



UNGA - DISEC

DISARMAMENT & INTERNATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE

AGENDA: COMBATTING NARCO-TERRORISM IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND MIDDLE EAST

Table of Contents

| SR. NO. | TOPIC | Pg. No. |
|----------------|---|----------------|
| 1. | Letter from the Secretary-General | 03 |
| 2. | Letter from the Executive Board | 04 |
| 3. | Introduction to the Committee | 05 |
| 4. | Introduction to the Agenda | 06 |
| 5. | Background of the Agenda | 06-07 |
| 6. | Historical Context | 07-08 |
| 7. | Classification of Illicit Drugs | 08-09 |
| 8. | Rise of Drug Trafficking | 09-12 |
| 9. | Understanding Drug Trafficking Routes: The Trade of Cocaine and Opiates | 12-13 |
| 10. | The Opiate Trading Networks | 14-15 |
| 11. | The Cocaine Trading Networks | 15-16 |
| 12. | Terrorist Groups in the Drug Trade | 16-18 |
| 13. | The Taliban: Primary Beneficiary of the Opiate Trade | 18-20 |
| 14. | The Role of ISIS and its Affiliates in Drug Trafficking | 20-21 |
| 15. | The Involvement Al Qaeda and its Affiliates in the Drug Trade: | 21-25 |
| 16. | Stakeholders | 25-28 |
| 17. | Root Causes | 28-30 |
| 18. | Current Situation in the World | 30 |
| 19. | Current Situation in the Middle-East | 30-31 |
| 20. | Current Situation in the South-East Asia | 31-32 |
| 21. | Important Treaties and Policies Against Narco-Terrorism | 32-35 |
| 22. | Timeline | 35-38 |
| 23. | Questions a Resolution Must Answer | 38 |
| 24. | Bibliography | 39 |

Letter from the Secretary-General

Esteemed Delegates and Respected Faculty Members,

It is with great honour that I extend this invitation for the first edition of The Rajkumar College Model United Nations Conference. I stand in solidarity with my fellow Executive Board members to say that this conference has unequivocally been our mission to organise since last year. It is our earnest expectation that it proves to be an enthralling experience.

We live most of our lives with the concern of our personal aspirations, struggles and wishes. Our perspectives, not so much out of intention, but rather necessity, are bound to first-person events. However, in Model United Nations, this vision is altered to the core. As we take on the avatars of nations and personalities, we compel our minds to break the fourth wall of everyday life and see the prophesied “bigger picture”. A remarkable way to achieve this is through deliberation on the same crises that experienced diplomats, economists and policy-makers face, but as highly capable high school students.

Keeping this ambition in focus, the RKCMUN 2025 is proud to announce साहसेन भविष्यं भवः as its theme, which translates to ‘*courage shapes the future*’. As we stand at a tryst with fate, courage drives every innovation and every beautiful beginning is the result of courageous revolution. Much like a delicately spinning top that can topple over and be the harbinger of chaos, diplomacy rests on fragile agreements and unstable promises. Navigating this chaotic lens is a challenge; resolving it through dialogue is our goal.

From the collapse of communism and the modern drug trade fueling terrorism to the rise of global currencies and the transparency of political parties, our conference explores an array of historical and contemporary challenges. And along the way, we promise fruitful debates and meticulous documentation. Let us shape the future with courage.

Warm Regards,
Megh Joshi
Secretary-General
The Rajkumar College Model United Nations Society

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure and joy that we welcome you all to the 1st edition of the RKCMUN. The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) is a simulation of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA-1). The agenda for this year, “Combating Narco-Terrorism in South-East Asia and the Middle East”, tackles one of the most complex challenges to global security, stability and human welfare today.

Nacro-terrorism has become a troubling link between drug trafficking and terrorism which has significantly impacted the societies, economies and governance structures around the world. Nowhere is this crisis more evident than in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, where porous borders, socio-economic challenges and political uncertainty have created an environment favourable to the growth of this threat. The consequences of this reach far beyond the immediate victims, affecting global systems and threatening international peace.

As delegates, you hold the responsibility to thoroughly survey this issue from diverse perspectives, including geopolitics, international law, efficient policies, and humanitarian concerns. Your duty is not just to identify the root causes but also to ponder on the practical and sustainable solutions to disassemble the networks perpetuating this cycle of destruction. Combined efforts, diplomacy, and critical thinking will help you lead the way in your discussions.

We encourage you to address the agenda with thorough research, firm commitment and a spirit of collaboration that captures the essence of the United Nations. The discussions and resolutions made in this committee will not just resonate within the walls of this conference but will also embody the hopes of a generation committed to upholding justice, security, and human dignity. Showcase your ability to lead, inspire, and bring meaningful change.

We eagerly await the insightful debates, impactful resolutions, and outstanding diplomacy that each of you brings to the committee. True influence lies in listening, adapting, and uniting to achieve shared aspirations.

Please feel free to contact us at the email address given below

With warm regards and high expectations,

Divyangini Jhala 076017@rkcrjkot.in

(Chairperson)

Prasham Shah

(Vice Chairperson)

Jay Kanabar

(Rapporteur)

Introduction to the Committee

Established after the devastating bloodshed and loss of lives during World War II, the United Nations was founded to represent people across the globe and uphold the principles of peace and stability.

The United Nations General Assembly's First Committee, the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), was established in 1945. As the first committee of the UNGA, DISEC focuses on addressing issues related to disarmament, security challenges, and threats to global peace and international security. It places a strong emphasis on protecting civilians worldwide who face security challenges. DISEC works in close coordination with the United Nations Disarmament Commission, ensuring that all member states adhere to the Geneva Conventions. DISEC is the only committee within the UNGA permitted to maintain verbatim records.

The First Committee sessions are structured into three distinctive stages:

- I. General debate
- II. Thematic discussions
- III. Action on drafts

Introduction to the Agenda

In today's world where weapons continue to pose an existential threat, narcotics have become equally destructive. From the growth of conventional weapons to the rise of emerging technologies, autonomous weapon systems, and technological advancements, narco-terrorism has emerged as a new tool to destabilize nations. Drug trafficking and the narcotics trade have expanded into massive, unregulated markets that are as dangerous as sophisticated weapon systems. This agenda today goes beyond merely discussing and deliberating upon narco-terrorism; it also is an indication and a critical reminder to delegates to recognize the alarming growth and impact of narco-terrorism in recent years.

Background of agenda

The concept of "narcoterrorism" was introduced in 1983 by the Peruvian political assailants to influence the politics of the country by causing terror and obstructing justice. In 1985, the phenomenon received much attention, when the Medellin cartel joined forces with the M-19 terrorist group and attacked the Supreme Court in Bogotá, Colombia, to prevent the extradition of several leading cocaine profiteers to the United States. Eleven high judges were killed.¹

In the late 1980s, American government agencies started using the concept of "narcoterrorism", to describe inter alia the involvement of the Soviet Union in the drug trade? In the 1990s, it was applied in several circumstances, referring to various complexes of illegal trade in drugs, terrorist methods of violence, and ideological superstructures. Over time, the concept of narcoterrorism has acquired two main usages. One of them focuses on drug gangs using the methods of terrorists to protect their drug operations, e.g. by murdering judges or journalists. The United States Department of Defense uses the definition "terrorism conducted to further the aims of drug traffickers".

Another determination focuses on narcoterrorism as the involvement of terrorist organizations in drug trafficking to finance their ideology-driven operations. Boyce (1987) defines it as, "the involvement of terrorist organizations and insurgent groups in the trafficking of narcotics". Ehrenfeld's definition is even wider: "the use of drug trafficking to advance the objectives of certain governments and terrorist organizations" This definition also covers state-controlled trade in drugs outside of channels regulated by the United Nations. It also retrospectively covers the opium war (1839-1842), when Great Britain was the primary agent forcing China to open up its country to free trade in opium, as well as the drug operations of the CIA in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s.

To cover both aspects, Davids has introduced a two-legged definition:

"On one hand terrorism that aims to protect and support the activities of illegal drug traffickers; and on the other, terrorism by organizations that use the financial profits of narcotrafficking to support their political, religious or other goals".

Historical Context

In the post-war period, the organizational structure of the trans-border illegal drug trade developed from single operators through gangs to syndicates and cartels.

Narcoterrorism, through systematic threats and a legitimate monopoly of violence, represents another stage of development.

In the arena of narcoterrorism, four types of operators are the main participants: criminal organizations of the mafia or syndicate types, armed movements, state governments, and "narcostates". Criminal organizations of the mafia or syndicate type have been active in this field throughout the entire post-war period. A classic example is the smuggling route French Connection, which in the 1950s and 1960s was the most important transport route for opiates to the United States. Alongside the traditional syndicates, in the last decades, a more loosely knit type of organization has developed in the form of flexible networks (e.g. cartels), where the arrangements are constantly changing. Specialized drug organizations are important for the distribution of drugs to the end consumer.

