
Background Guide 2016

Commission on Narcotic Drugs



Enhancing international cooperation to
strengthen efforts in West Africa to
counter illicit drug trafficking

Letter from the Executive Board

Chairperson: DM Varun

Vice-Chairperson: Karthi Kumar S

Welcome to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, one of the unique committees at the BITS MUN Goa 2017. First off, we expect you to do utmost research on the agenda. This background will serve as a starting point of your research and should not be considered as the whole research. As some of you would already know, research aka preparation for an MUN has no end. The more you research, the better you use it, the better you will score and you will have a better chance of winning it. It is also highly important to know that only debate with or without research is not going to earn you more points as same as that someone who uses every aspect of scoring like lobbying, paper work, raising relevant motions in the committee, raising relevant points of order and points of information, etc.

Although the agenda is constrained to West Africa, we expect you to discuss major drug crises worldwide, so that you have a better insight before moving on towards the solutions.

We are glad to be on the Executive Board of the CND at BITS MUN GOA 2017 and are looking forward for a “high” and heated debate.

Regards,

The Executive Board,

Commission on Narcotic Drugs

COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

-Commission on Narcotic Drugs

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) was established by Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 9(I) in 1946, to assist the ECOSOC in supervising the application of the international drug control treaties. In 1991, the General Assembly (GA) expanded the mandate of the CND to enable it to function as the governing body of the UNODC. ECOSOC resolution 1999/30 requested the CND to structure its agenda with two distinct segments: a normative segment for discharging treaty-based and normative functions; and an operational segment for exercising the role as the governing body of UNODC.

The Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation Towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem of 2009 is the main policy document of the United Nations guiding action by the international community in this field. It reaffirms the prime role played by the CND as one of the United Nations organs with prime responsibility for drug control matters. In line with its mandates, the CND monitors the world drug situation, develops strategies on international drug control and recommends measures to address the world drug problem.

The Commission adopted at the High Level Review in March 2014 the Joint Ministerial Statement, which identifies achievements, challenges and priorities for further action.

In the Political Declaration and Plan of Action of 2009, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs recommended that the General Assembly hold a Special Session on the World Drug Problem. The CND led the preparations for the General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) in 2016 and negotiated the outcome document. The Commission works on the follow-up to the UNGASS, implementing the recommendations made in the outcome document, on the way to the target date of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action in 2019.

The CND meets annually when it considers and adopts a range of decisions and resolutions. Intersessional meetings of the CND are regularly convened to provide policy guidance to UNODC. Towards the end of each year, the CND meets at a reconvened session to consider budgetary and administrative matters as the governing body of the United Nations drug programme.

Subsidiary bodies of the CND are the Subcommission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East and the meetings of the Heads of National Drug

Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEAs) for Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe respectively. The purpose of these meetings is to coordinate activities and to monitor new trends within the respective regions. The recommendations of the subsidiary bodies are submitted to the sessions of the CND for its consideration and follow-up action.

Case Study

Philippines Drug War:

Rodrigo Duterte won the 2016 Philippine presidential election on May 9 promising to kill tens of thousands of criminals, and urging people to kill drug addicts. As Mayor of Davao City, Duterte was criticized by groups like Human Rights Watch for the extrajudicial killings of hundreds of street children, petty criminals and drug users carried out by the Davao Death Squad, a vigilante group with which he was allegedly involved.

Despite earlier pronouncements in front of the media and public crowds, Duterte has denied any involvement in the alleged vigilante killings, and said that the Davao Death Squad does not exist. According to a spokesman, Duterte does not support or endorse the extrajudicial killings of drug suspects. Foreign affairs secretary Perfecto Yasay Jr. stated that Duterte "has always ensured that there will be investigations of any allegations of extrajudicial killings." According to the Philippines Dangerous Drugs Board, the government drug policy-making body, out of a population of approximately 100 million, 1.8 million Filipinos used illegal drugs in 2015, the latest official survey published, down from 6.7 million in 2004. Duterte said in his state of the nation address that data from the Philippines Drug Enforcement Agency showed there were 3 million drug addicts 2 to 3 years ago, which he said may have increased to 3.7 million.

