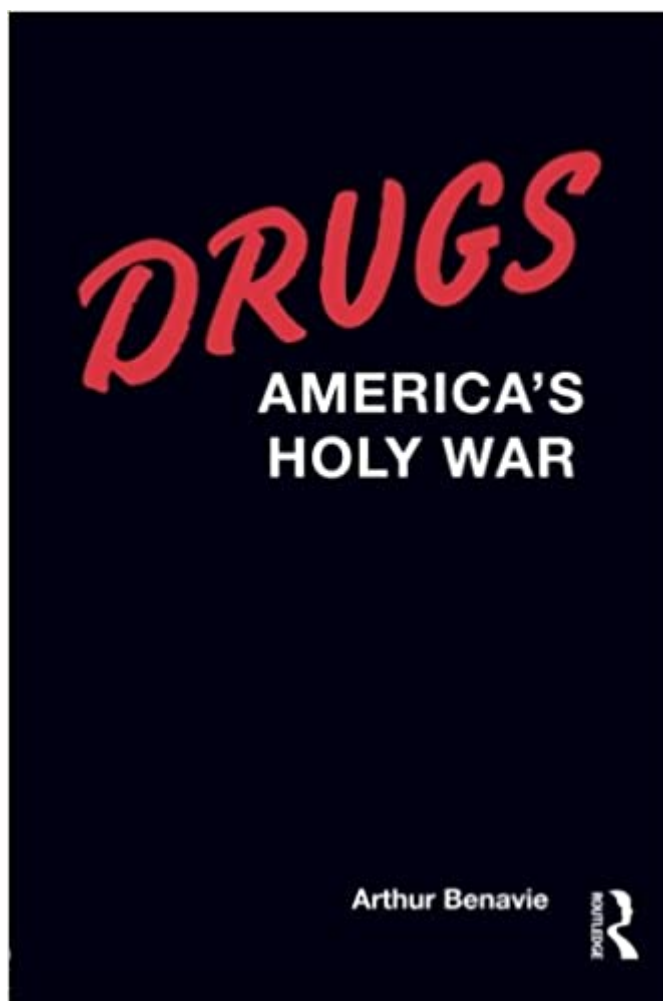


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# Drugs: America's Holy War



## Synopsis

Using the best scientific evidence, *Drugs: America's Holy War* explores the impact and cost of America's "War on Drugs" — both in tax spending and in human terms. Is it possible that US drug policies are helping to proliferate, not prevent, a multitude of social ills including: homicide, property crime, the spread of AIDS, the contamination of drugs, the erosion of civil liberties, the punishment of thousands of non-violent people, the corruption of public officials, and the spending of billions of tax dollars in an attempt to prevent certain drugs from entering the country? In this controversial new book, award-winning economist Arthur Benavie analyzes the research findings and argues that an end to the war on drugs, much as we ended alcohol prohibition, would yield enormous international benefits, destroy dangerous and illegal drug cartels, and allow the American government to refocus its attention on public well-being.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This is a concise overview of the drug wars in the US over the past few decades. Recommended."  
-- Choice, March 2010

Arthur Benavie is Professor Emeritus of Economics at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and has won multiple awards for his work in economic theory and teaching excellence. He has published several books, including *Deficit Hysteria: A Common Sense Look at America's Rush to Balance the Budget* (1998), and *Social Security Under the Gun* (2003).

I thought I knew all the arguments for ending the drug war. This book added about a hundred to my list. Very well researched and written book.

