

Introduction

The ascendancy of narcotrafficking deserves serious attention due to the huge threat it wages against human security and legitimate political structures. While its presence is perhaps more obvious in countries such as Mexico and especially Colombia, the industry thrives in a more hidden manner in Canada. In some major communities in British Columbia, for example, narcotrafficking represents the leading sector of the economy, yet many remain unaware of the depth of its presence. This endeavor will trace the implications of narcotrafficking on a journey that stretches from the politics of addiction on Vancouver's notorious East Hastings Street, to Canada's drug-porous borders, and then on to Mexico's narcotrafficking predicament within the context of Nafta. A final section is devoted to what is shaping up to be the most important strategic problem in the hemisphere at the dawn of a new millennium - the Colombian situation. Feasible options which promote human security are presented throughout the discussion.

Narcotrafficking and the Body Politic: NGOs, Health and Social Issues

British Columbia, and especially the Vancouver area, is treated here as a microcosm for issues in Canada concerning the relationship between narcotrafficking, the politics of the body, and the agenda of relevant NGOs. While there is no doubt that significant variations exist within and between provinces, the themes examined here are general ones and are therefore pertinent to the country as a whole. The conceptualization employed here is that of human security, which entails a redefinition of antiquated and often abstract notions of national security. It entails a vision of security which traces the link between domestic and global spheres, and which has concrete meaning to the lives of individuals and communities in Canada and throughout the world. It is closely tied to the notion of the human body as the ultimate site of politics.¹ While the state and political parties remain highly important, civil society and especially NGOs have an amplified role in conceptions of human security,