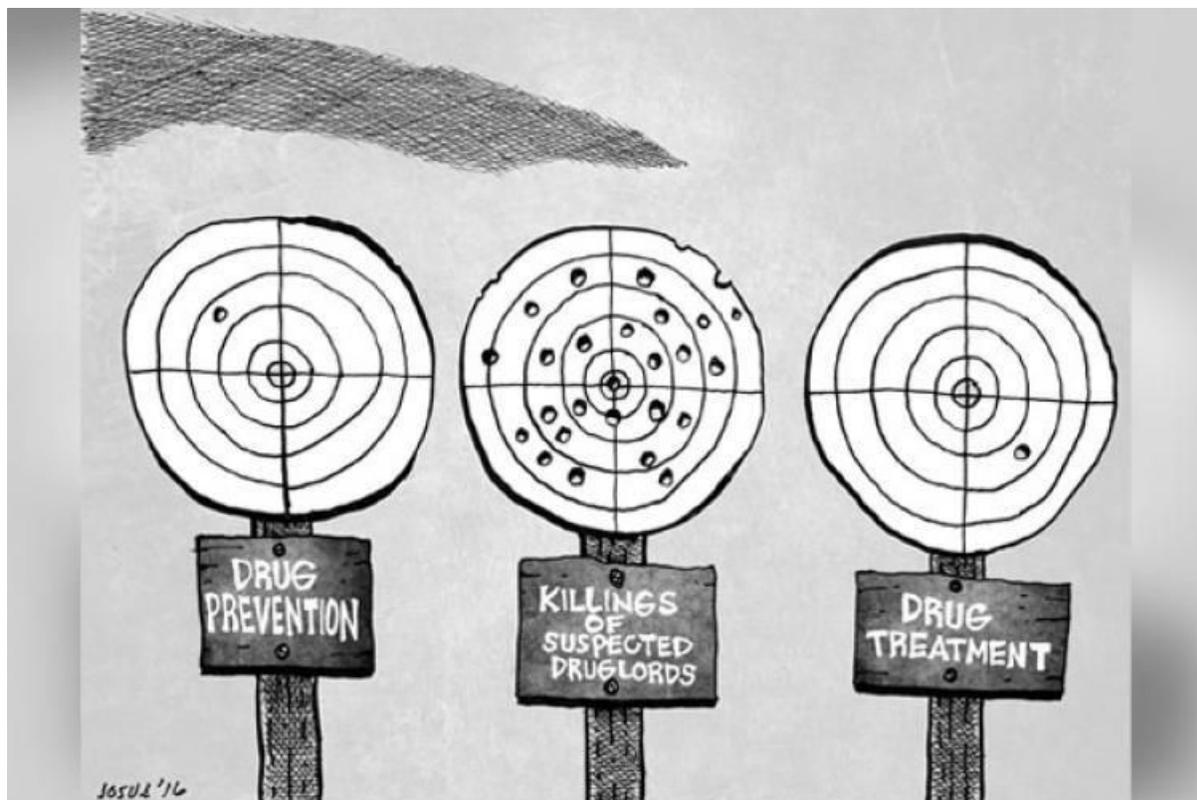
President Duterte has alleged that the Philippines is becoming a "narco-state" in order to justify the so-called war on drugs. There is little evidence to show this is true. The Philippines has a low prevalence rate of drug users, compared to the global average, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). -Amnesty, 7/10/2016



Gary Song-Huann Lin, the representative of Taiwan in the Philippines, welcomed Duterte's plan to declare a war against criminality and illegal drugs. He said Taiwan is ready to help the Philippines combat cross-border crimes like human and drug trafficking. On July 19, 2016, Lingxiao Li, spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Manila announced China's support for the Drug War: "China fully understands that the Philippine government under the leadership of H. E. President Rodrigo Duterte has taken it as a top priority in cracking down drug-related crimes. China has expressed explicitly to the new administration China's willingness for effective cooperation in this regard, and would like to work out a specific plan of action with the Philippine side." The statement made no reference to extrajudicial killings, and called illegal drugs the "common enemy of mankind". On September 27, the Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua reiterated that "Illegal drugs are the enemy of all mankind" in a statement confirming Chinese support for the Duterte administration.

