

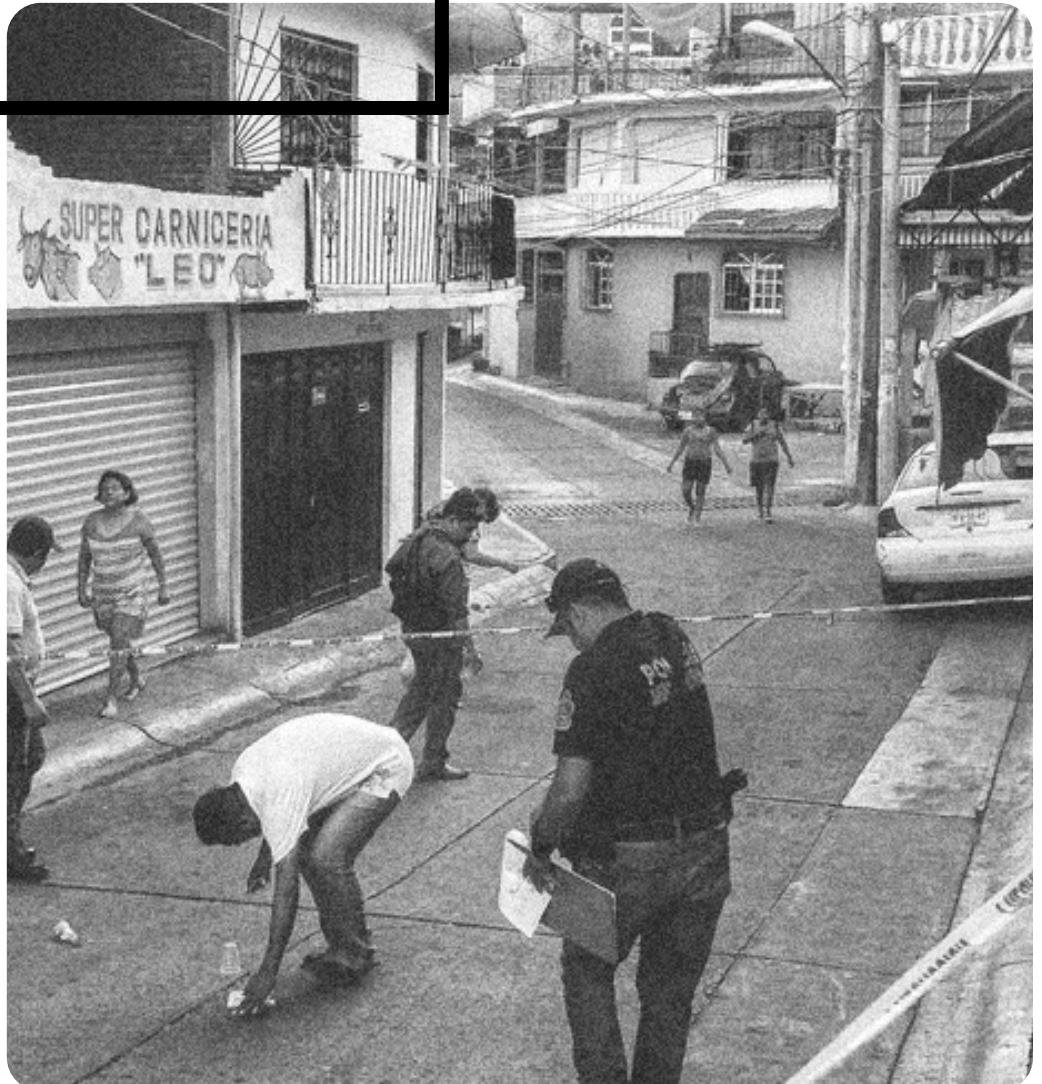
# UNODC

# Study Guide



## AGENDA

**Agenda- Deliberation on the Yemen Crisis with Special Emphasis on Proxy Warfare, Radicalization, Humanitarian Blockades, and the Escalation of Regional Instability in the Arabian Peninsula.**



## About The Literary Circle

Literary Circle is the club in NIT Durgapur, which gives the college an extra dimension of creative expression in the midst of technical unilateralism and gives the students of the college an opportunity to transcend the ordinary and mundane. The Literary Circle conducts various events throughout the year: Verve, Literary cum Youth Festival of the college and the biggest of its kind in Eastern India. The Literary Circle successfully pulled off the 18th edition of Verve in 2023. Flagship events in the fest, like the Treasure Hunt, have become a matter of college folklore. The club maintains a blog, The Darkest White, as the culmination of myriad pen strokes from the collective literary expression of the college. The club publishes the yearbook, so each student graduating out of college can reminisce about their days in the college, their hostel life and take with them a part of it. Humans of NIT Durgapur, by The Literary Circle, captures the untold stories, legends, and experiences of individuals, showing our readers how ordinary people can be unique, inspirational and relatable. The TEDx is an initiative where influential speakers are invited in order to realise TED's overall mission to research and discover "ideas worth spreading." TEDxNITDurgapur was co-organised by The Literary Circle and was a confluence of ideas and innovation. The club is known to be highly selective in its admission of new members, with only about 10-15 students inducted out of the entire batch of 900 each year. Great believers of the phrase 'quality over quantity', the members selected every year are the best of the best in the field of expression and creativity. Come, step into the Circle!

