Introduction

The region of Southern and Eastern Asia has faced a long term struggle against drug trafficking and crime, with the efforts of drug control and crime prevention increasing over the past few decades with relatively little progress. With the start of the large scale Opioid crisis (a specific type of drug) in China during the mid-1900’s, the superpower country served as a model within the region, spreading its epidemic of drug reliance, addiction, and abuse to other regions of Southern and Eastern Asia, such as Japan, India, and Vietnam. The growing illegal methods and structures of drug trade spread outwards and encapsulated the region, making drugs more available, cheap, and accessible to more people, further increasing the problem of drug abuse.

In 2009, a report by the United Nations Development Programme revealed that narcotic use in Southeast Asia and East Asia increased by around 30% in seven years, leading to lower graduation rates in both higher education and secondary education alike, as well as other effects on the stunting of Asian technological advancements. In addition, this sharp increase and reliance on narcotics poses serious health risks, possibly affecting younger adolescents who may abuse narcotics or even antibiotic prescriptions. This has directly correlated with an increase in crime rates and gang related activity, with over 5,850,000 people dying in India alone due to some form of violence, making it the fourth largest cause of death within East Asia. The surfacing of crime within the region along with increased drug abuse has proven that the two issues are connected, and thus must be solved in conjunction with one another, tackling deep-rooted economic, political, and social dynamic structures that lead to such issues.

Due to the alarming rate of drug abuse, state efforts have increased in the 21st century to combat this issue, such as the Southeast Asia region placing a death penalty on all forms of drug trafficking, including any illegal importing or exporting, selling or trading, or possession of drugs. Additionally, enforcements have further increased security within urban areas to tackle drug-related crimes and subsequently encouraged economic development, despite it being hindered by this issue.
Definition of Key Terms

Drug Control

The term drug control refers to the ability of a state power to control the specific type and amount of drugs entering their borders, including their accessibility to the public and their intended purpose, such as recreational or medical.

War on Drugs

The term “Drug War”, or commonly known as the “War on Drugs”, refers to the efforts of both state powers and non-state powers in tackling drug and narcotic abuse, both in courtrooms and on the streets alike. On a more implicit level of analysis, the term alludes to the harsh ideology of ridding a nation of drug abusers, through implementing methods of capital punishment, strict policy, and violence, as opposed to other forms of softer power such as long term development plans and rehabilitation. The phrase “War on Drugs” presents the issue as an urgent problem, and has a connotation of two groups against each other rather than a problem rooted within society as a whole. It has been exploited by advertisers as a means to further reduce drug abuse and crime rates.

Capital Punishment

The term capital punishment refers to the legal right within a nation’s constitution to sentence a citizen to the death penalty under court, thus ending the citizen’s life due to the nature of their previous actions. Capital punishment has often been debated (especially within South and East Asia) as being a viable alternative to tackling the issue of drugs, using a harsh “brutal policies” effort to further develop and advance the war on drugs. In some countries such as China, capital punishment has been put into effect, with results that curb the issue of drug addiction but do not solve it.

Synthetic Drugs

The term synthetic drugs refers to a specific type of drug that has been made synthetically, meaning artificially, rather than being grown from a seed naturally, or being organically derived. The most common are Fentanyl and Methamphetamine. Similar to genetically modified foods, such drugs are curated in laboratories and have the specific medical purpose of being enhanced to target one aspect of the human body (such as delivering one specific effect of increased numbness for anesthesia development, or tackling only specific cells, etc). Although intended to be used medically, synthetic drugs are often abused due to their modified nature, and are associated as being more addictive generally. Some governments acknowledge synthetic drugs as different from regular
drugs, and thus have different procedures for handling them, such as when importing or exporting them.

Crime Prevention

The term crime prevention refers to state efforts in reducing any acts of violence, including gang or drug related activities, especially within urban, populated areas. Crime prevention aims to tackle such issues through systematic efforts (such as policies, etc), and progress is usually measured by the state through quantifiable methods, such as Crime Rate.

