with community-based youth organisations and the promotion of healthy recreational facilities.

In his speech, Mr Williams touched upon a significant topic, the media. The media certainly has a role to play in the effort to control illicit drug problems, but one contribution that the media can make right now, particularly the newspapers, is not to name the specific hotels, neighbourhoods, and street corners where drugs are sold,⁹² or to report how to make crack cocaine.⁹³ In a way, it gives dealers free advertising.

There is at least one existing resource Government can call on immediately to assist with the demand reduction effort: the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA). SANCA is a NGO whose main objectives are the prevention and treatment of alcohol and drug dependence. Established in 1956, SANCA was founded in response to a need expressed by communities for assistance to deal with alcohol and drug abuse problems. The overall mission of SANCA is to address alcoholism through the provision of specialised, accessible and affordable development, prevention and treatment services to all South Africans, thereby restoring the self-respect and dignity of persons affected by alcoholism and drug dependence.⁹⁴

It is by subsidising agencies like SANCA that Government has attempted to provide prevention and treatment services. It is unfortunate that while Government recognises the significance of SANCA, local SANCA centres, and similar programmes, it has substantially cut their subsidies. With the problem of drug abuse continuing unchecked, Government is cutting subsidies to rehabilitation agencies.⁹⁵ Less funding means serious cut backs in service and the necessity for these programmes to charge for the services still rendered. SANCA is one of the few providers that serves people who have no medical aid and to charge fees means having to turn those away who cannot pay.

At this juncture it is necessary to understand that prevention programmes are not the *panacea* for deterring children or adults from abusing drugs. Looking at the evidence of evaluations conducted on the effectiveness of community-based programmes and school-based drug abuse prevention programmes in the US, the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences has concluded that some interventions have succeeded in delaying initiation of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use among youth. Nevertheless, despite rigorous evaluations of prevention interventions over the years, the overall effectiveness of these programmes in reducing psychoactive drug use has yet to be documented.⁹⁶

These findings do not mean that drug abuse prevention programmes are futile. Prevention programmes serve a vital purpose in educating people about the risks of drug abuse and these programmes should be seen as part of a continuum of an overall drug abuse control strategy. Such a strategy would also include treatment, rehabilitation, community awareness campaigns, and criminal justice initiatives.

What the evaluations of prevention programmes are not always able to measure, is the impact on the potential of one using illicit drugs. The impact of a programme may bring about

a delay in the initiation of first use, postpone or prevent the progression to harder drugs, or keep the user's level of illicit drug use within a low risk range. These are outcomes that may occur long after the participant has left the programme. A prevention programme can be judged a success if a participant completes a programme with a solid base of knowledge about the risks of drug use and attendant problems, and upon returning to the community makes a rational choice about using an illicit drug when an opportunity arises.

It appears that prevention efforts within the context of drug abuse problems, at most, can claim risk reduction, but not risk elimination.⁹⁷ Perhaps a more realistic approach is to envisage a drug-abuse free society rather than simply a drug-free society.⁹⁸

The other component of demand reduction is drug abuse treatment. Treatment does not appear to garner much attention in discussions of drug abuse policy. Emphasis seems more often placed on prevention over treatment. This is a serious policy error. Once an individual becomes a problem drug user, the cost to society mounts. This cost is not only in pecuniary terms of economic compulsive crime and loss of employment, but also in the non-pecuniary sense with stress and potential break-up of family, declining health and the risk for aids, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, etc. To provide treatment for a drug abuser at a cost within his or her means or free of charge, will ultimately save society money.

There is a desperate need for treatment programmes in South Africa, primarily, but not exclusively, in urban areas. The need for programmes covers all treatment modalities ranging from short term detoxification, short term residential, long term residential, inpatient hospital-based, outpatient counselling, and pharmacological-based treatment. At the very minimum, government hospitals should attend to drug abusers who present themselves to emergency rooms with basic health problems, rather than turn them away because they are drug users.

On the issue of supply reduction, Gelbard suggests improving information and intelligence gathering by establishing linkages at the subregional, continental and international levels; institution-building among the police, judiciary and prosecutors; and through international co-operation.⁹⁹ At an Interpol conference held in South Africa in 1994, several proposals were submitted to address trafficking in the Southern Africa region:

- establish a data base in Pretoria containing all information on drug syndicates;
- an effective communication system working closely with the Interpol communication system must be established;
- a working group dealing with Mandrax-related problems should be formed in every region;
- police and customs officials should be better trained, in order to be able to ascertain the validity of import and export documents, and travel documents;
- the adoption of a stricter policy for the issue of travel documents;
- the introduction of legislation for the control of chemicals used in the manufacturing of substances found in illicit drugs; and
- the detection and combat of fraud and corruption by high-ranking officials.