## About NITMUN

NITMUN is a forum convened by the members of the Literary Circle for discussion and analysis of global issues. It seeks to bring out motivated delegates from all over the country for a meaningful debate on significant international issues. Currently, in its 11th edition, NITMUN has been extremely successful in providing the perfect experience to each delegate. Over the years, we have entertained more than 2000 delegates totaling all the editions. Delegates arrive from all corners of India for an experience they will never forget .



## About the committee

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) contributes to global peace and security, sustainable development and human rights by helping to make the world safer from drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism. UNODC provides technical assistance, research and normative support to Member States to help them develop and implement comprehensive, evidence-based solutions to the complex and interconnected threats that they face at the national, regional and global levels. It centres on protecting people and our planet from criminal exploitation through inclusive, sustainable, human rights-based approaches. Headquartered in Vienna with a network of over 130 offices around the world, UNODC advances justice, health and security to build resilient societies and improve everyday life for individuals, families and communities around the globe.

UNODC works in all regions of the world through our normative expertise, our research, our regional and global programmes and our extensive network of field offices to help Member States in:

Tackling the world drug problem through balanced, evidence-based responses to address drug abuse and drug use disorders, as well as the production and trafficking of illicit drugs

Preventing corruption by promoting integrity and good governance and helping recover stolen assets,

Countering terrorism through effective, accountable and inclusive legal, crime prevention and criminal justice measures in line with international norms and the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy,

Combating organized crime by providing technical assistance and support and strengthening international cooperation to address organized criminal activity and all forms of trafficking,

Preventing crime and promoting criminal justice through human rights-based and victim centered approaches that strengthen the rule of law and access to justice.

## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE CRISIS:

Colombia's location is strategic for several reasons. First, it has direct access to the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, which facilitates the shipment of cocaine via speedboats, semi-submersibles, and cargo ships to different countries. Additionally, it shares borders with Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, and Panama. These borders are extremely porous, allowing the flow of drugs, contraband, arms, and migrants, among other illegal bounty. Internally, the country's rugged geography of three mountain ranges and thick jungles provides criminal organizations with enough cover to produce drugs in clandestine laboratories, store them, and transport them through routes that are difficult for the authorities to access. The country's gold resources have led to the proliferation of illegal mining, which represents a key source of income for criminal groups, sometimes even surpassing the profits generated by drug trafficking. The country's relationship with drug trafficking began in the 1970s, when farmers in northern Colombia began planting marijuana as a much more lucrative alternative to legal crops.



This period was known as the “Bonanza Marimbera”. Marijuana was shipped to the United States through networks involving Colombians and Americans, some of whom had come to Colombia in the 1960s with the Peace Corps. The smuggling of marijuana from Colombia to the United States laid the groundwork for the trafficking of other drugs such as cocaine. Colombian drug traffickers became the main links for cocaine shipments from Peru and Bolivia to the north of the continent. The late 1970s saw the emergence of the first major cocaine cartels: the Medellín Cartel -led by Pablo Escobar- and the Cali Cartel, headed by the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers.

Alongside the drug cartels, since the 1960s there have been various guerrilla groups, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – FARC), the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional – ELN), the Popular Liberation Army (Ejército Popular de Liberación – EPL) and the April 19 Movement (Movimiento 19 de Abril – M-19). One of the main methods of financing these groups was kidnapping businessmen, cattle ranchers, and politicians for ransom.

## Criminal Groups

After the FARC’s demobilization and exit from the Colombian criminal landscape in the mid-2010’s, power vacuums in the territory it had occupied led to a reconfiguration of the power balance. Among the criminal groups that took advantage of this change, the ELN and the Gaitanistas have gained considerable territorial and criminal power. FARC dissident groups have also made a name for themselves, especially the EMC, and in smaller measure, the Second Marquetalia, whose power is concentrated on the border with Venezuela.

Other groups also maintain an important territorial presence, and participate directly in criminal economies like drug trafficking, illegal mining, and extortion. Among these, some paramilitary successor groups stand out, like the Pachenca, the Caparros, and the Puntilleros. Smaller local criminal networks also persist. From gangs in urban areas like Medellín and Buenaventura, to groups like La Oficina, the one-time armed wing of the Medellín Cartel.

## **Security Forces**

The Colombian security forces—divided into the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Police—have around 500,000 active members. Each branch works hand in hand with security agencies in other countries, sharing information, and, sometimes, coordinating operations against organized crime groups.

Colombian security forces have been involved in corruption cases and have been linked to criminal groups in the past. The security and defense sector was the most affected by corruption between 2016 and 2022, according to data from Transparencia por Colombia. Similarly, State security forces have been involved in cases of excessive use of force, violence against civilians, and violations of human rights.

## **Possible Solutions and Actions**

### **1. Strengthening International Cooperation**

- Regional Cooperation: Encouraging cooperation between Colombia, its neighbors, and the international community (e.g., the U.S., the EU, and Latin American states) to share intelligence, control borders, and combat transnational crime.

- Strengthening the UNODC: Ensuring that the UNODC continues to support programs that offer economic alternatives for communities involved in drug production and trafficking.

## **2. Enhancing Rule of Law and Justice**

- Judicial Reform: Strengthening Colombia's judicial system to ensure fair trials and the punishment of those involved in drug trafficking, as well as reducing corruption within the system.
- Improving Law Enforcement: Training and equipping local police forces to more effectively confront cartels and paramilitary groups in remote areas.

