

International Drug Control

There remains substantial agreement among the international community on many aspects of the contemporary United Nations drug control regime. However, diverging views on the non-medical and non-scientific use of a range of controlled substances make drug policy an increasingly contested and transitional field of multinational cooperation. Employing a fine-grained and interdisciplinary approach, this book provides the first integrated analysis of the sources, manifestations and sometimes paradoxical implications of this divergence. The author develops an original explanatory framework through which to understand better the dynamic and tense intersection between policy shifts at varying levels of governance and the regime's core prohibitive norm. Highlighting the centrality of the harm reduction approach and tolerant cannabis policies to an ongoing process of regime transformation, this book examines the efforts of those actors seeking to defend the existing international control framework and explores rationales and scenarios that may lead to the international community moving beyond it.

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International Drug Control

Consensus Fractured

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This book is dedicated to the memory of
Jan van der Taas, 1928–2009

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Preface and acknowledgements

‘Oh, you poor thing’ has been the usual response of my colleagues to the news that I was going to spend another week observing events at the annual Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna. It is true that the apparently endless discussions of the placement of a comma or deliberation over whether to include the words ‘Calls upon’ or ‘Urges’ within an operative paragraph of a resolution can often be enough to induce coma. However, having studied various aspects of international drug control for nearly two decades I have become intrigued with the operation of this little-known Commission and what it reveals about the increasingly fluid field of drug policy; an area of public policy that one way or another touches all of our lives. Indeed, after my first direct experience of events at the Vienna International Centre in 2004, I realized that as an observer at the back of either the Commission’s Committee of the Whole or its Plenary sessions, I was witnessing a change in not only the nature of the issues being discussed but also in political dynamics and the intensity of the discussions. While this was the case, I struggled to understand what this meant and how all the moving parts fitted together. This book is the result of that struggle. And during what has been a longer and more painful process than I could have imagined I have accrued a variety of debts of gratitude to many people.

The content of the pages that follow has been informed and hopefully nuanced by information, insights and practical perspectives of over fifty formal interviewees. These comprise a range of parliamentarians, government, European Commission and United Nations officials, senior representatives of non-governmental organizations and fellow academics (in post and retired), in Washington DC, New York, Ottawa, London, Brussels, Amsterdam, Bern, Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Vienna and Tokyo. Thanks go to all those who generously gave their time to be interviewed and to the many others who were willing to discuss a myriad of related issues in a less-structured fashion.

xii Preface and acknowledgements

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Preface and acknowledgements

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My deepest gratitude, however, is reserved for Cath, Fynn and Poppy (and still Jordan). Your support, encouragement and love make it all worthwhile.

Thanks.

Abbreviations

ACC	UN Administrative Committee on Coordination
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ATS	amphetamine-type stimulants
CELAD	European Committee to Combat Drugs
CEN	cannabis expiation notice
CHALN	Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network
CHP	controlled heroin prescription
CICAD	OAS Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission
CIN	cannabis infringement notice
COW	Committee of the Whole
DCR	drug consumption room
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DFAF	Drug Free America Foundation
DIN	drug infringement notice
EC	European Commission
ECDD	WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction
ENCOD	European Coalition for Just and Effective Drug Policies
EU	European Union
FCTC	WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDPR	Global Drug Prohibition Regime
GRULAC	Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit

List of abbreviations

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HDG	Horizontal Drugs Group
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HLS	(CND) High Level Segment
HR2	Harm Reduction and Human Rights Monitoring and Policy Analysis Programme (IHRA)
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDPC	International Drug Policy Consortium
IDU	intravenous drug use/user
IHRA	International Harm Reduction Association
INCB	International Narcotics Control Board
IND	Investigational New Drug compassionate access program
LAS	Legal Affairs Section, UNDCP
LMG	like-minded group
MMAR	Medical Marijuana Access Regulations
MMT	methadone maintenance therapy
MMU	medical marijuana use
NAOMI	North American Opiate Medication Initiative
NGO	non-governmental organization
NIDA	National Institute on Drug Abuse
NSP	needle and syringe programme
NYPD	New York Police Department
OAS	Organization of American States
ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy
OST	opioid substitution therapy
PCB	UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board
PCOB	Permanent Central Opium Board
PSA	WHO Programme on Substance Abuse
SCON	simple cannabis offence notice
SEA	Single European Act
SWAP	UN System Wide Action Plan on Drug Abuse Control
THC	tetrahydrocannabinol
TNI	Transnational Institute
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDCP	United Nations International Drug Control Programme

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xvi List of abbreviations

UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	US Agency for International Development
VIC	Vienna International Centre
WHO	World Health Organization