A report concerning South African border security prepared by the Institute for Security Studies, suggested that to counter drug trafficking and cross-border crime, regionally based liaison with similar agencies in other countries must be encouraged. The international nature of the drug dilemma requires common regional strategies and professional approaches. There is also an urgent requirement to harmonise legal instruments and the ratification of protocols to enable law enforcement agencies to act effectively. Additionally, pressure should be exerted on countries which are known conduits for drugs in Africa, to desist from such activities and implement effective controls.¹⁰⁰

On the local level, a strategy used in the US to reduce supply that has had some success, is community policing. It was found that successful community policing programmes required three elements: a highly committed police department, a receptive community, and a drug market not yet firmly entrenched.¹⁰¹ The police gained community co-operation by meeting regularly with community groups, interviewing residents to inform them about early signs of developing drug markets, and installing a telephone hot-line for residents to call in tips anonymously.

Of course, the larger issue underlying the problem of illicit drugs is the illegality of possession and use. No laws can stop the trafficking or use of illicit drugs.¹⁰² Harsh laws and the threat of draconian prison sentences, including death, have yet to stop drug use. Evidence from the US and several European countries suggested the failure of a law and order strategy.¹⁰³ Raymond Kendall, the Secretary General of Interpol, admitted that police are 'losing the battle' against illegal drug use and dealing, and called for the decriminalisation of drugs. *"Clearly, in relation to the policies that are being applied, there is an imbalance between a totally prohibitive approach and the necessary complement in terms of reducing demand and dealing with educational prevention, rehabilitation and treatment measures. When we say decriminalisation, we do not mean legalisation."*¹⁰⁴ The cost of enforcing unenforceable laws is tremendous in terms of police resources, prosecutions, court hearings, detention, and incarceration. Just the cost of keeping prisoners in South Africa is R65,85 a day and there are 125 000+- prisoners held in 93 055 cells.¹⁰⁵ It needs to be emphasised that criminal proceedings are not the most effective method of controlling drug abuse.¹⁰⁶

Another method of controlling the use of illicit drugs is harm reduction. The harm reduction concept was developed in the Netherlands to view drug use as a health concern, rather than a criminal justice problem. Additionally, with the harm reduction model, a distinction is made between hard and soft drugs. A soft drug is one that has minimal health risks such as dagga (marijuana), and a hard drug is one that has considerable health risks, like heroin or cocaine. The harm reduction policy towards soft drugs is decriminalisation, except in regard to trafficking when the laws are strictly enforced.

Nonetheless, there are problems with a harm reduction strategy. One serious problem is that there is a risk for an increase in the use of hard drugs. If such an increase does occur, it may mean a rise in economic compulsive crime. Since the use of hard drugs is treated as a health problem, the culprit who commits an economic compulsive crime is less likely to go to prison and more likely to return to the street after completing a court ordered treatment.

Both concepts for controlling problems associated with illicit drugs – law and order, and harm reduction – were developed overseas in countries that had the resources to fully operationalise and then implement the resulting programmes. Additionally, these programmes are designed to meet a less varied cultural criterion than what exists in South Africa. The cultural diversity that is South Africa makes it unique in the world, but it also means that the task of formulating policies to address problems with illicit drugs in the country will be difficult. Formulating effective policy will require input from all fronts: local, provincial, and national governments, drug abuse service programmes, urban and rural community leaders, research and policy organisations, and the private sector.

Moreover, South Africa must define the problem in South African terms. The research methods, policy formulation protocols, and programme developments from overseas can serve as valuable resources, but are generally not suitable for direct application here, even though it is equally important to recognise the global orientation of the illicit drug problem and the need for South Africa to work jointly with the international community to develop an effective global strategy. Ultimately, however, South Africa will pioneer new research methods, new policy formulations, and new programmes to manage the illicit drug situation in the country. Furthermore, these new advances developed in South Africa will likely have relevance to other African countries in their quest to draft illicit drug control policies.

Aside from new policies and programmes, it will be through joint, co-ordinated action in which everybody – all the people of the country, all organisations and the community as a whole – are involved, that the necessary policies and actions to combat drug trafficking and drug abuse will be developed.¹⁰⁷

ENDNOTES

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