The European Parliament expressed concern over the extrajudicial killings after a resolution on September 15, stating: "Drug trafficking and drug abuse in the Philippines

remain a serious national and international concern, note MEPs. They understand that millions of people are hurt by the high level of drug addiction and its consequences in the country but are also concerned by the 'extraordinarily high numbers killed during police operations in the context of an intensified anti-crime and anti-drug campaign.'" In response, at a press conference Duterte made an obscene hand gesture and called British and French representatives "hypocrites" because their ancestors had killed thousands of Arabs and others in the colonial era. He said: "When I read the EU condemnation I told them fuck you. You are doing it in atonement for your sins. They are now strict because they have guilty feelings. Who did I kill? Assuming that it's true? 1,700? How many have they killed?"



Indonesian National Police Chief General Tito Karnavian commented in regards to Indonesia's rejection of a similar policy for Indonesia: "Shoot on sight policy leads to abuse of power. We still believe in presumption of innocence. Lethal actions are only warranted if there is an immediate threat against officers... there should not be a deliberate attempt to kill". In September 2016 Budi Waseso, head of Indonesia's National Narcotics Agency (BNN), said that he was currently contemplating copying the Philippines' hardline tactics against drug traffickers. He said that the Agency planned a

major increase in armaments and recruitment. An Agency spokesman later attempted to play down the comments, stating: "We can't shoot criminals just like that, we have to follow the rules."

On October 16, prior to Duterte's departure for a state visit to Brunei, the President said he would seek the support of that country for his campaign against illegal drugs and Brunei's continued assistance to achieve peace and progress in Mindanao. This was responded positively from Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah in the next day according to Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay Jr. Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said "he respect the method undertaken by the Philippine government as it is suitable for their country situation", while stressing that "Malaysia will never follow such example as we have our own methods with one of those such as seizing assets used in drug trafficking with resultant funds to be channelled back towards rehabilitation, prevention and enforcement of laws against drugs".

The International Criminal Court (ICC) chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda expressed concern, over the drug-related killings in the country, on October 13. In her statement, Bensouda said that the high officials of the country "seem to condone such killings and further seem to encourage State forces and civilians alike to continue targeting these individuals with lethal force." She also warns that any person in the country who provoke "in acts of mass violence by ordering, requesting, encouraging or contributing, in any other manner, to the commission of crimes within the jurisdiction of ICC" will be prosecuted before the court. About that, Duterte is open for the investigation by the ICC, Malacañang said.

On November 17, Sweden voiced their concerns over the continuous drug war. Its ambassador to the Philippines, Harald Fries said "As far as I know, the policies are stable and the rules are stable, but of course in Sweden as in many other countries, there is some concern about the large number of killings going on in this country. I can't say anything more than it is a concern, and we follow it and we trust that the Philippine government is investigating these killings. And that's what we hear that the government is doing".

On December 3 during a phone conversation between Duterte and President-elect

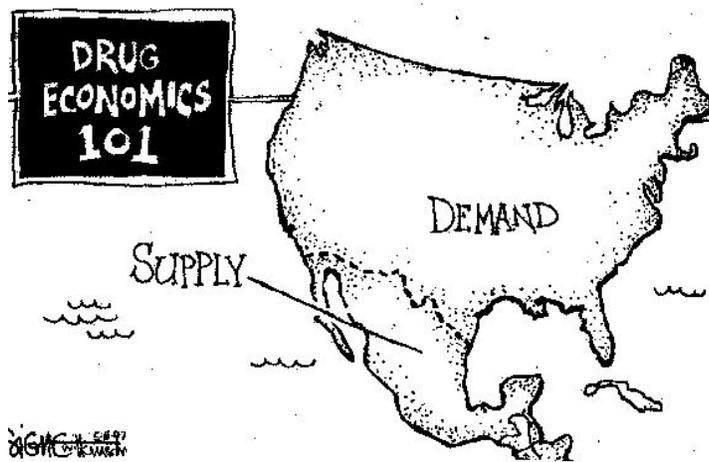
Donald Trump the later called the government role in the "war on drugs" as done at "the right way".