Drug-Related Crime

The term drug-related crime refers to any act of violence or crime that occurred as a result of drug interception. This may include the physical use of drugs themselves, but also issues surrounding drugs (such as their production or distribution) which can also create conflicts and lead to drug-related crimes. Studies have shown the strong correlation between increased drug abuse and subsequently increased crime rates.

Narcotics

The term narcotics refers to a chemical agent that affects the brain chemically, and its ability to make decisions, causing a plethora of negative side effects. Usually, the term is synonymous with drugs, however narcotics has two uses, one of which is medical (such as the use of anesthesia or other
sleep-enhancing drugs) and the other of which is recreational (such as the use of opioids like morphine and heroin, or other chemically derived compounds).

Background Information

The start of the Opioid crisis

For a deeper context on the issue, we must go back to the 1900's, where the roots of the issue are embedded. South and East Asia were introduced to drugs and narcotics starting as far back as 1,000 years ago, when they came in plant and fruit forms mostly from Europe, permeating the region for medical purposes. From this point, drugs (specifically cannabis and opium poppy seeds) were a popular and profitable market in Asia, and high export economies such as China started to produce them, subsequently leading to many drug producing farms and further spreading drugs throughout the region, such as to India and South East Asian islands. It is important to note, however, that drugs were often not abused rather than used for social or medical purposes; it was only during the 1900's when drug abuse rose as a prominent issue.

During this time, the Opium War occured in China. This is when the United States used its sphere of influence on China and its strong economic ties with the region to promote drug use and increase drug availability in the market for its own monetary gain. Thus, the pressures China faced led to a dramatic increase of drug use, and its loss in the Opium War and submission to the US economically. This time period is marked by 15 million opium addicts in China alone, with many of those addicts migrating throughout the region and spreading the issue to less urbanized areas, according to the United Nations Development Programme. It is important to note, interestingly, that many South and East Asian governments purposely did not have strict regulations on drug production and distribution, as the growing market was profitable for the host countries, leading to cloudy policies and the rise of the opium trade market, in both licit (legitimate and open) as well as illicit (illegitimate and secretive) forms.

The rapid increase in drug abuse

During the late 1900's, policies and perspectives towards drug abuse started to shift and become more regulated. Prompted by the public's concern on the issue, its detrimental effects on societal productivity and advancement, and the alarmingly increasing number of drug abusers, many governments started implementing policies in hopes of tackling the issue. The countries of Singapore, Hong Kong, Laos, Thailand, and Burma led the South and East Asian regions in terms of policy, using regional networks and forums to advocate for the implementation of policies addressing the drug abuse. Treatment facilities were set up to help drug addicts in need of emergency medical care, rehabilitation centers were created, and policies on the importing and exporting of drugs were set in place.
Additionally, advocacy groups and NGOs took a larger role in the issue, often creating programs that raise awareness on the health defects of drug abuse.

During this time, drug-related crimes rose as a prominent issue in urban areas, and in areas such as China, there was often military intervention and monitoring. Legal enforcement focussed on disassembling major drug-related crime groups and undermining the illicit channels of communication that such groups used, although this became increasingly harder with the rise of technology and the internet. Despite this, prisons within this region often became full, with an estimated 70% of all inmates detained for either drug abuse or drug-related crimes. The strict enforcement of the government proved effective in stunting the growth of the number of drug abusers, however in the mid 2000's, the price of drugs became even cheaper as cannabis production rose in China and Vietnam. This led to a resurgence of drug abusers - more specifically, a larger percentage of youth who were abusing drugs. Additionally, the drug market diversified, leading to not only more opioid and cannabis abusers, but also more heroin and morphine abusers, which had significantly greater health risks.