Armed movements consist of both religiously- and politically-motivated organizations ("rebels" or "terrorists") and paramilitary groups. During the civil war in Tajikistan from 1991-1997, warlords financed their forces by drug smuggling, primarily from Afghanistan. Several Colombian paramilitary groups have been the focus of extradition requests to the United States, based on suspicion of drug crimes. Twelve of the 28 organizations, which in October 2001 were listed as terrorist organizations by the U.S. State Department, were stated to be involved in the illegal drug trade. The total income from the drug trade for movements of the al-Qaeda type has been estimated by the U.N. to be 2.4 billion USD.

State governments and their intelligence and security services can be involved in the drug trade for both political and commercial reasons. In the post-war period, Communist regimes in Eastern Europe carried out government-sponsored narcoterrorism. The Bulgarian state trade bureau KINTEX was particularly involved in the transfer of large amounts of heroin to Europe, making good profits. In the period 1985 to 1995, the Castro regime in Cuba functioned as a middlemen for drug transporters from South and Central America to the United States. In Nicaragua, both the Sandinista regime and the Contras were involved in the drug trade. General Manuel Noriega in Panama in the 1980s was one of the world's leading "drug barons". North Korea has for decades been involved in drug smuggling through diplomatic channels.

Classification of Illicit Drugs

Drugs meant for trafficking and illicit trade can be divided into two categories: plant-based drugs and synthetic drugs. Plant-based drugs are further categorised into three categories: cocaine, opiates and cannabis, and all of them require unique climates and conditions to be produced.

On the other hand, synthetic drugs are not geographically constrained as the process does not involve the extraction of active constituents from plants that have to be cultivated in certain conditions for them to grow.

Opiate drugs (heroin and morphine are called opiate drugs), consumed by 18 million people around the world, are derived from opium, a chemical produced by poppy plants. Opium is used both as an end product and to manufacture heroin and morphine. Most of the opium produced is converted into heroin, which is then trafficked to different locations. Afghanistan is the primary source for most opiates produced and trafficked around the world. It produces opiates nearly at an industrial scale, making opiate production in other regions negligible.

Cocaine, produced from coca bush, has around 17 million users. Among the main cocoa-producing countries, Colombia is the leading country, followed by Peru and Bolivia, both having a high level of illicit cocaine production. Among the plant-based drugs, cannabis, with 183 million users, is the most popular illicit drug. Cannabis is produced widely across the world: around 135 countries, covering 92 per cent of the world population, produce this drug. Morocco remains a significant source of cannabis resin, followed by Afghanistan, Lebanon, India and Pakistan. While terrorist organisations continue to benefit from their sales, the cannabis trade does not form a strong transnational trafficking network due to its wide availability and easy access. Several states in the US, Canada and some European countries have legalised the plantation and use of cannabis for medicinal purposes, making it less attractive for transnational criminal groups to invest in its trafficking.

Likewise, synthetic drugs are not limited by a particular geography. These are created by chemicals and can be manufactured anywhere in the world. The most common synthetic drugs are amphetamine-type stimulants, methamphetamine, ecstasy (MDMA) and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD). Yet, these drugs differ from cannabis in that they are trafficked widely through certain trafficking routes. However, their origin and destination countries are mostly developed countries.

Rise of Drug Trafficking

Drug trafficking is a multibillion-dollar business, constituting a fifth of the organised crime revenues. A good part of the income from drug trafficking is funnelled into the treasury of terrorist groups. Over the years, major transnational terrorist groups have emerged as big actors in controlling the network of the illicit drug trade. With

increasing surveillance on the traditional financial routes, terror organisations are regularly looking for resources to fund their activities. The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) is a case in point. Until recently, it was termed the world's richest terror group, earning its revenues mainly from the sale of oil and taxation of the population it controlled. However, since its defeat in Baghuz in Syria—the last stronghold of ISIS effectively bringing the geographical caliphate to an end—it has lost access to its primary sources of revenue. To ensure a regular supply of funds, it is now exploring alternative revenue sources and in this regard, drug trafficking provides a lucrative opportunity. As a result, we see an increasing involvement of the ISIS jihadis in the drug trade. Likewise, when Al Qaeda lost its usual stream of funding—Islamic charities and wealthy patrons from the Gulf—its affiliates moved to drug trafficking.

It is a lucrative source of money on which terrorists rely to finance their organisations and activities" The investment in drug trafficking is low, and profits are high, which provides terror groups with an adequate alternative means to generate funds.

There are two major categories of drugs used in the business of illicit drug trafficking: opiates and cocaine. While opiates primarily originate from Afghanistan, cocaine comes from Latin American countries, but mostly from Colombia. In addition to this, synthetic drugs are also increasingly penetrating the traditional categories of trafficked drugs.

The primary destinations for both opiates and cocaine are Europe, the United States (US), Australia, Canada and Russia. There is evidence to suggest that Western and Central African countries have also become users of these substances. Opiates leave Afghanistan through three routes: the Balkan, northern and southern routes. The opiates taking the Balkan route are primarily meant for European consumption, and the northern route is mainly used to transfer drugs to the Russian markets. The southern route is more complicated. From Afghanistan, opiates arrive in Iran and Pakistan and leave towards multiple destinations via the Indian Ocean.

The Indian Ocean drug network is pivotal to the opiate trade, which, after leaving the Makran coast (in Pakistan and Iran), bifurcates into two branches. The western branch leads to Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar and Yemen. The eastern branch moves to India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and other Southeast Asian countries.

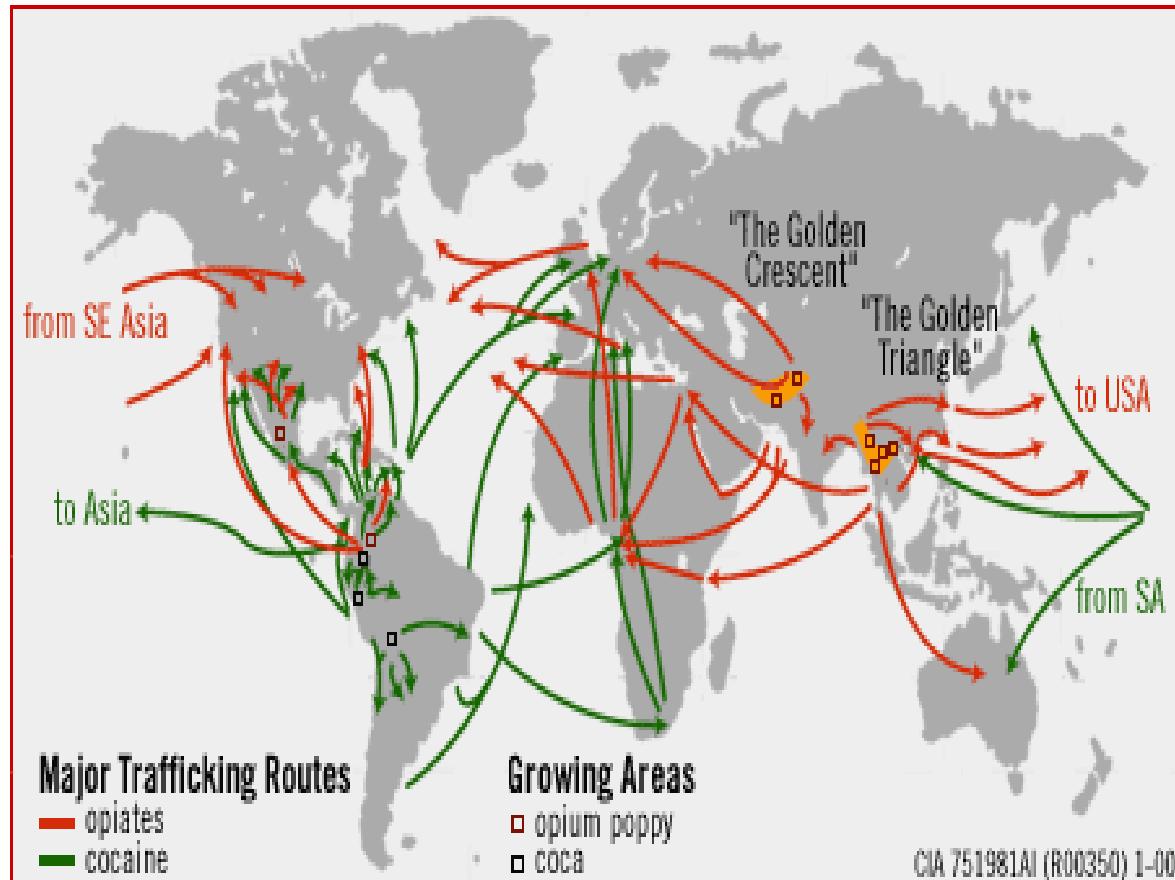
The western branch further gets bifurcated into many sub-branches leading to South Africa, West Africa and the US, after crossing the Atlantic. Seychelles has also become a prominent transit point as well as an end-user country. Drugs landing on the African coast further make their way to Central and West African countries, and to the Sahel region to be either sold or transported to Europe. In the east, Sri Lanka serves as a transit point, largely because of its reputation of promptly handling high port volumes, although a small portion of heroin stays in Sri Lanka for consumption. The last couple of years have witnessed an exponential rise in the production of opiates in Afghanistan and cocaine in Colombia, much to the delight of terror groups which now enjoy an increased cash flow. At the same time, it has further fuelled instability and insurgency in transit countries as well as countries of origin. In West Africa, the drug trade has fuelled terror groups like Boko Haram and its faction, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest.