## **3. Addressing Socio-Economic Issues**

- Alternative Livelihoods: Investing in rural communities to provide economic alternatives to drug production, such as agriculture, education, and infrastructure projects.
- Prevention and Rehabilitation: Focusing on education, outreach, and rehabilitation programs for individuals at risk of being involved in drug trafficking.

## **4. Fostering Peace and Stability**

- Post-Conflict Reconciliation: Ensuring that peacebuilding efforts continue, especially in regions affected by the long-standing conflict, and supporting the reintegration of former combatants and traffickers.
- Disarmament and Demobilization: Continuing efforts to disarm and demobilize criminal groups, including drug cartels and paramilitary organizations, and integrating them back into society.

## **5. Tackling Demand Reduction**

- Public Awareness Campaigns: Promoting global campaigns to reduce the demand for illicit drugs.
- Cooperation with the Consumer Countries: Ensuring that major consumer countries, like the U.S. and European nations, do more to curb demand for illicit substances.

The most common strategies/methods currently used locally by drug traffickers include:

1. Introducing bags filled with drugs in the sea chests and/or attaching them to the vessel's hull, rudders, anchors, propeller, vents, or water inlets; using divers while the vessel is berthed or at anchorage.
2. Hiding relatively small amounts of drugs in certain remote locations onboard (e.g. cabins, funnels, decks, store room or engine room) with collaboration of stevedores or even crew members. In some cases, visitors (with or without collaboration of the crew) board the vessel and quickly hide these packages in certain remote locations.
3. Placing illegal substances within sealed containers before loading. One of the most common methods currently used by drug traffickers all around the world is to break into containers and hide drugs within the cargo, replacing then the security seals (usually this method involves certain level of collaboration from the terminal operators and/or the cargo agents). Most targeted containers are reefers.
4. Burying packages with drugs within bulk cargoes. This method allows high quantities of illegal substances to be moved at any time, usually within the stow.

# Timelines

## 1970s: The Rise of Drug Cartels

In the 1970s, Colombia began its transformation into the epicenter of global drug trafficking. While drug use and trafficking were present earlier, this period saw the foundation of organized cartels that would dominate the illicit drug trade for decades. Initially, Colombia was primarily known for producing and exporting marijuana to the United States. By the mid-1970s, growing demand for cocaine and its high profitability shifted the focus of Colombian traffickers to coca cultivation and cocaine production.

### The Formation of the Medellín Cartel (1976)

One of the most significant developments of the 1970s was the formation of the Medellín Cartel by Pablo Escobar, Carlos Lehder, Jorge Ochoa, and José Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha. The cartel was based in Medellín, Colombia, and started as a loose network of smugglers. These individuals saw an opportunity to capitalize on the burgeoning cocaine market in the United States, where demand was skyrocketing.

Parallel to the Medellín Cartel, the Cali Cartel began its operations in the late 1970s. Founded by the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers and José Santacruz Londoño, this cartel took a more business-like approach to drug trafficking. Unlike the Medellín Cartel's violent methods, the Cali Cartel preferred bribery and corruption to expand their influence, making them less conspicuous in the early stages.

Before cocaine became dominant, the marijuana trade played a crucial role in shaping Colombia's drug economy. The illicit drug trade brought significant wealth to Colombia, particularly to regions like Medellín and Cali. However, this wealth was unevenly distributed and often concentrated in the hands of cartel leaders and their allies. The growing wealth of cartels enabled them to bribe government officials, police, and military personnel. Those who resisted faced intimidation, violence, or assassination. By the late 1970s, Colombia was on the path to becoming the world's leading cocaine exporter, laying the groundwork for the international drug epidemic of the 1980s.

### **The Assassination of Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla (1984)**

The assassination of Colombian Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla marked a significant turning point in Colombia's war against drug cartels and their entrenchment in politics and society. This tragic event highlighted the immense power of the Medellín Cartel and the challenges faced by those who opposed them. Lara Bonilla had publicly denounced Escobar, exposing his links to drug trafficking. This revelation embarrassed Escobar and forced his resignation from Congress, marking the beginning of a bitter feud. The murder shocked the nation and drew international attention. It was a bold statement by the cartels, showing they could target even high-ranking government officials with impunity. The assassination galvanized the Colombian government to take a stronger stance against the cartels. President Belisario Betancur, initially hesitant to engage in a full-scale war against drug traffickers, signed an extradition treaty with the United States shortly after Lara's murder. This allowed Colombian criminals to be tried in the U.S., a move that enraged the cartels.

## **1985: The Palace of Justice Siege**

The Palace of Justice siege on November 6, 1985, was one of Colombia's darkest days, blending narcotrafficking, guerrilla warfare, and state response. The left-wing guerrilla group, M-19 (April 19 Movement), stormed the Palace of Justice in Bogotá, taking over 300 hostages, including Supreme Court justices.

The siege unfolded in dramatic fashion. Armed M-19 militants stormed the building, demanding the repeal of the extradition treaty between Colombia and the United States. The government responded with overwhelming military force, laying siege to the Palace of Justice. Tanks and heavy artillery were used, leading to widespread destruction.

By the end of the siege, over 100 people were dead, including 11 of the 25 Supreme Court justices. Many hostages were killed, and the building was destroyed by fire.

-Extradition as a Focal Point: The siege highlighted how deeply the cartels feared extradition to the U.S., where they could not manipulate the judicial system.

## **1989: Medellín Cartel's Terror Campaign**

The Colombian government, with U.S. support, intensified its crackdown on the cartels. Escobar retaliated with a campaign of terror.