In his book, "Drugs: America's Holy War" Professor Arthur Benavie cogently outlines the costs of this "war" not only in terms of money, but also in how it affects our lives and civil liberties. A quote by Gary Johnson, a former governor of New Mexico, in the Introduction (p.5) immediately caught my attention: " We are presently spending \$50 billion a year on the war on drugs. I am talking about police, courts and jails...". As a practicing Neuroscientist at Duke University, I was aware that in 2008 the National Institutes of Health Budget was about \$30 billion. In other words, our government spends much more on the war on drugs than research on cancer, heart , lung, pain, kidney , stroke, eye, AIDS, aging, the environment and yes, even addiction. What is clearly outlined in this book is what we are getting for this \$50 billion/year (Over 15 years this would equal the \$750 billion "bailout package" currently being discussed in congress). Maybe this money would be worth it if the "war" were worth fighting or if it were possible to win it, whatever ever that may mean. Professor Benavie clearly gives the reasons why it is not worth fighting. In addition to the cost of the war, he stresses the cost to our society in terms of crime, corruption of our police and representatives, public health, and wasted human capital with regard to the many people in jail for non-violent crimes. The chapter that I found most disturbing, however, was the one on the loss of our civil liberties in the event someone accuses us of possessing drugs or if they find drugs on our property. In summary, this is an outstanding historical and current treatment of our government's policy towards drugs. My hope is that the new administration will have the courage to change some of these outmoded policies. Sidney A. Simon

This is a superb book which lays out clearly the history of the war on drugs, the causes, the terrible costs and consequences, and proposals for moving beyond the drug war. It would be a great book to use in undergraduate classes and for concerned citizens. It is filled with facts and thoroughly documented. I learned much that I did not know about the topic. The book appeals to the general reader with many interesting stories and illustrations. I found the history of the drug war particularly interesting and the chapter on civil liberties particularly chilling. This book needs to be in the hands of the new U. S. Attorney General Eric Holder and his staff at in incoming administration's Department of Justice.

While attending and exhibiting at the National Conference of Social Sciences I met hundreds of teachers who were amazed that anyone was challenging accepted US Govt dogma on drug policy. Most agreed that the War on Drugs was a failure but when prompted, they had spent little time in their classrooms discussing modern prohibition: America's so-called War on Drugs. So, it was to my sincere elated surprise to hear of a book written by an economist researching the effectiveness of the drug war. If any good, I thought, it could be a tool for many teachers ready to take on this policy's effectiveness. *Drugs--America's Holy War* is not only a great teaching aide but an interesting literary trip as I read how Arthur Benavie set out to find what is "good" about the drug war. Benavie, like Edwin Starr's famous 1970 song, found that the answer was "absolutely nuthin'!" Benavie realizes early on that Thomas Sowell's famous quote was going to be the reason for our drug war: "policies are judged by their consequences, but crusades are judged by how good they make the crusaders feel." Throughout his book, Benavie shows the relationship between the reality and the hysteria that helps the crusaders feel good about their drug war. (pg 90 and many other references). He also addresses the perspectives of the drug czar vs. science in several terrific chapters, and he even pokes Body Count authors Bill Bennett and John Walters in the eye, "pointing" out that they elected to omit any harm caused by the drug war. (pg 108) His book finishes up with several genuine and well thought out suggestions for a post-drug war policy. *Drugs--America's Holy War* is well detailed with quotes from many sources: judges, cops, economists, legislators, writers, scientists and more. I especially liked a Q/A section in the back, as if he were at a news conference and were being grilled by the press. Mike Smithson  
Speakers Bureau Director  
Law Enforcement Against Prohibition[...]

Art Benavie has written a scathing indictment of the Drug War, which should leave no one in doubt that America's drug policies need to be radically re-oriented. After a discussion of the history of the War on Drugs, Benavie goes on to a careful analysis of its effects on crime, public health, civil liberties, and the budget. The perverse effects of treating drug addiction as a criminal problem rather than as a disease are thoroughly portrayed, with facts, figures, and anecdotes, all copiously documented in footnotes at the end of the book. Anyone who knows someone who has been caught up in this process should read this book. Especially our political leaders who have adopted the wrong paradigm, leading to mounting corruption, crime, and disease.

What a pleasure to find an economist who lays out the case for enlightened public policy with such clarity and precision. Benavie knows this particular subject inside and out, and makes compelling

arguments that the cost of America's war on drugs is far too high. The book is beautifully written, and the arguments are carefully presented. I've always sensed that the war on drugs was misguided. Now I feel well-prepared to defend my views with an arsenal of hard-nosed facts. Thank you, Dr. Benavie.

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