ISIS benefits from the sale of drugs, particularly synthetic opioids, in the territories controlled by it and in countries where it has a strong presence, like Libya, and Al Shabab cuts its share in Somalia, and Kenya counter drug trafficking, countries are collaborating

internationally and nationally. For instance, the networks in the Indian Ocean, which serve as the lifeline of the drug trade originating from Afghanistan, have continuously been under surveillance by a joint action force of 18 countries led by the US, known as Combined Task Force 150 (CTF-150). The force aims to 'promote maritime security to counter terrorist acts and related illegal activities. Other measures like taking a more robust approach towards unflagged vessels and improved interdiction rates over flagged vessels have also been introduced. Likewise, the European Union (EU) and Interpol have stepped up measures to counter drug trafficking by training security forces and assisting operations against drug traffickers, as well as making efforts to reduce drug demand. However, combating drug trade is a complex task and with the increasing presence of terror groups, security agencies are facing mounting challenges. It requires a continued, coordinated effort to break the supply chain.

As the drug trade network is very complex and there are hundreds of terror groups, organised criminals and non-state actors benefiting from it, the focus here is only on UNGA DISEC

illicit drugs financing ISIS, Al Qaeda and their affiliates, including the Taliban. The scope is restricted to only the trade of opiates (mainly heroin, originating from Afghanistan) and cocaine originating from Latin America (mostly Colombia), both travelling in the direction of Europe.



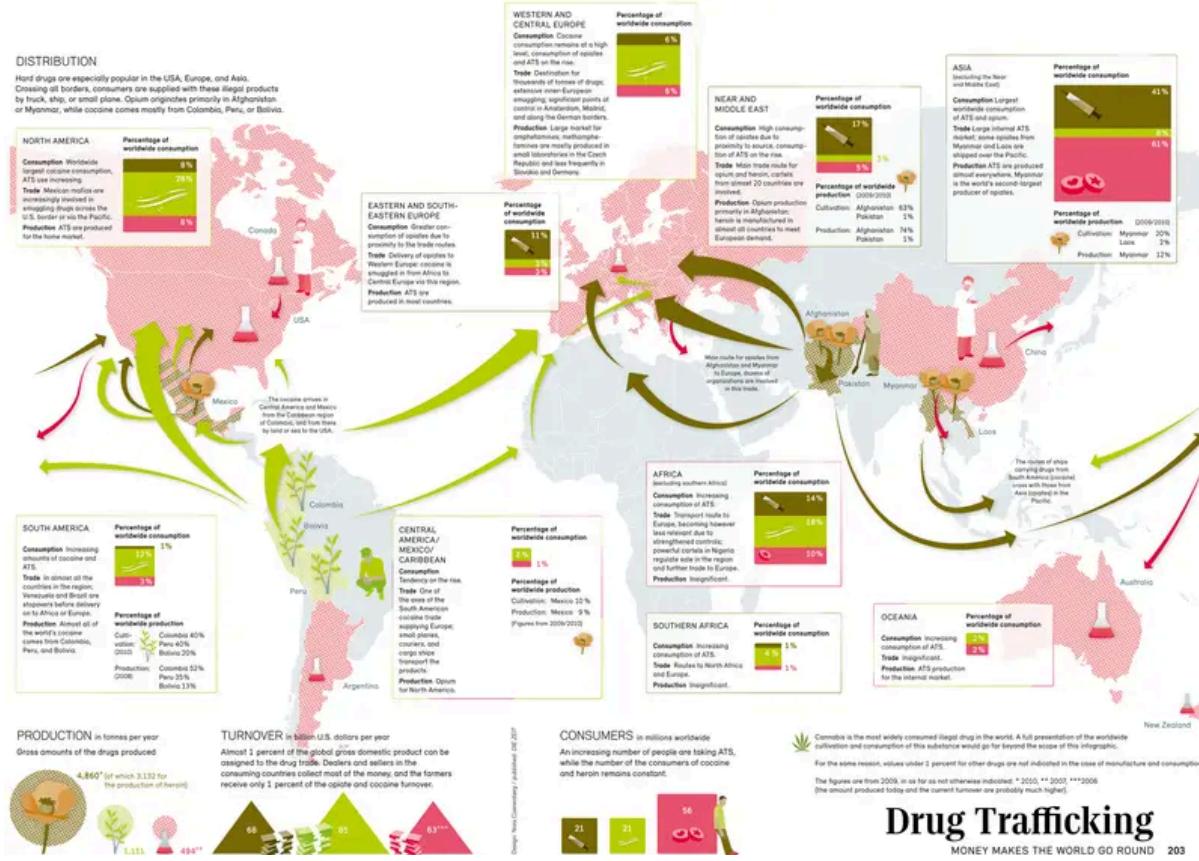
UNDERSTANDING DRUG TRAFFICKING ROUTES:

THE TRADE OF COCAINE AND OPIATES

Before arriving at the final destination, illicit drugs travel thousands of miles from their place of production, pass through multiple countries, and sometimes continents, and change several hands.

During this journey, their worth increases manifold: usually, drugs are sold close to 150 times more than their price at the place of origin.⁷ While illicit drugs pass through multiple criminal groups, individuals, traffickers and major terrorist groups,

the cross-border nature of organised crime provides potential avenues for these groups to cooperate.



Traffickers also follow a standard operating travel procedure—drugs are trafficked along a few predefined routes—following well-established trends of other forms of criminal behaviour. Evidence suggests a correlation between the conflict regions controlled by powerful non-state actors and drug trafficking routes. While drug trafficking predates conflict and is made possible by state weakness, once a conflict starts, it is the presence of illicit economies that emboldens the armed groups that are party to the conflict. The Taliban in Afghanistan, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in Colombia, Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimeen (also known as Al Qaeda in Mali) in Mali and AQIM are some terrorist groups or non-state actors who have both benefited from and contributed to the conflict in their regions.

The final destination of a majority of drugs is either Europe, the US (and Canada) or Australia, owing to their purchasing power. However, a rising trend in the use of illicit drugs in Africa is also observed. The drugs in Europe, as will be shown later, arrive through multiple channels, namely, the Balkans, the Atlantic and Africa. While the Balkans and the Atlantic primarily bring opiates and cocaine, respectively, Africa

brings both cocaine from South America and heroin from Afghanistan, as well as cannabis resin from North Africa.

The Opiate Trading Networks

As mentioned earlier, once opiates are ready to be traded, three major routes are used for trafficking: the Balkan route (via the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey to West and Central Europe); the northern route (through Central Asia to the Russian Federation and further to Europe); and the southern route (to South Asia, Gulf countries in the Near and Middle East, Africa and then to Europe).!¹⁰ All three routes find a place in the world's top five drug trafficking routes, sometimes referred to as 'narcotics superhighways'.

Historically, opiates were trafficked mostly over the ground and the Balkan route was the primary choice for traffickers. This route is the shortest and fastest way for

opiates to arrive from Afghanistan, via Iran and Turkey, to be sold on European streets. According to Europol, Istanbul is a key location used by organised crime groups (OCGs) to arrange heroin transports with Turkish facilitators. In recent years, a sub-branch of the Balkan route has emerged which passes through Iraq before entering Turkey, either directly or through Syria! However, current trends suggest that trafficking

along this route is decreasing. This is mainly due to the recent increase in refugees and subsequently, the increase of vigilance in Turkey. Traffickers now prefer to circumvent Turkey to send drugs to Armenia or Azerbaijan from Iran. This route has a significant presence of terrorist groups who either act as transit drug traffickers or impose a custom tax on drugs, ensuring sustained cash flow for their activities.

Opiates shipped from Afghanistan along the northern route are primarily destined for the huge consumer markets in Central Asia, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The Russian heroin market is big enough to consume the entire quantity of drugs entering Russia and very little is further shipped to Europe, mainly to Poland or Baltic countries. Historically, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) has made



profits on this route from the sale of the drug. The IMU also pledges allegiance to ISIS.