Effects of drug abuse

The rise of heroin and morphine abuse posed serious health risks within South and East Asia. The amount of drugs seized in South and East Asia rose 13% from 2016 to 2018, and the amount of methamphetamine tablets seized in 2018 was 745 million (with around 515 million tablets found in Thailand), according to the United Nations News & Commentary Global News Forum (UN Dispatch). Such large numbers come with dramatic health shifts within the region. For example, depression and anxiety rates have dramatically peaked, especially in the countries of China, India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Laos. There has been more violence in these areas due to the emergence of new drug-related crime gangs, which poses a safety risk to the residing communities. Additionally, the death toll has risen in the region, with South and East Asia responsible for 35% of all drug-related deaths worldwide (which totaled to 585,000 in 2017).

Moreover, there have been more cases of HIV/AIDS, and hepatitis C, due to the effects that injecting drugs has, which allows for more dispersion of diseases. There have been more complaints of heart and lung pains, and more cases of brain damage and neurological damage, which all stem from long-term drug abuse. Not only are there physical health risks, but also psychological health risks, which is exemplified by more chronically mental patients in hospitals than ever before. Worse still, is that the UNODC report estimates that only one in seven (roughly 13%) of drug abusers who need treatment actually receive it. These health risks (among many others) convey the large implications of drug abuse and crime within South and East Asia.
Not only are there medical health risks, but there are also numerous economic and societal risks. For example, in Afghanistan, the economy is mostly reliant on drug production as its main source of revenue; this poses a dangerous problem for Afghanistan as they can not de-assimilate from the drug cycle without hurting their economy and development. Thus, Afghanistan cannot implement strict policies on drug production as it would indirectly suffer; this has led them to diversify their economy in hopes of straying away from the drug cycle, and thus allowing them to reduce the number of drug abusers within their country. To do so, Afghanistan has participated in regional economic alliances and diversified their trade output, as well as implemented policies that provide incentives to manufacturers that deviate from the production of drugs. Afghanistan, subsequently, must maintain a delicate balance that promotes economic development while also not harming their main source of funding.

Another economic risk is the fact that crime rates and increasing rates of drug abusers leads to a less productive workforce. Institutions are directly affected by this issue, as they can no longer operate efficiently with such a workforce, and thus the magnitude of productivity of a country decreases; this is evident in areas like Laos and Thailand. Other processes that are affected include a decrease in graduation rates, increased rates of divorce, higher rates of corruption, lower academic thresholds, and decreased scientific and technological development, among many other processes. These cumulatively impact the country as pose serious effects on its economy and society.

The spread of synthetic drugs

In addition to traditional drug abuse in the South and East Asian regions, a new form of drugs has arose, that being synthetic drugs. The creation of synthetic drugs was derived from drug research and
development in the United States in the late 1900’s and early 2000’s. Within only ten years, the diversity of such synthetic drugs increased dramatically, and spread from North America to South and East Asia. Due to their abundance, the price of regular drugs decreased due to the availability in the market, further developing drug addicts within the region. One synthetic drug in particular, that being Fentanyl, is extremely addictive and has even been declared worse than heroin; it is important to note that due to the new developments of these drugs, not much research has been done on them before their mass production and distribution. This makes them even more dangerous as the effects are not explicitly laid out, although it has been estimated by the United Nations Development Programme report in 2017 that 12-15% of all traditional drug addicts in China have tried synthetic drugs at least once, and of those addicts, up to 18% of them are in the youth category.

The spread of synthetic drugs started out as largely medical, due to the enhancement of features that make drugs desirable in medicine, such as their anesthetic abilities, however they have spread to become one of the largest threats in South and East Asia. One reason for this is the lack of regional differentiation between traditional and synthetic drugs in terms of drug production and policy, which allows them to spread. In the Philippines, the government explicitly implemented policies in 2014 that regulate synthetic drugs (for medical purposes only) and further specify the conditions under which research can be conducted on synthetic drugs; this move has decreased the grasp that synthetic drugs has on the Philippines, thus proving effective.

