

Mexico: The Legalization of Opium for Medicinal Use?

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There would be far-reaching implications for the US if the incoming Mexican government goes through with the current Defense Minister's suggestion to legalize opium for medicinal use.

This so-called “[solution](#)” has long been discussed and is seen by some as a pragmatic approach for lessening the heavy carnage caused by the country's drug war over the past decade, which has killed more than 200,000 people since it first began in 2006. The concept is simple enough and it's that the country's opium farmers, which have made Mexico the world's third-largest supplier of this drug, would sell their harvests to government-approved entities for use in scientific studies and medicine instead of giving them to the cartels, though this would require that the state provide adequate protection to both the farmers and their crops. This is a lot easier said than done because the security services are thought to be deeply infiltrated by the cartels, and many citizens live in fear of what would happen if these forces found out that they were cooperating with the government.

Mexico would therefore probably have to go through with what President-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, popularly known by his initials as AMLO, previously proposed in calling for a ceasefire with the cartels and even bestowing amnesty on non-violent members of these gangs in order to restore national stability. For as risky of a policy as it may be, it's not impossible for it to succeed to the benefit of most Mexicans as a whole, though that doesn't mean that it would also be in the US' national interests to see this plan unfold. The country has been so ravaged by the collateral damage caused by the rampant use of hard drugs within its society, which includes crime waves and overdoses, that the legalization of opium for medicinal use in Mexico might make its drug crisis many orders of magnitude worse if there aren't proper border security measures in place beforehand.

Unless Mexico is successful in purging its security forces and the state in general of the cartels' pernicious influence, which is highly unlikely, then the US' southern neighbor will practically transform into one of America's greatest Hybrid War threats overnight if this legalization proposal is ever implemented. The expected large-scale export of opium or its manufactured heroin product from Mexico into the US would ravage local communities even more than they already are and could contribute to the drug being even more easily and cheaply available than ever before, thus leading to more addictions that people will have to battle for the rest of their lives, to say nothing of the consequent crime wave that might follow. There's simply no way that legalizing opium for any purposes in Mexico is good for the US' so-called “soft security” if its southern neighbor remains totally corrupt and strict border security isn't in place.

It can therefore be expected that the US will either pressure Mexico to keep opium cultivation illegal or will try to find a way to shield itself from the catastrophic consequences if this happens.

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