Opiates shipped along the southern route are destined for multiple countries, in multiple directions, involving multiple actors. From Afghanistan, opiates are moved to Pakistan (small quantities are moved to Iran as well) to be shipped to the Gulf countries or East Africa for shipment to Europe. Drugs are also trafficked along the southern route to India, Sri Lanka and other countries in South Asia for subsequent shipment to Europe or North America (mostly Canada). Pakistan, with well-established ethnic and familial links, is a major transit country for Afghan opiates arriving in the United Kingdom (UK). Heroin trafficked via Pakistan to the UK is likely to have either been sent directly by parcel, air courier or maritime container; or been trafficked by sea onto eastern or southern Africa for onward movement.

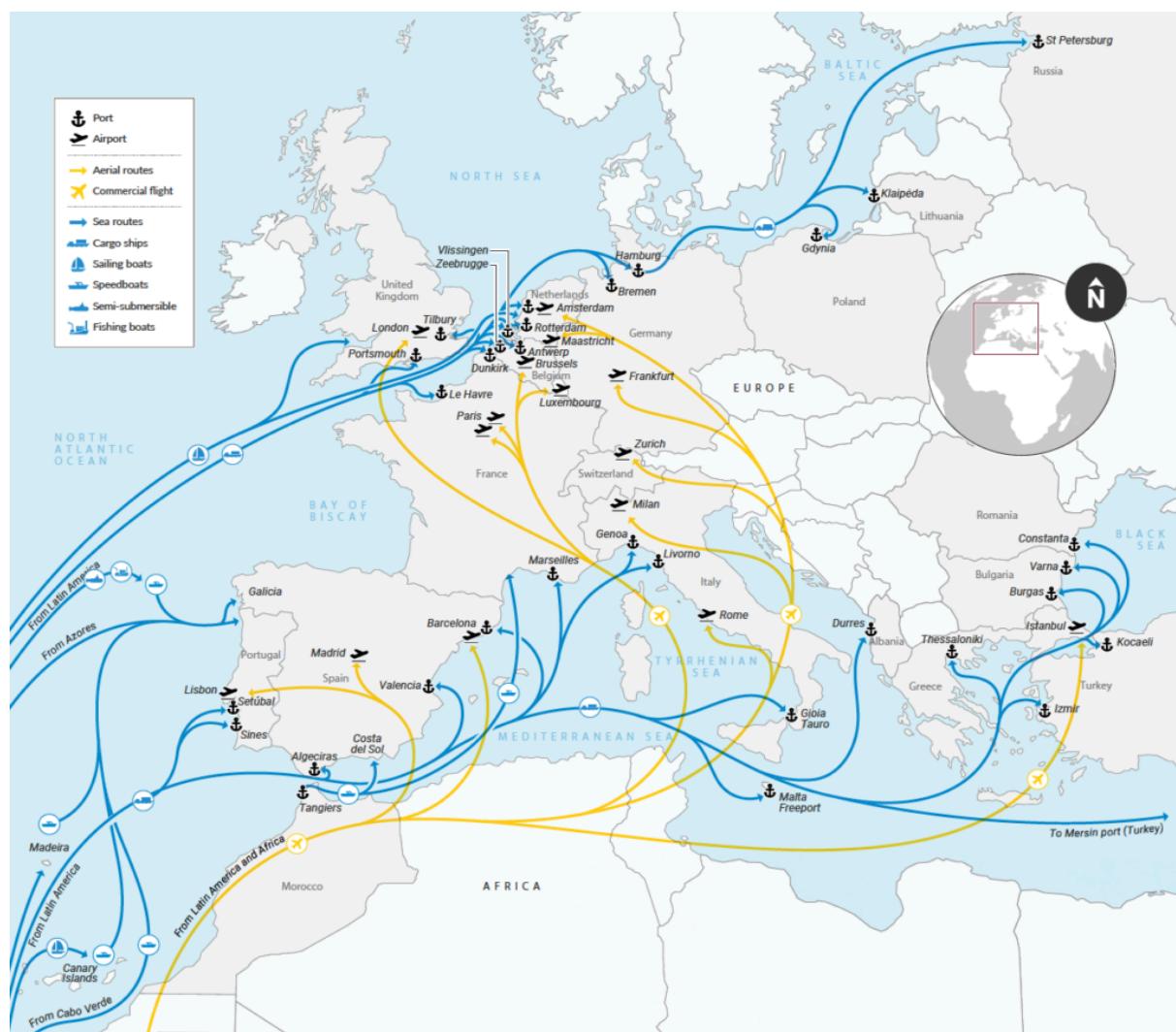
Drugs entering Eastern Africa land in the ports in Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and Somalia. As airports of Addis Ababa and Nairobi have an international reputation and are well connected with the entire continent, drugs are easily transited to either West African countries or directly to European countries. Remaining drugs make their way to the African mainland, like Uganda, Rwanda, Mozambique and Zambia. There is evidence to suggest that Africa is experiencing a sharp increase in heroin use, becoming end users as opposed to their traditional status of drug transit points. Armed groups have reportedly made profits on this route and seem to have a destabilising effect in East Africa. In West Africa, Islamic extremist groups are increasingly playing an active role in regional drug smuggling networks.

The Cocaine Trading Networks

The transatlantic route, from Latin America to Europe, is the most popular route for cocaine to travel to Europe. A significant proportion of cocaine arriving in Europe is produced in Colombia and enters Europe via Spain, after crossing the Atlantic in maritime containers. This route is known as Highway. Other trafficking routes, like "shipments passing through South American countries, such as Ecuador, Brazil and Venezuela, as well as the Caribbean and West Africa while en route to Europe are also frequently used. Almost for a decade now, West Africa, like East Africa for heroin, has become a significant transit point for cocaine arriving from Latin

America and subsequently, transshipped to Europe. Thanks to their weak judicial system, corrupt security forces and lack of surveillance capacity, the ports of Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ghana and Senegal have become easy targets for drug traffickers. Indeed, 'West African criminal networks are leading players in transporting and distributing cocaine in Europe, with help from AQIM and other Sahel-based extremist groups.

Large quantities of cocaine are also trafficked to the US and further to Canada, Central America, the Caribbean, Oceania (mainly Australia), and Southeast Asia via South Africa and East Africa.



TERRORIST GROUPS IN THE DRUG TRADE

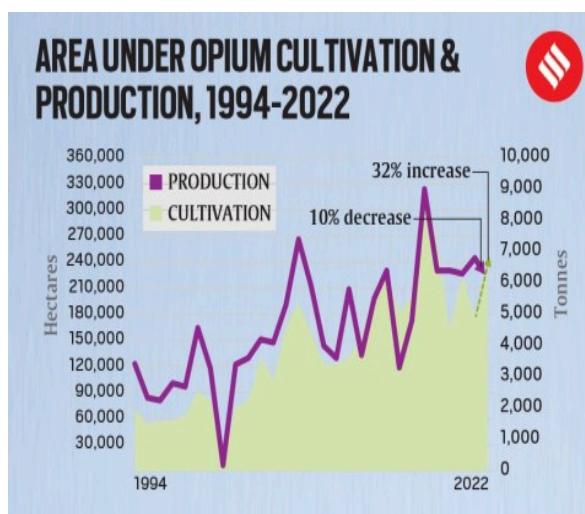
Before 9/11, drug trafficking was not seriously considered a sustainable source of income for terrorist organisations. Scholarship on the financing of terrorism excluded or only vaguely included the link between the profits from drug trafficking and terror financing and this assertion did not change immediately after 9/11. There is a reasonable amount of justification for this exclusion as evidence to suggest connections between drug trafficking and Al Qaeda's financing was absent. Al Qaeda's primary funding source before 9/11, which reached an annual income of up to \$30 million at one point, came largely from Islamic charities and the use of well-placed financial facilitators who gathered money from both willing and unwilling donors, primarily in the Gulf region. In addition to fundraising and money from charitable organisations, Al Qaeda had offshore entities and companies. Hawala was the most popular source of money transfer, followed by cash transactions and bulk couriers. Bank accounts were also frequently used to transfer money: for instance, operatives of 9/11 received money mainly through bank transfers. Within a few years after 9/11, a reasonable shift in the narrative of terror financing was observed. Drug trafficking gradually became a profitable, sustainable and lucrative means of terror financing. A major factor for this shift after 9/11 was the crackdown by security agencies on the sources of terrorism financing, particularly charitable organisations and bank transfers of money, by increasing the monitoring of the global bank transaction system. Following the guidelines issued by a majority of countries, banks and other financial institutes adopted comprehensive regulatory measures to curtail money laundering. Security agencies across the world also targeted the sources of income in a coordinated way. Amid these measures, Al Qaeda and allied organisations' funding streams dried up, forcing them to explore alternative sources of income. The illicit drug trade provided them with the right means to ensure a secure line of credit. A classic example of this is the Taliban. In 2011, the Taliban's income peaked at \$400 million per annum, and this only includes profits made at sales points in Afghanistan and not in European streets, which is way more than the Taliban's selling price at the borders of Afghanistan. Likewise, in 2013, the FARC earned an astronomical income of \$1 billion only from the drug trade. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) also reported that the total potential value of Afghanistan's opium harvest could be up to \$3.1 billion per annum, while cocaine in Latin America was estimated at \$2.5 billion per annum. The 2017 Global Financial Integrity report, Transnational Crime and the Developing World

estimated the global business of drug trafficking at around \$650 billion. No doubt, such an enormous amount attracts considerable attention from terror groups.

