

children smoking heroin; prostitution among the young, 13-14 years (which is on the increase); damage to family cohesion and anguish caused as a result of addiction of a family member, and the loss of human capital when the young abuse drugs or become addicted to heroin or cocaine. These costs, like the erosion of integrity of police officers; the undermining of the authority of the rule of law; the erosion of values, morals, and ethics; and the wear and tear on institutions, etc., are incalculable.

### **The War on Drugs: Ensuring Good Governance in Host Countries**

The cost and damage, current and potential, to Canadian society and communities across the country, stemming from the inflow of illicit drugs, especially heroin — mainly from Burma — is, as shown above, very high. What then should and can be done to combat the danger that threatens the quality of life and security of Canadians? As discussed, the “war on drugs”, both upstream and down-stream, has not produced the desired result. With regard to the war upstream, in host countries,[30] the war on drugs in Burma has in fact resulted in civil strife, internal wars, military atrocities, repression of the people by successive military-authoritarian regimes, etc. It has also brought about, as noted, an alliance between elements that are involved, directly and/or indirectly, in the transnational opium-heroin trade, or have benefited from it. There is no denying the observation made by Robert Gelbard that anti-drug assistance to the Burmese government has failed in the past. It is also wise to heed his assessment — made from a “hard-headed, drug-control point of view” — that the Burmese military and its ruling generals are part of the problem, not the solution.[31]

As such, it does not make the slightest sense for the government of Canada to follow the lead of self-interested elements within the American government — the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency), for example — or go along with the suggestion that the “war on drugs”, in cooperation with the military regime, should be resumed. In view of the danger, in the short- and long-term, posed to Canadian security (broadly defined), there is only one option open: that option is — as well put by Gelbard — “encouraging a swift resolution to Burma’s political crises, one that can make its military more

accountable to civilian and judicial authority, one that denies legitimacy to narco-traffickers, one that leads to a real fight against corruption and crime”.[32] This option, given the failure of the “war on drugs” approach, is the only way the government of Canada will be able to protect and ensure the safety of Canadians.

### **END NOTES**

1. Perhaps one of the earliest re-definition of the so-called heroin problem as a transnational, multibillion dollars agro-business, rather than as a problem of law enforcement, is found in Chao-Tzang Yawngwhwe, “The Political Economy of the Opium Trade: Implications for Shan State”, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol.23, No.3, 1993, pp. 306-326.

2. This point is recently stressed by Professor Richard Stevenson, an economist from Liverpool University (England, U.K.). See Richard Stevenson, “Costs of the ‘Drug War’”, Seminar: Sensible Solutions to the Urban Drug Problem, The Fraser Institute, Vancouver, B.C., April 21, 1998. The seminar was hosted by the Fraser Institute, a very conservative, highly respected think-tank based in Vancouver —regarded in some quarters as the bastion of hard right-wing, very conservative think-tanks.

3. For an illuminating study of the history of the beginnings of the opium trade, see Hao Yen P’ing, *The Commercial Revolution in 19th Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), esp. pp.55-64, 67-70, 112-137.

4. See Alfred McCoy, “CIA Covert Action and Drug Trafficking”. Transcript obtained from Alternative Radio, 2129 Mapleton, Boulder, CO 80304.

5. For a detailed and excellent study of Ne Win’s Burmese Way to Socialism economy, and the “illegal” economy and associated trade, see Mya Maung, *The Burma Road to Poverty* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

6. In terms of negative social side effects, such as family violence, property crime, violent crime, etc., alcohol is viewed by most researchers, scholars, and even policemen, as more damaging to society than narcotics (except, crack cocaine). See Robin Room, “Psychoactive Substances in Canada: Levels of Harm and Means of Reduction”, Seminar: Sensible Solutions to the Urban Drug Problem, The Fraser Institute, April 21, 1988. Also, Patricia G. Erickson, “Drugs, Violence and Public Health: What Does the Harm Reduction Approach Have to Offer?”, Seminar: Sensible Solutions to the Urban Drug Problem, The Fraser Institute, April 21, 1988.

7. For a critical analysis of the upstream “war on