The Avianca Flight 203 Bombing: On November 27, 1989, Escobar's operatives bombed Avianca Flight 203, killing all 107 passengers and crew. The bombing was intended to kill presidential candidate César Gaviria, though Gaviria had not boarded the flight. Escobar's campaign included bombings in urban areas, assassination of politicians and judges, and the targeting of journalists critical of his operations.

The bombing shocked the global community and cemented Escobar's reputation as a global menace. The U.S. ramped up its support for Colombia, providing intelligence, equipment, and training to combat drug cartels.

### **1991: Escobar's "Surrender" and La Catedral**

Facing mounting pressure from the Colombian government and the U.S., Pablo Escobar agreed to surrender in exchange for leniency. In 1991, Colombia abolished extradition in a move widely seen as a concession to the cartels. Escobar turned himself in but negotiated his terms. Escobar was imprisoned in La Catedral, a luxurious prison he built himself. The prison was a mockery of justice and exposed the Colombian government's inability to control the drug lord. In 1992, Escobar escaped when the government attempted to transfer him to a standard prison. His escape marked the beginning of his downfall.

### **1993: Death of Pablo Escobar**

Following Escobar's escape, a combined effort by the Colombian government, U.S. DEA, and a vigilante group known as Los Pepes led to his capture. On December 2, 1993, Escobar was killed in a rooftop shootout in Medellín. Escobar's death marked the end of the Medellín Cartel's dominance. With Medellín weakened, the Cali Cartel emerged as the primary player in the cocaine trade.

### **1994-1995: The Fall of the Cali Cartel**

Cali Cartel operated more discreetly, relying on corruption rather than violence. However, their control over 80% of the global cocaine market attracted international attention.

In 1994-1995, Colombian authorities, with U.S. assistance, captured the Cali Cartel's leaders, including the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers. Their arrest was a significant victory, but it left a power vacuum in the drug trade.

**Late 1990s:** Emergence of Paramilitary Groups (AUC) As cartels disbanded, paramilitary groups like the AUC (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia) took over the drug trade. Initially formed to counter left-wing guerrillas, the AUC became heavily involved in narcotrafficking, using drug money to fund their operations. The AUC established vast networks controlling coca cultivation and trafficking. The AUC's operations resulted in widespread human rights abuses, including massacres and forced displacement.

- State Challenges: The rise of paramilitary groups blurred the line between politics, insurgency, and narcotrafficking, complicating government responses.

This period (1985–1999) marked Colombia's transformation into a battleground for cartels, paramilitaries, and the state, with profound consequences for its society and international drug trafficking.

## 2000: Launch of Plan Colombia

In 2000, Colombia and the United States initiated \*\*Plan Colombia\*\*, a \$7.5 billion initiative aimed at reducing cocaine production, combating insurgent groups like FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), and strengthening Colombia's government institutions. This plan was born out of Colombia's struggle to contain the influence of drug cartels and narco paramilitary groups that were funding guerrilla and paramilitary operations.

The U.S. provided helicopters, intelligence, and training to Colombian security forces to dismantle drug networks and combat guerrilla groups. Efforts were made to strengthen Colombia's judiciary, law enforcement, and governance to fight corruption and enhance the rule of law.

Coca cultivation decreased in some areas, but drug traffickers adapted by relocating production to remote regions. Increased violence as insurgent and paramilitary groups retaliated against eradication efforts. Critics argued the plan disproportionately harmed rural communities and failed to address the root causes of coca cultivation, such as poverty and lack of alternative livelihoods.

**2002: Rise of Álvaro Uribe's Presidency and Crackdown on FARC:** Álvaro Uribe was elected Colombia's president in 2002, running on a platform of security and anti-terrorism. His policies, known as \*\*Democratic Security\*\*, focused on weakening FARC and other armed groups, which had become deeply entrenched in the drug trade.

Negotiations began with paramilitary groups like the AUC (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia) to disarm their members in exchange for reduced sentences.

FARC lost control of key territories and cocoa-producing regions, but many of its factions doubled down on narcotrafficking to sustain their operations. Paramilitary groups formally disbanded by 2006, but splinter groups, known as \*\*BACRIM\*\* (Criminal Bands), emerged, continuing the drug trade.

## **2003-2006: Demobilization of the AUC and Rise of BACRIM**

The AUC, which had grown powerful through its involvement in the drug trade, agreed to demobilize under Uribe's government. Over 30,000 paramilitary fighters surrendered their weapons. Many mid-level commanders refused to demobilize, forming splinter groups known as \*\*BACRIM\*\* (Bandas Criminales). BACRIM, such as Clan del Golfo, adopted decentralized structures and continued to control narcotrafficking routes and coca cultivation. Rural communities faced continued violence and displacement as BACRIM fought for control of cocoa-producing regions.

## **2008: Operation Jaque and Decline of FARC Leadership**

FARC faced significant setbacks during Uribe's presidency, culminating in \*\*Operation Jaque\*\* in July 2008. This military operation rescued 15 hostages, including former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, from FARC captivity. Operation Jaque was a major blow to FARC's public image and morale, showcasing the effectiveness of Colombia's military under U.S.-backed initiatives. FARC's leadership suffered significant losses, including the deaths of key commanders like Raúl Reyes.

## **2009-2010: Coca Cultivation and Narco-Adaption**

Despite successes in reducing coca cultivation through eradication efforts, traffickers adapted by

1. Moving coca fields to more remote, harder-to-access regions.
2. Using small, independent networks to evade detection and prosecution.
3. Diversifying operations to include illegal gold mining and extortion.