**Major Countries and Organizations**

**People’s Republic of China**

The People’s Republic of China is a dominant geopolitical influence within the Southeast Asia region, encapsulating more than 3.6 million square miles of land. China is involved in the issue as its country is suffering the most from the consequences of drug abuse, as indicated by its large spike in drug-related crimes and criminal groups, which has been increasing steadily since the start of China’s Opium Crisis in the 1900’s. Additionally, China has become the hub of illegal drug trafficking within the region as it is the world’s second largest opium producer, leading to more than 2.5 million drug abusers in China, with many of them young adolescents. This large demographic has pushed the government to initiate a brutal War on Drugs, including harsh internet tracking, increased security and border checks, and intolerant policies, creating little (yet not enough) change within China.

**Socialist Republic of Vietnam**
The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a small yet substantial nation of nearly 100 million inhabitants, with many ties to China. Due to its long-standing historical relationship with China (its bordering country), Vietnam embodies similar economic, political, social, and cultural dynamics as found in China, thus tying it greatly to China’s issue with drug abuse. The Vietnamese issue of drug abuse was even more so prevalent after the Vietnamese War in 1975, which led to a Unitary form of government that subsequently did not enforce or regulate drug abuse effectively. This led to a higher increase in crime rates and thus an even larger reliance on drugs - specifically, Vietnam struggled with the abuse of medical narcotics due to a lack of hospital regulation. Today, the government has tried to tackle this issue and enforces a strict drug death penalty offense.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is a key organizational player in the issue of drug abuse and crime prevention within the Southern and Eastern Asia regions. Not only has the UNDP spent a collective amount of more than 2 trillion dollars over the past ten years in an effort to develop infrastructure within the region, especially in areas such as Bangladesh and Nepal, and thus tackled the issue of crime prevention through economic interdependence and regional stability, but they also raise awareness about this issue. Additionally, the UNDP encourages certain policies to be implemented to curb drug abuse, and regulates new developments and research on drugs. In short, the UNDP acts as a crucial hub of information and a unifying force within the region, promoting sustainability and attempting to solve the issue from a long-term perspective.

United States of America

The United States of America (the US) plays a key role in the South Asia and East Asian regions in relation to drug abuse. Not only is the US responsible for the introduction of Opium into China and its steady-fast abuse, but it is also responsible for the introduction of more complicated drugs into Vietnam during the Vietnamese War in the 1970’s, leading to heavier addictions. Despite this, the US is taking an international stance against drug abuse, and is involved in treaties that regulate the production, manufacturing, and exportation of both medical and recreational drugs. In recent years, the US’s relations with China in the context of the Trade War have affected the drug economy within China, leading to an increase of narcotic prices, and as the US continues to establish their influence in this region indirectly, through establishing trade ties and furthering their diplomacy, they continue to become a critical player to consider when attempting to solve the issue of drug abuse and increased crime rates.

The Republic of India

The Republic of India is yet another key state in this issue. With a population of over 1.339 billion in 2017, it holds large political, economic, and social power in South Asia, dominating the trade industry.
and acting as a regional leader, driving long-term changes. Due to the social demographic of India, most of its drug users live in un-urbanized areas, with more than 70% of all drug abusers in India coming from less economically developed areas. In addition, education is lacking within such regions, and thus the issue of drug abuse can spread more rapidly as citizens are less educated on drug harms. The Indian government has worked vigorously to tackle this issue, highlighting the benefits of education and implementing multiple awareness policies from the start of 2012 onwards. Despite this, however, India continues to hold a large number of drug abusers, with over 6 million heroin users alone in 2018, according to the United Nations Development Programme.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is another vital stakeholder in this issue. Listed officially as a sub-section of the UN, this organization works to tackle the issue of drug abuse and subsequent increases in crime rates, through providing the needed framework for countries to discuss the issue and provide clear solutions, as well as create lasting policies. The UNODC was created in 1997, after the UN recognized the magnitude of the drug issue, and from then on it has risen to become a vital part of the solution, providing yearly reports on drug abuse and crime rates. Additionally, in 2017, the UNODC issued a “Regional Programme for South Asia”, which is a comprehensive program that tackles drug production and illicit drug trafficking through strict government policies and awareness campaigns. The program was officially implemented in 2018 and is scheduled for completion in 2021, with a quantifiable impact measured in the decrease of drug abusers in South and East Asia. Moreover, the UNODC also deals with combating transnational organized crime, countering corruption, and researching on drug effects.