Most of the funds received by terrorist groups are invested in increasing their organisational capacity, which includes the purchase of arms and ammunition, recruitment of workforce, creation of information technology (IT) infrastructure, payment of couriers and maintenance of hideouts. Contrary to the general belief, a much smaller amount goes into financing terror attacks. For instance, at the time Al Qaeda's income peaked at \$30 million per annum, the operational cost of 9/11—the world's biggest-ever terrorist operation on a sovereign nation —was only \$500,000. Though this was the most expensive terrorist operation in the history of terrorism, it represented only 1.6 per cent of Al Qaeda's total income. Other high-profile attacks, like the 2005 London bombings at £8,000 and the 2002 Bali attacks at \$50,000, required much less investment. Similarly, the Moroccan-origin attackers responsible for the Madrid attacks funded their operation mainly through the sale of hashish and ecstasy.

The Taliban: Primary Beneficiary of the Opiate Trade

The Taliban is possibly the only terrorist organisation that does not have multinational footprints in this transnational illicit trade. However, it does control



the production and supply of opiates, becoming one of the most prolific organisations in the drug business. While it was uprooted in 2001 by the alliance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Northern Alliance, successive weak governments allowed it to regroup and a resurgence of the Taliban became imminent. By the time NATO pulled out of Afghanistan, the Taliban was controlling a significant size of the country's territory. Control over territories allowed the Taliban to become a major player in the drug business in

Afghanistan. In 2016, around 92 per cent of opium poppies were grown in either Taliban-controlled areas or high-confidence Taliban support zones. Most Afghan opium is grown in the southern provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Farah, Nimroz and Uruzgan. There is also evidence of the presence of ISIS in poppy cultivation and sales business in Afghanistan, although it is estimated that ISIS only controls around 1 per cent of the total opium poppy cultivation. The enthusiasm of organisations to reap profits from the drug business is so high that ISIS fought with the Taliban to control the drug trafficking profits in Nangarhar, which it eventually lost to the Taliban.

The Taliban's increasing control over Afghani territories has some justification as it has created an ecosystem of sustainable supply chain models. It does not cultivate poppies on its own but facilitates production by supporting local farmers. These farmers are neither terrorists nor insurgents. They do not have any business with the Taliban's or any terrorist organisation's ideology. In the absence of any alternative means of livelihood, the poppy business provides them with a source of income. The Taliban further supports these farmers by guaranteeing the purchase of their products. It also provides local farmers with advance loans to obtain their backing while simultaneously ensuring a future source of revenue. In areas it has full control, the Taliban exercises the functions of a proper government. It taxes the same farmers it supports (or promotes) to grow poppies. The income generated through tax levies and the sale of poppies helps to sustain the insurgencies. The Taliban also taxes other actors involved in the opium chain in territories it does not control but requires transit access.

TABLE 1: Opium-poppy cultivation in provinces in Afghanistan

| PROVINCE | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | CHANGE (%) 2021-2022 | CHANGE (HA) 2021 - 2022 | PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Hilmand | 136,800 | 90,700 | 115,600 | 109,800 | 122,000 | +11% | +12,300 | 52% |
| Kandahar | 23,400 | 14,000 | 20,600 | 17,000 | 29,200 | +72% | +12,300 | 13% |
| Badghis | 7,000 | 7,600 | 22,400 | 4,900 | 14,100 | +188% | +9,200 | 6% |
| Uruzgan | 18,700 | 11,600 | 13,400 | 9,700 | 14,600 | +49% | +4,800 | 6% |
| Farah | 10,900 | 7,100 | 10,500 | 11,500 | 15,800 | +38% | +4,400 | 7% |
| Nangarhar | 17,200 | 3,100 | 2,200 | 2,000 | 5,200 | +159% | +3,200 | 2% |
| Balkh | 8,500 | 7,000 | 5,900 | 2,200 | 4,500 | +109% | +2,400 | 2% |
| Faryab | 8,200 | 6,600 | 13,100 | 4,800 | 6,900 | +45% | +2,200 | 3% |
| Badakhshan | 7,700 | 4,700 | 6,400 | 3,600 | 4,300 | +21% | +700 | 2% |
| Nimroz | 9,100 | 2,000 | 2,900 | 2,300 | 2,400 | +5% | +100 | 1% |
| Remainder | 15,100 | 9,000 | 10,600 | 8,800 | 13,700 | +55% | +4,800 | 6% |
| Rounded Total | 263,000 | 163,000 | 224,000 | 177,000 | 233,000 | +32% | +56,000 | 100% |

Estimates are rounded, percentage changes have been calculated based on precise figures.

Tony Blair, the former British Prime Minister, once said that “the arms The Taliban are buying today and are paid for by the lives of young British people buying drugs”. This is quite right as the Taliban uses its profits from the opium trade to buy weapons, food

and other necessary items to support its insurgency in Afghanistan. It also appears that another aim of the Taliban to be involved in the drug trade, as confessed by a UNGA DISEC

Taliban associate and terror convict, is to wage war against the West by making them drug addicts.

The Role of the ISIS and its Affiliates in Drug Trafficking

While the Taliban has been in this business for a while, ISIS—once the world's richest terrorist organisation—is relatively a new player. ISIS's \$2 billion revenue was primarily made up of the sale of crude oil, taxation on the subjects in its controlled territories and kidnapping for ransom.⁴ Recent evidence suggests an increasing involvement of ISIS in drug trafficking. It has emerged not only as the trafficker of drugs but also as an end user. The ISIS jihadis have been found using captagon, known as jihad pills in ISIS circles, on a wide scale. These pills appear to suppress the pain and induce enough energy in jihadis to remain awake for lengthy battles.

From 2017 onwards, ISIS rapidly started losing the territories it once proudly controlled, which culminated with the loss of Baghuz in Syria in March 2019.⁴ The loss of territories deprived ISIS of its two primary sources of revenues—oil and taxes—forcing them to look for unconventional sources of revenue, which illicit drug trade adequately provides. While ISIS has lost its territory, its jihadis are very much active and prepared for a long asymmetric something that Al Qaeda did after it was pushed out of Afghanistan's urban centres in 2001.

ISIS comes with an advantage that makes it a key player in this business. Its jihadis, or affiliates, are actively present in territories where drug networks, both cocaine and opiates, pass and enter Europe. Further, increased surveillance over the coastline of Spain to control the cocaine arriving directly from the coasts of Latin America has forced the Latin American drug cartels to look for alternative ways and forge alliances with terrorist groups for the smooth passage of drugs through highly unstable regions. For instance, an ISIS affiliate, Jund al-Khilafa, provides armed protection to cocaine traffickers. Drug traffickers prefer to use unstable regions controlled by non-state actors as the latter can protect drugs at a cost, a privilege that cannot be extended by sovereign governments.

Recently, the Italian Navy discovered a new route from Libya to Sicily, controlled by ISIS, that was being used to transfer cocaine. Another route from Libya now goes to Egypt and the Middle East before entering Europe through the Balkans.⁴⁸ ISIS has now seized control of much of the Middle Eastern and Asian drug profits from both cocaine and opiates and can also move drugs from Iraq through Syria and Turkey into Europe with relative ease. Recently, more than 11 million of the amphetamine pills that the ISIS fighters were given were seized at the Syrian borders and Greek authorities, in 2017, caught 26 million tablets of synthetic opiate, tramadol, destined for Libya.

TSIS has also adopted a microfinancing model which allows the European recruits to rely on drug trafficking as a means of generating revenue at a low level. This model enables European jihadis to make proceeds from peddling drugs at a minimal level, providing them with the financial flexibility to travel back and forth to Syria as well as to save the money to help procure the resources necessary for planning a terrorist attack—a model adopted by the Madrid attackers. This modus operandi fits well into the ISIS extra-territorial contributions on a tactical level and as profits and benefits suggest, ISIS will likely continue getting involved in the illicit trade.