Colombian cartels began collaborating with Mexican drug cartels, such as the Sinaloa Cartel, to smuggle cocaine into the U.S. and Europe. Cocaine routes expanded through West Africa into Europe, making the trade a global challenge.

### **2010-2012: Emergence of Neo-Paramilitary Groups (BACRIM)**

By the 2010s, the remnants of the AUC had restructured into smaller but highly organized neo-paramilitary groups, collectively referred to as BACRIM. These groups, such as Clan del Golfo, filled the power vacuum left by the demobilized AUC and exploited the drug trade as their primary revenue source.

#### Activities of BACRIM

- Drug Trafficking: BACRIM controlled key cocaine-producing regions and smuggling routes.
- Extortion and Illegal Mining: These groups diversified their operations into extortion, illegal gold mining, and human trafficking.

Collusion with Mexican Cartels: It worked closely with Mexican cartels like the Sinaloa and Zetas to smuggle cocaine to the U.S. and Europe.

### **2012-2016: Peace Negotiations with FARC**

After decades of conflict, President Juan Manuel Santos initiated peace talks with FARC in 2012. The negotiations aimed to end one of the longest-running conflicts in modern history, which was heavily fueled by narcotrafficking.

#### Key Agreements

1. Demobilization and Disarmament: FARC agreed to lay down arms and transition into a political party.
2. Land Reform: Addressing rural inequality, a key driver of coca cultivation.

3. Substitution of Coca Cultivation: Farmers were incentivized to replace coca crops with legal alternatives.

### **Impact of the Peace Agreement (2016)**

- Over 7,000 FARC fighters demobilized, but not all complied, leading to the rise of dissident factions.
- The peace deal won Santos the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 but faced criticism for leniency toward former FARC members.

### **2016-2018: Rise of FARC Dissidents and ELN**

Despite the peace deal, many FARC members rejected the agreement and formed dissident groups. Simultaneously, the ELN (National Liberation Army), Colombia's last major guerrilla group, expanded its influence. Dissidents and ELN fighters took over coca-producing areas vacated by FARC. Clashes between BACRIM, FARC dissidents, and ELN escalated violence in rural areas. These groups extended their operations into Venezuela, exploiting political instability there. The resurgence of violence undermined public confidence in the peace process. Coca cultivation reached record levels by 2017, as the power vacuum allowed traffickers to expand production.

### **2017: Cocaine Production Peaks**

Colombia's coca cultivation reached an all-time high in 2017, producing an estimated 1,400 metric tons of cocaine.

#### **Impact**

- Increased pressure on the Colombian government from the U.S. to curb production.
- Further militarization of anti-drug operations, leading to clashes with local communities.

## **2018: Election of Iván Duque and Hardline Policies**

In 2018, Iván Duque was elected Colombia's president on a platform of reversing perceived leniencies in the FARC peace deal and intensifying the war on drugs. While coca eradication efforts increased, traffickers adapted by relocating production to more remote areas. Duque's approach led to strained relations with rural communities, many of whom depended on coca cultivation for survival.

## **2019-2020: Escalation of Violence and International Drug Trafficking**

Colombian cartels expanded their partnerships with Mexican cartels, particularly the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation Cartels, to smuggle cocaine globally. Violence against social leaders, human rights activists, and community organizers surged, with over 800 killed between 2016 and 2020. Many of these leaders opposed coca cultivation or worked on land restitution. The pandemic disrupted drug trafficking routes temporarily but also increased poverty and unemployment, making rural populations more vulnerable to recruitment by criminal groups. Cocaine production continued to rise, highlighting the limitations of eradication-focused policies. Colombia remained the world's largest cocaine producer, with the drug trade fueling corruption, violence, and environmental destruction.

## **2020: Ongoing Operations Against Clan del Golfo**

The Clan del Golfo, Colombia's largest criminal organization, continued to dominate the drug trade, engaging in cocaine production, illegal mining, and extortion.

Colombian authorities intensified operations against the Clan del Golfo, resulting in significant arrests and drug seizures. In November 2020, a combined Panama-Colombia operation led to a \$70 million drug haul. While these actions temporarily disrupted the cartel's activities, the decentralized nature of the organization allowed it to adapt and continue its operations.

### **2021: Capture of Dairo Antonio Úsuga (Alias "Otoniel")**

Dairo Antonio Úsuga, known as "Otoniel," was the notorious leader of the Clan del Golfo, overseeing extensive drug trafficking networks. After years of pursuit, Colombian security forces captured Otoniel in October 2021 during a large-scale military operation involving over 500 personnel. Otoniel's capture dealt a substantial blow to the Clan del Golfo, leading to internal power struggles and a temporary decrease in their activities.

### **2022: Extradition and Sentencing of Otoniel**

Following his capture, Otoniel faced charges in both Colombia and the United States for drug trafficking and related crimes. In May 2022, Otoniel was extradited to the United States to face charges of drug trafficking, marking a significant step in international cooperation against narcotrafficking. In August 2023, Otoniel was sentenced to 45 years in prison by a U.S. court, underscoring the international community's commitment to combating drug cartels. The extradition and sentencing of Otoniel highlighted the effectiveness of international collaboration in addressing transnational criminal organizations. However, the Clan del Golfo continued to operate under new leadership, indicating the resilience of such groups.