Republic of the Philippines

The Republic of the Philippines is a vital state within East Asia in the context of drug abuse and crime rates. The Philippines has been struggling with controlling the trading and distribution of drugs since the early twentieth century, mostly due to its geography. The Philippines is composed of more than 7,000 islands, which makes controlling imports and exports difficult, and allows for many illicit trading networks to form. As a result, the drug market has grown significantly in the region, with little retaliation from government forces; this was also largely influenced by the rise of the Opioid Crisis in China. Additionally, the Philippines lacks the infrastructure and resources to address the issue (such as allocation of financial resources or strengthening their law enforcement), and thus the “War on Drugs” in the country was unsuccessful. Instead, the Philippines has instilled a more educational, recovery based approach, making sure to increase the amount of rehabilitation centers and raise awareness about drug risks in less urbanized areas, which has yielded significant results.
The Golden Triangle

The Golden Triangle is an official area where the borders of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar all meet. The area is around 367,000 square feet, and has been where many of the opioids in the region have been produced. The land houses many poppy seed farms and thus has been attributed to advancing the drug markets of South and East Asia; it is not only a threat to regional stability, as supplies drugs and feeds the market, however it also indirectly funds terrorism. The link between drug trafficking and funding terrorism has been established in the Golden Triangle, as many violent non-state actors and crime groups have gone to the drug market as a source of income for terrorist acts. According to the UNODC report in 2007, the drug market in South Asia alone is estimated to be over $5 billion, and the numbers have only grown since then. Additionally, this has led to the spread of drug-related gang crime and subsequently destabilized governments within South and East Asia. Although small, this area of land presents a threat to economic, political, and social stability within South and East Asia, leading to an increased number of drug abusers, funding for terrorist groups, and increased crime rates.

Timeline of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850 - 1910</td>
<td>The First and Second Opium Wars, in which Britain and the US were using indirect imperialism to force the trading of drugs within China, thus spurring the drug market and affecting Chinese economics, politics, and sovereignty.</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 24</td>
<td>The United Nations officially formed in 1945 in California with the intent of maintaining international peace and security and developing economic and political diplomacy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>The United States and other Western nations continue to control and develop the drug market in South and East Asia (specifically in China and India)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was officially formed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>The Afghan Opiate Trade Project forms, which becomes one of the largest illicit drug trading networks within the region and threatens state sovereignty and control</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>The global number of drug abusers reaches 14 million; record number of</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Synthetic drugs were created and distributed globally, leading to many dangerous economic, political, and medical risks</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>The &quot;War on Drugs&quot; in South and East Asia begins; China imposes death penalty</td>
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2011 Chinese prisons reach maximum capacity and law enforcement is stretched

2012 - 2015 Thematic Programme on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (a programme that tackles the institutional root causes of crime and promotes criminal justice)

2016 UNODC: Developing a guide on positive youth education and engagement

2018 UNODC Regional Programme for South Asia officially commences

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, 2019, (CND/RES/62/3)
- International cooperation against the world drug problem, 18 December 2008, (A/63/432)
- Strengthening efforts to prevent drug abuse in educational settings, 2019, (CND/RES/61/2)
- Promoting the implementation of the electronic International Import and Export Authorization System for licit trade in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, 2019, (CND/RES/61/5)
- International cooperation to address and counter the world drug problem, 2018, (A/RES/71/211)
- Supporting the availability, accessibility and diversity of scientific evidence-based treatment and care for children and young people with substance use disorders (CND/RES/58/2)
- Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity (A/RES/63/195)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

A strict “War on Drugs” approach

Because of the detrimental health risks that drugs posed, and the rise of synthetic drugs, and subsequently increased crime rates, many governments imposed strict rules on drug production in hopes of tackling the issue. What has been coined the “War on Drugs” emerged, which refers to harsh and brutal efforts in tackling the issue, rather than submissive policies.