The Involvement of Al Qaeda and its Affiliates in the Drug Trade:

The West African Networks and the Sahel

Guinea-Bissau, a small West African state, is often known as Africa's narco-state due to the enormous inflow of cocaine from Latin America. Guinea-Bissau's political instability and weak governments have facilitated the growth of the drug trade. It is an excellent geographical choice for a transhipment point as it is flat, with an archipelago of eighty islands, all covered by thick jungle and with easy access by the sea. It is equipped with 27 airstrips constructed by the Portuguese, ideal for small planes to land. During the Portuguese times, Guinea-Bissau was a major fishing hub. As a result, its port has huge empty warehouses where cartels could store the cocaine. Once drugs arrive in Guinea-Bissau, corrupt officials ensure a prompt and safe transfer of shipments to mainland Africa and ultimately, to Europe.

In addition to Guinea-Bissau's geographical advantage, the Sahel region offers plentiful opportunities for the Latin American drug cartels to use this route for drugs to be moved to Europe. The region hosts the ancient trans-Saharan smuggling routes—used for smuggling contraband items for generations—the area is unstable, there is a significant presence of smugglers who can act as traffickers and major terrorist groups, like AQIM and its affiliates, are now operating in the Sahel under the umbrella of the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM). The region is impoverished with no economic opportunities for youth and most importantly, ethnic and tribal loyalties are well respected. The last one is particularly important as organisations or groups that receive the patronage of local tribe leaders are guaranteed safe passage of contraband items. After the trans-Saharan route in the Sahel region was revived for drug trade from 2003 onwards, in no time it became the only economic activity of the entire region. Hundreds of local smugglers, including jihadis, from Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Mali and Morocco were employed by terrorist organisations to smuggle drugs or did so on their own. Soon Gao in Mali became the trading headquarters, acting as the main transit point in the cocaine trade with Europe. From Gao, the drugs are sent north across the Sahara Desert, primarily to the Mediterranean shores of Libya. The regions of southern Tunisia, southern Algeria and northern Niger serve as bases and transit points for terror groups and local smugglers with links to the wider Sahel region. Cocaine also lands directly at the airports of Nigeria, Ghana and Benin, usually hidden in shipments of plantains or coffee." This is then transported inside trucks and sport utility vehicles (SUVs) along the old trans-Saharan smuggling routes. Once it enters the African mainland, different groups control the movement of cocaine as well as opiates arriving from East Africa. Depending on the influence in the region and profits, while some terrorist groups become traffickers themselves, others protect traffickers and ensure their safe transit-charging a nominal fee instead of their service.

MAP 1. Main cocaine trafficking routes to and from the Sahel countries and territories with individual cocaine seizures in West and Central Africa, January 2019–September 2023

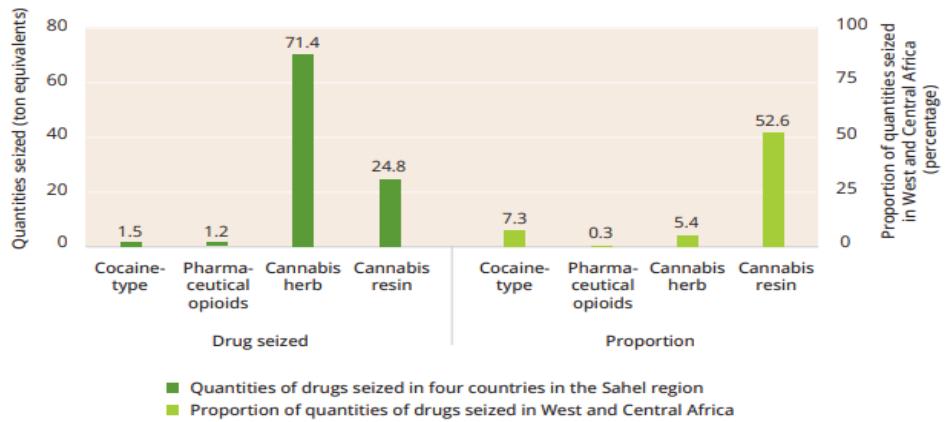


There is clear evidence that GSIM and the Movement for Monotheism and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) have coordinated with Colombian cocaine traffickers to ensure the safe passage of their business. In a systematic method, they have recruited locals to transfer drugs across the desert region between Mauritania, Mali, and Algeria to Europe and also transfer synthetic drugs between Spain and Algeria. The AQIM also imposes a tax on drug convoys in areas where its jihadis are not directly involved in trafficking.

Likewise, Boko Haram is a key player in the transit of drugs from Nigeria and neighbouring countries, like Cameroon, Chad and Niger using the traditional long-distance trading routes northwards. It also provides a variety of services to drug cartels: trafficking of drugs and ensuring safe passage protecting drug traffickers; or purchasing drugs for consumption. It is widely suspected that much of Boko Haram's funding for recruits to rape and kidnap civilians come from drug trafficking. However, unlike Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria is the central hub for opiates (heroin), mainly arriving from East Africa via air or inland. Nigeria's annual heroin seizure is around 180 kilogram (kg), whereas other countries rarely reach 10 kg per annum. Estimates indicate that approximately 40 percent of illicit drugs arrive in Europe through Africa. The African route is now becoming more popular for cocaine, thanks to the increased monitoring over the Spanish coastline. The World Drug Report 2017 indicates that around 70 per cent of cocaine that arrives in Europe uses Africa as the

transit point. We have seen earlier how Highway 10 is slowly losing its popularity over the Libya-Sicily route. The extent of the drug trade in the Sahara can be assessed by a sighting of a burned Boeing 727 in the middle of the desert in Mali in 2009, which was flown across the Atlantic from Venezuela loaded with cocaine but crash-landed. The owners of cocaine were quick to burn the substance to destroy the evidence.

FIG 6. Drug seizures in four of the Sahel countries (Mali, Burkina Faso, the Niger and Chad) and the proportion they represent of the overall quantities of drugs seized in West and Central Africa, 2021 and 2022



Sources: UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire 2021 and 2022 from Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo. Sufficient data were unavailable for Cabo Verde, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritania, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Sierra Leone.

While drug cartels have been moving cocaine through Guinea-Bissau by strengthening ties with the West African terror groups, the heroin business has been thriving on the other side of the continent. Drugs arrive from Afghanistan to the eastern seaboard, into Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique, through flotillas of small boats, ferrying smaller quantities of the drug to nearby beaches, islands or coves; or sometimes even directly to commercial ports. Once it has landed on the East African coast, traffickers either work in an individual capacity or under a group, transshipping drugs via air to Europe or by land to Central Africa, and then to North Africa via the Sahel. In the latter case, opiates meet the same drug handlers, individuals or terrorist groups who traffic cocaine from the West African ports. On the East African coast, there is also evidence of politicians being directly involved in drug trafficking. In Kenya, several high-profile politicians, including Mombasa governor Hassan Joho and Nairobi governor Mike Sonko, have been implicated in the drug trade in a report made to Kenya's parliament. Similarly, there is a clear link

between some local politicians in Mozambique and drug trafficking. However, the drugs from Mozambique are likely to move to South Africa for consumption.

Stakeholders

Colombia

Since the early 1960s, Colombia has been the epicentre of the global war on drugs. Infamously known as the centre of production of cocaine trafficked by regional criminal organisations. Between 1993 and 1999 Colombia became the main global producer of raw cocoa, as well as of refined cocaine, and one of the major exporters of heroin. The value of the cocaine trade is assessed at \$10 billion per year in U.S. dollars. Colombia's share of coca production is estimated at 43% of global production. Colombia is in the top two coca bush-producing countries in the world. In Colombia, there has been a huge internal regional dispute between the political leaders and drug traffickers. There have been cases and threats of terrorism against political leaders supporting the harsh anti-drug policies. Armed groups in Colombia remain heavily involved in the cocaine market, intensifying violent conflicts in areas affected by drug trafficking, illegal mining and human trafficking. Increases in cultivation are also coinciding with an increase in violence against social leaders, a deterioration of security conditions and additional pressure against indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups. Overall, Colombia has emerged as a hub for the growth of Cocaine and heroin and its illegal transportation from South America to the rest of the world.

Turkey

Turkey has become a transit route for all the drug supplies that are supplied from Latin America to Asia. Turkey has become a hub for illicit drug supplies and terrorism related to these supplies. Turkey is central to the Balkan route, the primary path for heroin smuggling into Europe. The Susurluk scandal (1996) revealed ties between state actors, organized crime, and ultranationalist groups involved in drug smuggling. Turkey has become a treasure root for drug dealers for monitoring and transporting their supplies of narcotics across the ends of the world. There has been a great rise in the transportation of drugs through Turkey, majorly due to the

conflicts and instabilities across the Middle East and Europe. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has identified Turkey as a major transit country for cocaine. While many countries struggle to prevent the shipment of drugs through their territory, Turkey appears to be either welcoming it or turning a blind eye to it. UNODC stated that Turkey “has been increasingly used as a transit country for cocaine in recent years.