On December 21 (PST), Grammy-winning American singer James Taylor posted on social media that he had cancelled his concert in Manila, which was set for February 2017, citing the increasing number of deaths related to the country's drug war.

On December 24, U.S. Senators Marco Rubio, Edward Markey, and Christopher Coons expressed their concerns regarding the alleged extrajudicial killings and human rights violations in Duterte's war on drugs. Through a letter sent to the U.S. Department of State, they noted that instead of addressing the drug problem, investing in treatment programs or approaching the issue with an emphasis on health, Duterte has "pledged to kill another 20,000 to 30,000 people, many simply because they suffer from a drug use disorder." Rubio, Markey and Coons also questioned U.S. secretary of state John Kerry's pledge of \$32-million funding for training and other law-enforcement assistance during his visit to Manila.

Mexican Drug Cartel:

The Mexican Drug War (also known as the Mexican War on Drugs; Spanish: guerra contra el narcotráfico en México) is the Mexican theater of the United States' War on Drugs, involving an ongoing low-intensity asymmetric war between the Mexican Government and various drug trafficking syndicates. Since 2006, when the Mexican military began to intervene, the government's principal goal has been to reduce the drug-related violence. Additionally, the Mexican government has claimed that their primary focus is on dismantling the powerful drug cartels, rather than on preventing drug trafficking, which



is left to U.S. functionaries.

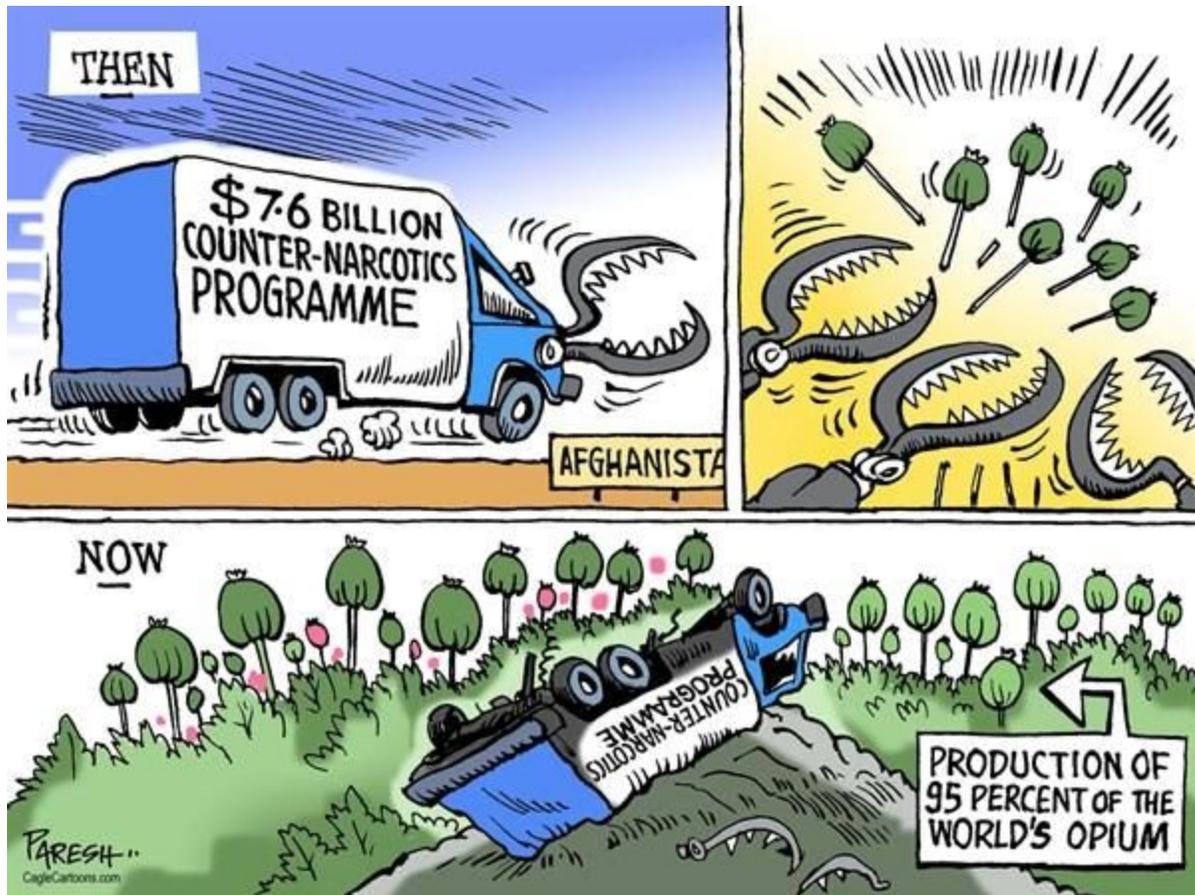
Although Mexican drug cartels, or drug trafficking organizations, have existed for several decades, their influence has increased since the demise of the Colombian Cali and Medellín cartels in the 1990s. Mexican drug cartels now dominate the wholesale illicit drug market and in 2007 controlled 90% of the cocaine entering the United States. Arrests of key cartel leaders, particularly in the Tijuana and Gulf cartels, has led to increasing drug violence as cartels fight for control of the trafficking routes into the United States.