An outcome of the War on Drugs was the death penalty imposed on drug abusers and uncertified dealers. Although controversial, many South and East Asian governments have imposed a strict death penalty on drug users, such as India, China, and Vietnam. In Thailand, within the first three months of the implementation of this policy, roughly 2,800 people were killed (young adults were not considered in
the death penalty, but rather received disciplinary action and prison time). The implementation of the death penalty was not well received, and countries were seen as being too brutal in the War on Drugs. Not only was the death penalty implemented, but also other brutal policies, such as blacklisting suspected drug dealers without valid proof and even arresting individuals. On some occasions, there was even military intervention and monitoring in areas of perceived crime meetups, and drug checks in institutions became more vigorous and frequent. This tactic led to many prisons filling up quickly, and an overall over-dependent on the law enforcement system, leading to a tense “us v.s. them” approach.

A development, education-centered approach

Other countries in the region wishing to preserve their image while still tackling the drug abuse and crime issue, such as Singapore, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Cambodia, took a different approach. Instead of ensuing a “War on Drugs”, such countries instituted educational programs that raised awareness on the issue of drug abuse and crime prevention, especially in high schools and universities. Additionally, they promoted economic development through becoming involved in regional programmes and alliances, thus furthering the process of urbanization and subsequently leading to a reduced number of drug addicts. Also, many governments chose to monitor drug frameworks and illicit trade networks, while simultaneously strengthening their policies on drug production and distribution, as well as implementing further security measures at border checkpoints. Moreover, treatment facilities were made (many of which were temporary treatment facilities instituted by the UNODC) that allowed those in need to gain access to medical help without discrimination or other disciplinary action (such as for being under 18).

Results of each approach

Each approach yielded different results. The “War on Drugs”, although brutal, was surprisingly unsuccessful as it instilled ideas of harsh repercussions for drug abusers, therefore making many stay silent and pursue medical attention, while also allowing illicit networks to become more hidden and utilize online communication networks more effectively. It also did not tackle the issue of urbanization. On the other hand, the second approach was more successful, leading to less organized crime. Although drug abuser rates decreased or remained steady, the networking of drug dealers increased, and the issue still remained a prominent one to this day.
Possible Solutions

Expanding law enforcement services

One possible solution to the issues of drug abuse and crime activity is to improve law enforcement services. In many South and East Asian countries (such as Indonesia) have adequate systematic measures in place to ensure that the drug market does not grow, however a large reason why these policies are rendered ineffective is because of their implementation, which comes down to the law enforcement services. These services can be improved by having access to more resources, greater workplace conditions (which act as an incentive to increase the number of staff), greater infrastructure and organization, and greater communication between their independent sectors. Doing so would largely prove effective in implementing and regulating new drug policies. Additionally, by increasing the capacity of prisons and their services, the issue of drug-related crimes can be tackled as well, since the country now has the capability to arrest more individuals without overcrowding prisons and stretching resources. Furthermore, law enforcement would be better equipped to administer drug tests, which would become more frequent and more accurate. The enforcement of drug tests is crucial, as they allow authorities to detect what areas have the most amount of drug abusers, what drugs are being abused, and how they are being obtained, which would help authorities locate illicit drug trading networks. As shown, expanding
law enforcement services and improving their conditions will largely aid in tackling the issues of drug abuse and increased crime rates.