Peru

Peru is one of the most cocoa-producing countries in the world. There has been a spike in the production of drugs since the 1980s due to several reasons. The Shining Path rebel group is one of the main reasons for the growth of narco-terrorism in Peru. This group provides logistical support and protection to drug traffickers and has been operating in Peru since the 1980s. This group has accommodated and concentrated Peru’s drug production in a very specific and isolated area, the Valley of the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro rivers, or VRAEM, which is infamously known for the production of cocoa in bulk. This area is tightly protected by The Shining Path, which has failed in the Peruvian Government to tighten its hold and prevent the production of cocoa in this area. These produced drugs are mostly trafficked through the Pacific Coast and are transported to the GOLDEN TRIANGLE where furthermore the drugs are trafficked and used in illegal activities.

Bolivia

Bolivia, alongside its South American neighbouring countries like Peru and Colombia, is one of the world’s largest cocaine-producing nations in the world. Bolivia has an extensive market and it’s trafficked across the world through the Pacific Coast and the Atlantic Ocean through the Suez Canal and the Cape of Good Hope. The Narco terrorism in Bolivia is backed and monitored by various organisations Extortion and kidnappings tied to drug trafficking crimes are more frequent and violent, as is the presence of members of highly dangerous criminal organizations like the Primer Comando de la Capital (PCC) and the Comando Vermelho (CV) being confirmed by police authorities. The production of cocaine has

increased tremendously in Bolivia. Under the shadow of growing cocoa, farmers and traffickers grow Cocaine and it's furthermore supplied to other countries. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) monitors coca cultivation annually. Their 2022 report highlights that Bolivia had 29,900 hectares under coca cultivation, marking a 2% decrease compared to 2021. However, illegal coca production and trafficking remain significant concerns.

USA

The United States of America has shown a very strong resistance against the growth of drugs in its country. However, the USA has been continuously alleged of using drugs for its benefits in wars. During the Cold War Era, the USA indirectly allowed drug trafficking and also helped use it for funding Contra Rebels in Nicaragua. But, the USA has shown great cooperation at the global level to stop the illicit funding of narcotics. The Mission Colombia in the early 2000's was one of the USA's major missions to stop the growth of narco-terrorism. The USA has shown itself as a global leader to stop narco-terrorism. But, the USA is the largest Drug Consuming nation in the world. Marijuana, followed by cocaine and LSD, is the most used illicit drug in the United States. As of 2023, around 133.5 million people in the United States had used marijuana at some point in their lifetime. In the past few years, several states have legalized marijuana for both recreational and medical purposes, creating a new and thriving market. Overall, the USA has shown itself as a leader in stopping narco-terrorism, but its country's problems remain a vital issue for the US government that is yet to be solved.

Myanmar

Myanmar is one of the most vital countries in the GOLDEN TRIANGLE. One of the biggest world drug trafficking corridors is centred on the Golden Triangle, where the borders of Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos meet and from where illicit items including UNGA DISEC

drugs are trafficked to lucrative markets across Southeast Asia. Myanmar is the second largest Opium producing nation in the world. Several militias in Myanmar control and monitor the trafficking of opium and other drugs. The United Wa State Army (UWSA) is the think tank for the distribution and trafficking of drugs all over Southeast Asia and has become one of the largest distributors of narcotics in the world.

Thailand

Well, Thailand might not be a significant part of growing drugs and a country where the influence of narco-terrorism is increasing vigorously, but Thailand is a transit hub for illicit drug smuggling and findings of militias and groups that aren't considered as "extremist groups" in Thailand. Many separatist groups support such activities to protect drug shipments and monitor their funding. Being part of The Golden Triangle alongside Myanmar and Laos, Thailand has played an important role in the expansion of drug smuggling and narco-terrorism and its funding over Southeast Asia.

Root Causes

There are several reasons and root causes that can be drawn from the emergence of narco-terrorism.

1. Economic disparities and forced bondage with narco-terrorism

The economic and financial conditions of an individual are often misused by the dealers and many mafias engaged in the illicit trafficking of drugs and narcotics. In countries like Myanmar and Laos, many dealers have misused the needs of these individuals and created a monopoly of illicit trafficking with the help of these needy people who are ready to help them in exchange for money.

2. Political Instability and Poor Governance

There have been many instances where the trafficking of narcotics and terrorism related to it increased when there was political turmoil going on in a country. For Instance, In the time of the Cold War when South America and the whole world were facing drastic political and economic Instability, Escobar used the instability exacerbated by the Cold War that had erupted throughout Colombia, and the larger region, especially Nicaragua, to pursue his political and personal ambitions that were challenged by the Colombian elites, resulting in his and the Medellin drug cartel eventual downfall. This single act of Pablo led him to gain control of narco-terrorism in the whole South American region and control it under the eyes of an unstable government.

3. Globalisation and Transnational Networks

With the boom of Globalisation in the 1980s, the trading and exchange of goods increased tremendously. This was an opportunity for drug dealers to use networks and keep the movement of narcotics steady from one country to another. We can trace back the rise of cocaine trafficking through Guinea-Bissau as a result of globalisation. Guinea-Bissau has become a transit point for cocaine trafficking from Latin America to Europe. Its strategic location, combined with weak governance, makes it a key player in the global drug trade. In the eye of globalisation, there was a huge exchange of narcotics going on between West Africa and Europe, and the demand for cocaine rose vigorously during the 1980s. Improved transportation, communication technology, and demand from European markets drive the drug trade, allowing international actors to exploit Guinea-Bissau's vulnerabilities.

4. Ineffective policies to counter narco-terrorism

Narco-terrorism has emerged as a new way to destroy countries. But, there have been steps taken by many countries and the UN to counter narco-terrorism, but these steps haven't been effective enough to eradicate the issue of narco-terrorism from its root. For example, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) efforts to combat narco-terrorism globally. Mexico's militarized operations against cartels.

But, these policies haven't been enough to fight narco-terrorism at the concentration it should have been. Countries should form bilateral and multilateral policies to cooperate and strengthen the war against narco-terrorism.

These are a few of the root causes that narco-terrorism has emerged and is still emerging and establishing its forefoot in all corners of the world. If these causes aren't addressed with almost importance with cooperation and measurable steps, then this war against narco-terrorism will go in vain and in the end, narco-terrorism and this human disaster will prevail.

Current Situation in the world

Narco-terrorism is not a stand-alone threat but is interlaced with arms and human trafficking. Darknet markets are used for the trafficking of drugs and precursors. Wildlife and antique trafficking are also intertwined with drug trafficking. There is a rising number of adolescent users, and the gender gap is reducing with psychotropic drug users compared to narcotic users. Hard drug markets being created in the West cause concern regarding terror financing. While new and emerging technologies are used to curb drug trafficking, drug traffickers use them to conduct their business. By any standards, the criminal narcotics industry ranks among the wealthiest and most powerful multinational business conglomerates in the world, grossing an estimated \$500 billion a year. To put this into perspective, U.N. Secretary-General Koffi Anan recently claimed that the illegal narcotics industry is greater than the global oil and gas industry and twice as large as the overall automobile industry. The effects of this worldwide, highly integrated industry have been felt from Colombia to Thailand, from Afghanistan to Sudan and from Russia to the United States. No country has been impervious. Transnational drug networks have exploded in response to the new conditions in the former Soviet Union. Particularly menacing are the connections that have been identified between networks in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Soviet successor states.

Current Situation in the Middle East

The Arab region comprises three diverse and culturally distinct geographical areas, namely the Middle East region, the Maghreb and the Gulf States. Across these three

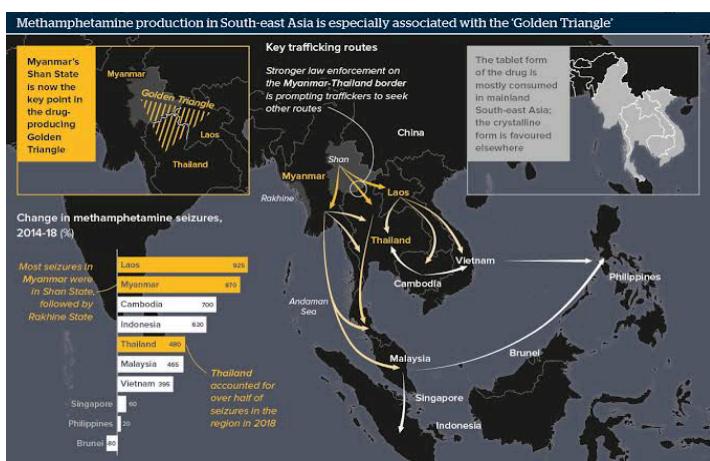
sub-regions are displayed considerable disparities and differences in levels of development, economics, politics, legal systems and culture. National capacities, capabilities and treaty adherence relevant to UNODC's mandates and operations vary from country to country. Due to its strategic location and comparatively weak control measures in some of the countries in the region, illicit activities related to the trafficking of drugs and crimes associated with it, firearms and human beings and migrant smuggling are expanding in the region, and bringing increasing profits to international and local criminal organizations. Indeed the drug and crime control problems are becoming more and more prominent in the region, and have the potential to escalate considerably if countermeasures are not strengthened now, and a clear message is not sent, particularly against the trafficking of drugs, human beings and smuggling of illegal migrants and terrorism. HIV/AIDS, which was not previously a particularly prevalent problem in the MENA region, is now increasing, particularly among injecting drug users and in prison settings. The situation is further aggravated due to the inadequate performance of the criminal justice system. Throughout the region, the need to strengthen governance, insecurity, conflicts, poverty and economic disparities among and within countries of the region are providing opportunities for transnational organized crime, as is reflected in increasing incidences of illicit trafficking in drugs, persons, money, and arms, and the consequential generation of proceeds of crime and acts of money-laundering.