Analysts estimate that wholesale earnings from illicit drug sales range from \$13.6 to \$49.4 billion annually. By the end of Felipe Calderón's administration (2006–12), the official death toll of the Mexican Drug War was at least 60,000. Estimates set the death toll above 120,000 killed by 2013, not including 27,000 missing. By far, the Mexican Drug Cartel remains to be one of the major problems that is difficult to tackle.



Afghanistan Drug Production crisis:

Afghanistan's opium poppy production goes into more than 90% of heroin worldwide. Afghanistan has been the world's greatest illicit opium producer, ahead of Burma (Myanmar), the "Golden Triangle", and Latin America since 1992, excluding the year 2001. Afghanistan is the main producer of opium in the "Golden Crescent". Opium production in Afghanistan has been on the rise since U.S. occupation started in 2001.



Based on UNODC data, opium poppy cultivation was more in each of the growing seasons in the periods between 2004 and 2007 than in any one year during Taliban rule. More land is now used for opium in Afghanistan than is used for coca cultivation in Latin America. In 2007, 92% of the non-pharmaceutical-grade opiates on the world market originated in Afghanistan. This amounts to an export value of about \$4 billion, with a quarter being earned by opium farmers and the rest going to district officials, insurgents, warlords, and drug traffickers. In the seven years (1994–2000) prior to a Taliban opium ban, the Afghan farmers' share of gross income from opium was divided among 200,000 families. In addition to opiates, Afghanistan is also the largest producer of cannabis (mostly as hashish) in the world. In 2004, a fatwa was issued by Muslim clerics claiming that opium production is contrary to the sharia law and that opium producers would face punishments in accordance with the sharia.

However, in the last decade both the Taliban and the Karzai government have actively

protected the opium trade, while the US forces have mostly turned a blind eye. The US invasion has in fact been causal in a massive increase in opium production, with public eradication efforts being largely window dressing. Notably, there was a large increase in the area under cultivation between 2002 and 2014.

The following areas of Afghanistan play a role in the drug traffic:

Production:

"Southern region" of Helmand and Kandahar provinces, on the border with Pakistan, which are the highest-volume areas for drug transactions. There is a traditional route from Helmand, through Pakistan, to Iran.

Smuggling:

Herat, in Herat Province, the Northern Alliance stronghold, which borders Iran
Faizabad, in Badakhshan province, which has borders with Tajikistan, Pakistan, and China.

Labor practices:

According to the U.S. Department of Labor's 2014 List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor, opium production is one of the sectors that rely on child labor in Afghanistan. Poppies being the source of the crude drug, children are still recruited to harvest these flowers in the country's farming fields.

Opium is king in Afghanistan

The opium trade has funded insurgents fighting NATO forces and corrupted the government. Afghanistan is the world's top opium producer.