## **2023: Escalation of Violence and Government Response**

Despite leadership losses, the Clan del Golfo and other criminal organizations intensified their activities, leading to increased violence and challenges for the Colombian government. In February 2023, reports emerged of internal killings within the Clan del Golfo, including the assassination of high-ranking members like "Siopas," indicating internal power struggles. In early 2023, the Colombian government declared a ceasefire with the Clan del Golfo as part of peace efforts. However, continued criminal activities by the group led to the suspension of the ceasefire in March 2023.

## **2024: Continued Efforts and Challenges**

The Colombian government persisted in its efforts to dismantle drug cartels and address the socio-economic factors contributing to the drug trade.

**22 October 2024:** President Gustavo Petro announced that his government plans to buy coca from farmers while they are integrated into Colombia's legal economy. The announcement immediately sparked controversy, because of international legislation that criminalizes the buying and selling of the plant that, among other things, is used to produce cocaine.

**23 October 2024:** Colombia's potential cocaine exports soared to a record 1,925 metric tons in 2023, despite increasingly successful efforts to intercept drug shipments, according to numbers released by the United Nations and the government."

**25 October 2024:** Mafia cocaine trafficker arrested after posing by Escobar's grave. Originally from Caserta, north of Naples, he 'specialised in the illegal importation of cocaine' and served as a key point of contact between mafia clans and the Colombian cocaine producers, Italian police said in a statement on Friday.

**27 November 2024:** Colombia-led operation seizes world record 225 tonnes of cocaine, and uncovers new Australia trafficking route. Operation Orion, a cooperative operation between 62 countries, finds some of the record haul on a new drug route being used by a 'narco submarine'. In the six-week Operation Orion, law enforcement agencies and other organisations from 62 countries halted six semi-submersible vessels stuffed with cocaine and confiscated 1,400 tonnes of drugs in total, including more than 1,000 tonnes of marijuana.

**3 December 2024:** Drug cartel grind to a halt with six major arrests in Colombia. 5.8 tonnes of cocaine seized and 32 arrested as law enforcement cooperation between the EU countries and Colombia intensifies.

**5 December 2024:** One of Colombia's legendary drug lords and a key operator of the Medellin cocaine cartel has been released from a U.S. prison and is expected to be deported back home. Records from the U.S. Bureau of Prisons show Fabio Ochoa Vásquez was released Tuesday after completing 25 years of a 30-year prison sentence.

**6 December 2024:** Russia arrests suspected members of infamous Colombia cartel, seizes \$55 million of cocaine bound for Europe. The suspects were caught loading 570 kilograms (1,250 pounds) of the illegal substance into a container intended for shipment to the European Union, according to Russia's FSB security services. The FSB said the smugglers brought the drugs into Russia from Peru hidden in a vehicle, and that they were members of Colombia's infamous Cali Cartel.



## Keywords

**FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia):** A Marxist guerrilla group that, historically, was deeply involved in the drug trade as a means to fund its operations. While the FARC formally disbanded in 2016 after signing a peace agreement, many of its former members have joined other criminal organizations or narcotrafficking groups. The FARC is a key example of a group that blended political ideology with drug trafficking to fund its activities. Even after the peace deal, many ex-FARC members have continued drug trade activities, contributing to the ongoing violence and instability in Colombia.

**Plan Colombia:** A U.S.-backed initiative launched in the late 1990s aimed at reducing drug production and improving security in Colombia. It focused on military aid, anti-narcotics training, and economic support for development in drug-producing areas. Although Plan Colombia had some success in curbing drug production, it faced criticism for its military-heavy approach, which sometimes contributed to human rights violations and didn't address the root causes of drug trafficking, such as poverty and lack of alternative livelihoods.

**Security Council Resolution:** An official decision or action taken by the United Nations Security Council to address an international issue, such as drug trafficking or organized crime. The UN Security Council may pass resolutions to impose sanctions, offer financial aid, or call for action from member states to combat the influence of drug cartels and paramilitary groups in Colombia and other affected countries.

**The Medellín Cartel:** One of the most infamous drug cartels in Colombia, led by Pablo Escobar, it controlled the majority of the cocaine trade to the U.S. in the 1980s and early 1990s. The Medellín Cartel was one of the main driving forces behind Colombia's position in the international drug trafficking market, influencing not only Colombia's internal security issues but also its international relations with countries like the U.S.

**Narco-Paramilitary Groups:** Armed groups in Colombia, often with ties to drug cartels, that use paramilitary tactics (like bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations) to enforce control over regions that produce or transport drugs. These groups maintain the influence of cartels in the regions where they operate. By exerting military and social control over drug-producing areas, they become key players in the violence and instability associated with drug trafficking.

**Peace Process (FARC Peace Agreement):** The peace agreement signed between the Colombian government and FARC in 2016, which aimed to end the armed conflict and transition FARC members into political life while addressing rural development, drug trade, and political issues. The peace process is critical to understanding how Colombia is working to reduce drug-related violence and curb the influence of paramilitary groups. The success or failure of these peace agreements is crucial in deciding whether Colombia can effectively combat narco-violence in the long term.

**Anti-Narcotics Law:** A series of legal measures passed by the Colombian government to fight the production, trafficking, and use of illegal drugs, including specific laws targeting cartels and paramilitary groups. This law is directly related to government efforts to reduce the power and influence of cartels, while also addressing the legal framework for tackling drug trafficking within Colombia.