Current Situation in Southeast Asia

Wedged between the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle, and as a theatre of protracted insurgencies and long-running cross-border terrorist activities, India has long witnessed narcoterrorism activities. Whereas the intent of narcoterrorism in other parts of the world is primarily profit-making to fund terrorism, the

phenomenon is more complex in India. The experience of the past few decades suggests a symbiotic relationship between terrorist organisations and drug trafficking syndicates. This is evident from the fact that the routes used by drug smuggling syndicates are also often the same ones taken for terrorist movements, especially along the Western borders. These are the areas where terrorist organisations and drug syndicates also receive the support of Pakistani state agencies, including for the reconnaissance of routes and facilitation and guidance to cross the international border. There has also been an increase in opium sales and



the emergence of synthetic drugs in Afghanistan following the Taliban's ban in August 2022. Afghanistan serves as an important source of revenue for terrorist organisations and insurgents in the region. After the invasion of the United States (US)-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2001,

the US spent more than US\$9 billion between 2001 and 2019 to deter Afghan farmers from producing opium.[23] These efforts failed; between 2009 and 2021, opium production doubled as Afghanistan produced and supplied 80 per cent of the world's opium and began to dominate the global heroin market. The Taliban used the revenues generated from opium production to fund its campaign against the ISAF.

IMPORTANT TREATIES AND POLICIES AGAINST NARCO-TERRORISM

Amidst the rise Of narco-terrorism, there have been steps and policies formed by the United Nations. There have also been many multilateral and bilateral treaties and policies between several governments in the world to tackle the situation of narco-terrorism and eradicate its prevalence.

Here are some of the important UN treaties :

1. Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961)

The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961 is an international treaty that controls activities involving specific narcotic drugs and lays down a system of regulations for their medical and scientific uses, concluded under the auspices of the United Nations. This was first amended in 1972 and this was the first treaty of the United Nations against narco-terrorism. This Convention aims to combat drug abuse by coordinated international action. Two forms of intervention and control work together. First, it seeks to limit the possession, use, trade in, distribution, import, export, manufacture and production of drugs exclusively for medical and scientific purposes. Second, it combats drug trafficking through international cooperation to deter and discourage drug traffickers.

2. United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988)

The Convention was adopted by the United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, held in Vienna from 25 November to 20 December 1988. It is often referred to as the Vienna Convention. It is one of the major treaties of the United Nations against countering narco-terrorism. This Convention provides comprehensive measures against drug trafficking, including provisions against money laundering and the diversion of precursor chemicals. It provides for international cooperation through, for example, extradition of drug traffickers, controlled deliveries and transfer of proceedings.

Now, given below are some multilateral policies that were signed by countries for the war against narco-terrorism

1.) Plan Colombia (2000)

After the horrors caused by Pablo Escobar and his groups in narcotics, the USA came up with an initiative named “Plan Columbia”. Plan Colombia was a United States foreign aid, military aid, and diplomatic initiative aimed at combating Colombian drug cartels and left-wing insurgent groups. The plan was originally conceived in 1999 by the administrations of Colombian President Andrés Pastrana and U.S. President Bill Clinton and signed into law in the United States in 2000. The official objectives of Plan Colombia were to end the Colombian armed conflict by increasing funding and training of Colombian military and para-military forces and creating an anti-cocaine strategy to eradicate coca cultivation. Partly as a result of the plan, the FARC lost much of its power against the Colombian government. This plan had dual objectives, first to eradicate the ongoing military conflict and second to reduce the illicit drug trafficking in Columbia.



2.) SAARC Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1990)

This convention was signed by the South Asian countries in 1990, by the UN treaty against psychotropic substances and illicit drugs in 1988. The purpose of this Convention is to promote cooperation among Member States, so that they may

address more effectively the various aspects of prevention and control of drug abuse and the suppression of illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, which are specific to the SAARC region. A Member State may adopt more strict or severe measures than those provided by this Convention if, in its opinion, such measures are desirable or necessary for the prevention or suppression.

3.) The Merida Initiative (2008)

In December 2008, Mexico and the United States signed the first Letter of Agreement (LOA) for the Merida Initiative, opening a chapter of historic cooperation and acknowledging the shared responsibilities of the United States and Mexico to counter drug-fueled violence threatening citizens on both sides of the border. Its main objectives were to Diminish the power of organized criminal groups by systematically reducing drug trade revenues by interdicting drugs, stopping money laundering, reducing production, and dismantling criminal organizations. Through equipment, technology, and training, the Merida Initiative supports better investigations, more arrests and prosecutions, and shipment interdiction.

These are some of the main conventions and treaties that have been introduced to reduce the ongoing emergence of narco-terrorism. The delegates are advised to go through these policies and may also refer to policies other than these from the UNODC official website and countries' official websites.

Timeline

1984:

The Medellin Cartel, led by Pablo Escobar, reached the peak of its power, dominating the cocaine trade in Colombia.



1986:

Afghanistan emerged as a significant opium producer during the Soviet-Afghan War, with opium financing mujahideen groups.

1989:

Pablo Escobar offers to pay off Columbia's mat debt in exchange for amnesty highlighting narco terrorism's economic influence

1993:

Pablo Escobar is killed in Medellin by Colombian police, marking the decline of the Medellin Cartel.

1996:

Taliban in Afghanistan imposes a 10% tax on opium, institutionalizing its role in narco-financing insurgency.

1999:

The U.S. launched Plan Colombia, a multi-billion-dollar initiative aimed at combating drug cartels and insurgent groups like FARC.

2001:

Post-9/11, the Taliban began to heavily rely on opium production for funding its operations against the U.S.-led forces.

2006:

Mexico declares a war on drug cartels under President Felipe Calderón, leading to a surge in violence and cartel fragmentation.

2009:

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports a resurgence of opium cultivation in Afghanistan, linked to Taliban insurgency financing.

2013:

Narco-terrorism expands to Africa, with Boko Haram and al-Shabaab profiting from drug smuggling routes.

2015:

ISIS begins taxing and smuggling captagon pills, becoming a significant player in narco-financing in the Middle East.

2016:

The FARC signed a peace deal with the Colombian government, but drug trafficking persists through smaller criminal groups.

2019:

Mexican cartels diversify into fentanyl production, leading to a rise in opioid-related deaths in the U.S.

2021:

Taliban returns to power in Afghanistan, reportedly profiting from the methamphetamine trade while enforcing opium bans.

2022:

The UNODC highlights a growing link between organized crime groups and extremist organizations in Africa and the Middle East. Dark web marketplaces and cryptocurrencies become central to the global narcotics trade.

2024:

Narco terrorism adapts to advanced technology like drones for smuggling.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer

- 1) What legal frameworks need to be established or strengthened to address narcoterrorism effectively?
- 2) How to eradicate the issue of drug trafficking amidst the increasing conflicts all over the world?
- 3.) What are the ways for spearheading the fight against illicit financing of narcotics?
- 4.) What are the methods for stabilizing areas with political Instability to ensure no trafficking through these areas?
- 5.) What are the measures that should be taken by the local governments to combat Narco terrorism?

Bibliography

- <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/ru/organized-crime/module-16/key-issues/terrorism-and-drug-trafficking.html>
- <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/middle-east-and-north-africa.html>
- https://www.unodc.org/pdf/technical_series_1998-01-01_1.pdf
- <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/index.html?tag=Drugs>
- http://www.unodc.org/pdf/WDR_2006/wdr2006_ex_summary
- http://www.unodc.org/pdf/WDR_2005/volume
- <https://www.unodc.org/islamicrepublicofiran/drug-trafficking-and-border-control.html>