**Further raising public awareness (and improving school educational policies)**

Another viable solution to the issue is to focus on raising public awareness on the dangers of drug use. A large reason why the drug abuse issue still persists today despite harsh tactics and policies against it is that citizens are simply not aware of the consequences of drug abuse. Although seen as the norm in many More Economically Developed Areas (MEDC’s), LEDC’s do not have the same opportunities to learn about the effect of drugs on their health. Thus, without proper knowledge many citizens continue to use drugs for its recreational effects without considering its dangers. With the implementation of an awareness campaign that aims to spread information about drugs and their side effects, many more citizens will become informed about such effects and consequently make an informed decision when faced with an opportunity to take drugs. This dynamic will become especially apparent in less urbanized areas, where many citizens have not attended secondary school and have not been introduced to drug-related topics.

Additionally, this program can branch out into educational curriculums and thus instill ideas about drug abuse to children from young ages, thus providing a safer, more long-term solution to the issue, while creating socially responsible citizens. Another benefit to this program is that it would open the conversation about drug abuse (especially in South and East Asia, where drugs are seen as taboo and socially generally refrains from talking about it, such as in China), thus making more people comfortable with asking questions about drug abuse and confronting it, as well as causing more people to reach out to treatment facilities without fear of societal rejection. As shown, the implementation of an educational-based awareness campaign targeted to both civil society as well as students will largely aid in tackling the issue of drug abuse in the region.

**Increased cooperation between governments and regional NGO’s**

While focussing on governmental policies from a national level is important, it is also important to consider other resources, such as NGO’s, IGO’s, and other regional partners. Countries can expand their outreach and gain access to more resources through collaboratively working on solving the issue. Humanitarian NGO’s such as Amnesty constantly provide resources for countries to employ, and can utilize communication strategies and appeal to the public more effectively than countries in the South and East Asia region, who rule through a strict approach. Thus, by incorporating multiple perspectives of not only government officials, but also regional NGO’s and other civil society, the issue can be tackled more efficiently (especially the issue of increased crime, for which NGO’s can provide the public appeal while governments can provide the necessary infrastructure to operate a large-scale program solution).
This solution will also lead to more clarification in policies and legal structures concerning drugs, and will lead to a differentiation of drug markets (such as with traditional versus synthetic drugs). This increased detail will allow authorities to better function and regulate drug markets, leading to their ultimate decline as a result of NGO and governmental cooperation. Additionally, because NGOs and governments are combining their efforts and resources, there will form a better monitoring of illicit drug communication networks and at a faster rate, furthering tackling the issue. It is thus apparent that when governments cooperatively work with NGO’s, IGO’s, and other regional partners, the issue can be solved more effectively and quickly, and at a larger scale.

Providing rehabilitation and treatment centers

Yet another solution that countries in South and East Asia can implement is to provide rehabilitation and treatment centers for drug abusers and crime gang members. In previous years, many governments attempted to limit citizen’s hold on drugs by tackling and destroying illicit drug communication and trading networks, however this failed as governments did not consider the issue from the citizen perspective. Authorities assumed that citizens would return to a regular, drug-free lifestyle and abandon their crime activities, however this was not the case; in fact, the exact opposite occurred, as crime increased in order to get a hold of drugs. Thus, the only outcome was increased tensions between drug abusers and authorities.

However, by providing rehabilitation and treatment centers, the government is providing an alternative to drug abuse and thus their current model of tackling drug systems can be put into effect. Not only would this occur, but more people would become drug-free and assimilate into society as productive citizens, leading to overall economic development with aids the country. Such rehabilitation and treatment centers would need to be adequately staffed, supplied, and trained, and regularly tested to ensure its success. Countries such as the Philippines have even provided free, government-funded treatment facilities to ensure that citizens from all socio-economic statuses have access to the resource and receive care.