**Coca Eradication Program:** A government-led initiative aimed at eliminating coca plants (used to produce cocaine) from Colombia through various methods like manual eradication and aerial fumigation. This program is directly tied to the larger efforts to reduce the raw materials for the cocaine trade, which is the backbone of Colombia's drug trafficking problems.

**The Colombian Conflict:** A multi-decade armed conflict in Colombia involving guerrilla groups, paramilitaries, and the Colombian government. It involved the FARC, ELN (National Liberation Army), and various paramilitary organizations, many of which were funded by the drug trade. The Colombian Conflict was exacerbated by the profits from the drug trade, fueling violence and instability. Its impact continues to be felt today, as some armed groups still use drug trafficking as a means to fund their operations.

**The Anti-Drug Certification Act:** A U.S. law that required countries to meet certain criteria in the fight against drug trafficking in order to continue receiving American aid. Colombia was often subject to this certification due to its role as a major cocaine producer. This act brought international pressure on Colombia to curb its role in the drug trade and provided support for anti-narcotics operations, such as Plan Colombia.

**Paramilitary Demobilization:** The process of disbanding paramilitary groups in Colombia, particularly the AUC, as part of peace negotiations. This involved providing former fighters with amnesty or legal protections in exchange for their disarmament and exit from the drug trade. Paramilitary demobilization is crucial for reducing the power of narco-paramilitary groups, who play a significant role in the drug trade.

# Geopolitical Players

When it comes to key countries involved in the issue of countering the rising influence of cartels and narco-paramilitary groups in Colombia to curb international drug trafficking, there are several countries and regional players that play a significant role.

## Colombia

- Role: As the country most directly impacted by the drug trade, Colombia is the central actor in this issue. Colombia is both a major producer of illicit drugs (especially cocaine) and a key battleground for the fight against drug cartels and paramilitary groups. The Colombian government is responsible for implementing drug control policies, law enforcement, and peacebuilding efforts, including attempts to dismantle cartels and paramilitary groups.

## United States

- Role: The U.S. is the largest consumer of illicit drugs from Colombia, especially cocaine, and has been a major partner in the fight against drug trafficking in the region. The U.S. government has provided Colombia with significant financial aid and military assistance under initiatives like Plan Colombia.

## Mexico

- Role: Mexico plays a significant role in the drug trade as both a major transit country for drugs from Colombia and a producer of certain illegal substances. Mexican cartels, such as the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), are heavily involved in trafficking cocaine, heroin, and other drugs through Central America to the U.S.

## **Peru**

- Role: Peru is another key producer of coca plants, which are processed into cocaine and trafficked internationally. Peru shares a border with Colombia, and the two countries cooperate in counter-narcotics operations. While Colombia is the dominant producer, Peru is also a significant player in the South American drug trade.

## **Brazil**

- Role: Brazil serves as a transit country for drugs moving from Colombia to global markets, particularly to Europe. Brazilian law enforcement agencies collaborate with Colombia and other South American countries to combat drug trafficking.

## **Venezuela**

- Role: Venezuela has become an increasingly important transit point for drugs moving from Colombia to other parts of the world. The country has faced instability in recent years, and there are reports of collaboration between Venezuelan officials and Colombian cartels.

## **European Union (EU) Countries**

- Role: Europe is a key destination for drugs produced in Colombia, especially cocaine. The EU is involved in both counternarcotics efforts and promoting international cooperation to tackle transnational drug trafficking. It also supports programs to reduce demand for illegal drugs within its borders.

## **Other Latin American Countries**

- Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, and others may not be direct producers of illicit drugs, but they are often involved in the trafficking chain, either as transit countries or through links with organized crime groups. These countries collaborate with Colombia and international organizations to fight drug cartels and paramilitary groups.

## **Interpol (International Criminal Police Organization)**

- Role: Interpol supports cross-border cooperation in tracking and dismantling transnational criminal organizations, including drug cartels. It helps law enforcement agencies in Colombia and other countries share intelligence, coordinate operations, and track illicit drug shipments across borders.

## **Organization of American States (OAS)**

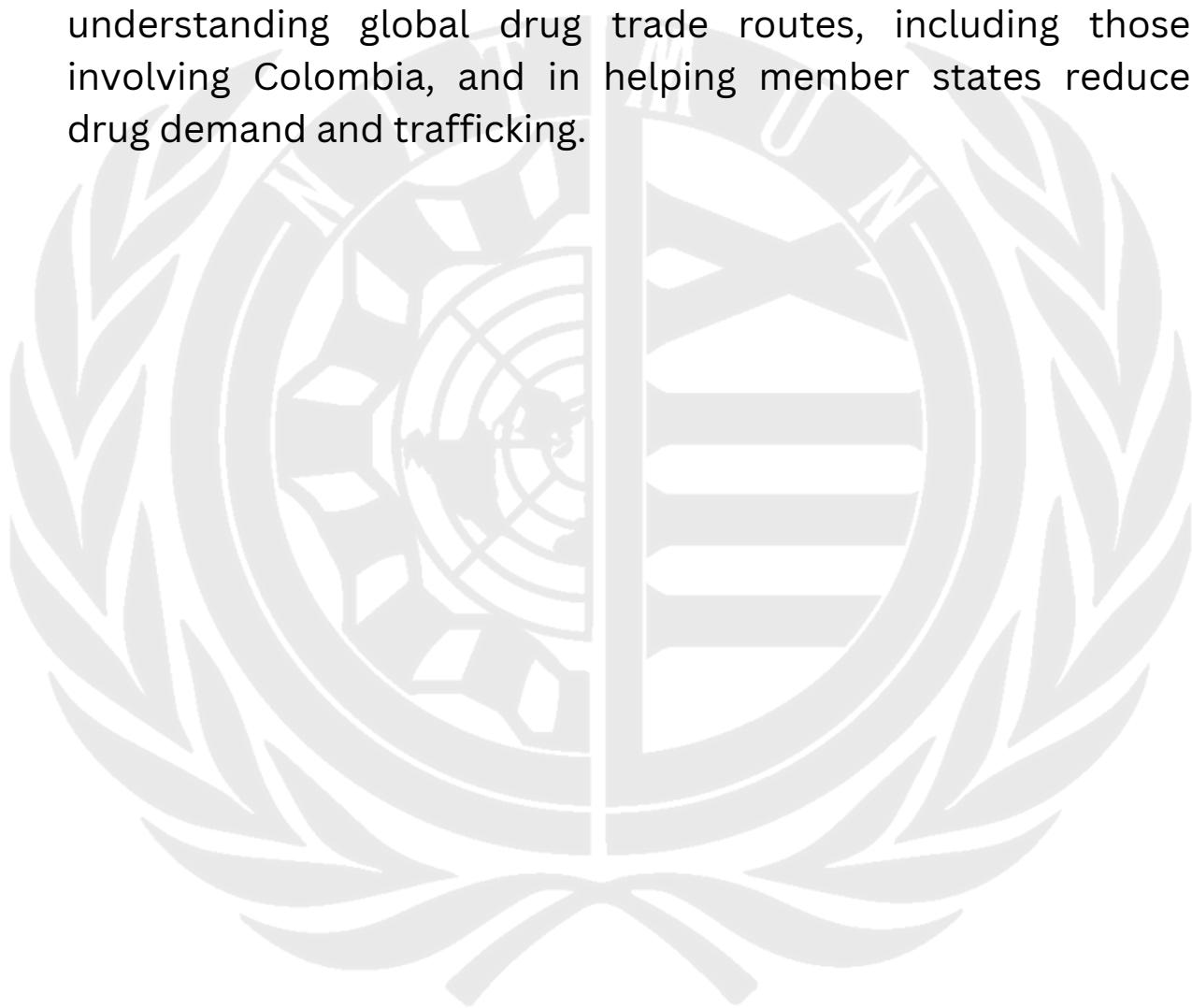
- Role: The OAS plays a significant role in promoting regional cooperation in the Americas to tackle drug trafficking and organized crime. Through its Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), it coordinates efforts between countries in the region to develop common strategies and implement joint initiatives for drug control, demand reduction, and institutional strengthening.

## **World Customs Organization (WCO)**

- Role: The WCO focuses on improving the effectiveness of customs enforcement to prevent drug smuggling and trafficking. It provides tools and technical assistance to customs authorities worldwide, including in Colombia, to detect and intercept illicit drugs at international borders and ports.

## **European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)**

- Role: The EMCDDA is a European Union agency that provides information and analysis about drug-related issues in Europe. While its focus is on Europe, it plays an important role in understanding global drug trade routes, including those involving Colombia, and in helping member states reduce drug demand and trafficking.



## Conclusion

Addressing the rising influence of cartels and narco-paramilitary groups in Colombia to curb international drug trafficking requires a multi-faceted approach combining strengthened international cooperation, enhanced rule of law, socio-economic reforms, and a focus on human rights. Colombia's unique geopolitical position and history make it a critical player in global anti-narcotics efforts, necessitating robust support from neighboring countries, international organizations, and consumer nations like the U.S. and the EU.

Sustainable solutions lie in empowering rural communities with alternative livelihoods, fostering peace through reconciliation efforts, and prioritizing demand reduction in consumer markets. Continued coordination with global entities such as the UNODC, Interpol, and regional actors will be pivotal in dismantling transnational drug networks. Only by addressing the root causes of the drug trade and ensuring long-term socio-economic stability can Colombia hope to transform into a resilient society, free from the grip of narcotics and organized crime.

# Questionnaire

- What are the primary illicit drugs produced in Colombia, and how do they affect both local and global markets?
- What are the primary cartels and paramilitary groups involved in drug trafficking in Colombia today?
- What are the social, economic, and political consequences of drug trafficking in Colombia?
- How have historical efforts, such as Plan Colombia, shaped the current landscape of drug trafficking and anti-narcotics measures in Colombia?
- How can the international community, through the UNODC, assist Colombia in strengthening its rule of law and combating drug trafficking?
- What is the role of major international actors (e.g., the United States, European Union) in supporting Colombia's anti-drug efforts?
- What are the key challenges faced by the Colombian government in reducing drug production and trafficking?
- What is the relationship between drug cartels and narco-paramilitary groups in Colombia, and how does this complicate efforts to combat drug trafficking?

- What comprehensive measures can be proposed to ensure sustainable and long-term solutions to drug trafficking in Colombia?
- How can Colombia's rural communities be empowered to transition away from illicit drug production to alternative livelihoods?
- What role should the UNODC play in supporting Colombia's efforts to reduce the demand for illicit drugs internationally?
- What measures can the international community take to improve cooperation between neighboring countries (e.g., Venezuela, Panama) to address cross-border drug trafficking?
- How can the effectiveness of Colombia's anti-drug trafficking policies be measured, and what key indicators should be used?
- How can Colombia balance the need for strong military and police interventions with the protection of human rights in areas affected by drug trafficking?

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