Reducing the production of opioids

Many countries - such as Afghanistan - have an economy that is reliant on drugs as a main source of income (through plantation farms, production, and trade). If such countries try to reduce their production of opioids, they would lower the amount of drug abusers - but also encounter another issue, that being economic decline. However, there are some possible solutions that allow such countries to evolve their economy and direct it away from the drug industry. Firstly, by investing in education and technology - and focussing on political diplomacy and cooperation - countries can start to develop a more diversified economy that profits off of many factions, thus allowing them to slowly reduce the production of opioids without harming their economy. Additionally, the government can provide those
who relied on drug production, such as farm workers and plantation owners, with a means to sustain, while incentivising them look towards other goods for economic opportunity, such as more sustainable food/textile options. Thus, over a long-term period, countries can start to shift off of their drug-dependent economy and diversify, while maintaining their status of economic development and not affecting the lives of those who profited off the drug market.

**Increasing research and development on drugs**

A vital (yet often underlooked) aspect of resolving the issue is to increase government funding towards research and development projects that concern drugs. Although not a direct solution, doing so provides many benefits, with the main one being that it allows governments to know more about new drugs from a verifiable source. In turn, their educational programs will improve since they have more knowledge about the effects of specific drugs, and they will narrow down the demographic of drug abusers and thus provide better rhetoric and solutions to tackle the issue. Because new drugs are being produced and sold rapidly every year (as exemplified by synthetic drugs), the government is accountable towards differentiating between such drugs in law and regulating specific drug markets. By increasing the funding of research and development programs, the efficiency of such programs is increased and subsequently the amount of information available to both the public and governments about specific drugs, which will help authorities regulate the market more effectively. Research and development is a vital, non-direct solution that assists governments greatly in tackling this issue.

**Improving economic stability through urbanization**

A more long-term solution is to improve economic stability through promoting the process of urbanization. A large portion of drug abusers live in rural areas that are not urbanized, such as in India; additionally, many drug abusers are either homeless or jobless, and generally are in a low socioeconomic band. Thus, by improving the economy and promoting development, a process of urbanization can take place, which will largely decrease the amount of drug abusers in more rural areas. By doing so, a larger number of people will have a stable source of income and can rise out of poverty, and are thus less inclined to resort to drug use. Additionally, more people will be educated on the risks of using drugs and will become more socially responsible citizens, which will decrease the number of drug-related crime gangs. It is important to note, however, that this solution is long-term, since this process occurs over a large period of time and requires a lot of economic resources, sound infrastructure, and political organization and cooperation. However once the process occurs, it will reap great benefits to the community and lead to a dramatic decline in the amount of drug-abusers.

**Guiding Questions**
1. How can countries in South and East Asia monitor the production and illicit trafficking of drugs?
2. How can countries who are dependent on drug production as their main source of profit (such as Afghanistan) transition to a more sustainable economy? How will this process work?
3. How can non-state actors, such as NGO's, have a large role in South and East Asia in terms of cooperating with governments to solve the issue?
4. How should synthetic drug laws be differentiated from traditional drug laws?
5. Should countries take a strict, “War on Drugs” approach to the issue, or should they take a long term, sustainable approach? Why? What effect will this have on their policies?
6. How should governments go about raising awareness on the issue? How can educational policy play a bigger role in the solution?
7. How can the UNODC’s policies be re-evaluated to be integrated into new solutions? For example, how can the Regional Programme for South Asia be utilized in conjunction with new solutions?
8. Why should countries continue researching on new drugs? How can they adapt their policies to better include and tackle the findings of new research and developments?
9. How can states further promote the process of urbanization to reduce the number of opioid abusers in underdeveloped areas? How will this change the country’s ability to implement solutions?

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Appendix or Appendices


This report by the UN Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid is a comprehensive, yet simple, resolution-styled report that addresses the disparities within legal aid. It also looks at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the current status of the document, detailing how it can be used within courtrooms and prisons create judicial equality, making it a vital resource to refer to while drafting a resolution on the issue of drug-related crime.


This detailed report from the UNODC Global Study on Legal Aid details the positions of 49 countries in their legal drug-tackling developments and how they organize their legal frameworks, along with the effectiveness of their organization. Additionally, it provides case studies and refers
to specific examples of projects that the 49 countries are doing to address both drug abuse and increased crime rates, rendering it another vital resource while drafting a resolution to this issue.