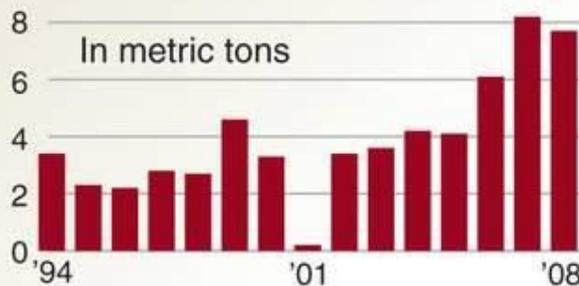
Where opium is grown

- None, or very little
- Low to moderate
- High to very high



Opium production

Production has increased almost every year since the U.S.-led invasion in 2001



Source: U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2008, Afghanistan Opium Winter Rapid Assessment January 2009 Graphic: Judy Treible © 2009 MCT

Opium cultivation

- Area being planted has decreased, yet the yield has increased

Pounds per acre (kg/ha)

'07 **37.9** (42.5)

'08 **43.6** (48.8)

• Farmers involved **2.4 million**

• Average annual income **\$1,997**

• Income per hectare for opium compared to wheat

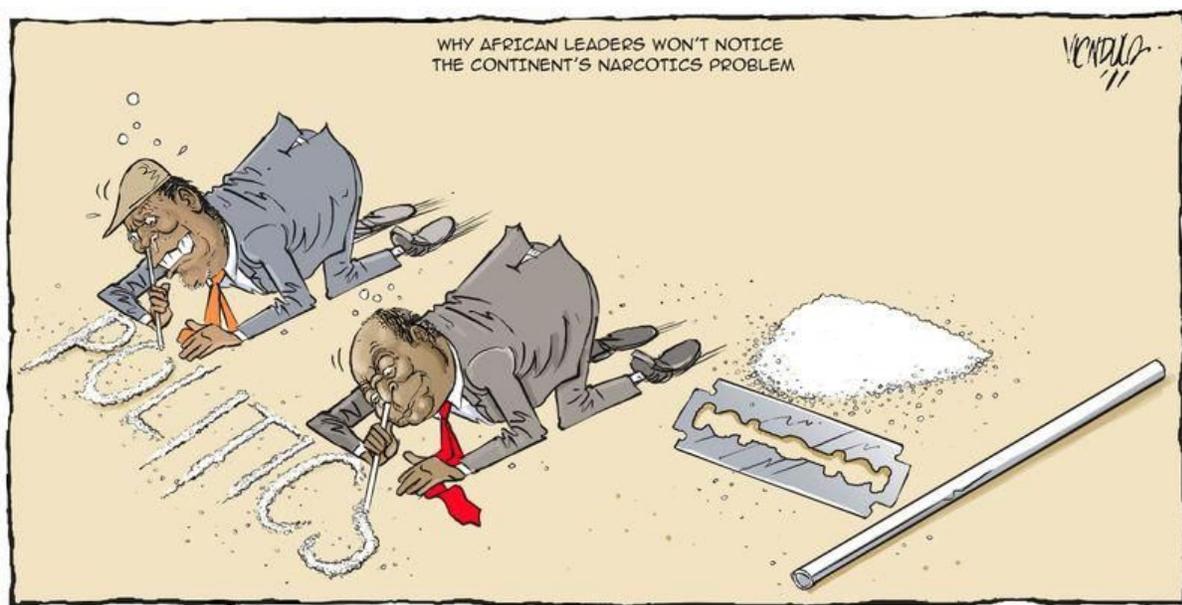
Opium \$4,662

Wheat \$1,625

Drug Situation in West Africa:

West Africa is rapidly becoming a major player in the global trade in illegal drugs and a central focus of the efforts to control it. Escalating arrests of West African drug traffickers at foreign airports, container shipments of cocaine seized off the West African coast and the collapse of entire African states under pressure from global drug cartels are some of the images used by international drug-control experts and the media to illustrate West Africa's growing role in the trade in heroin and cocaine during the past decade.

International experts claim that after having played an insignificant role in the global drug trade for decades, West Africa is now a transit route for most of the cocaine available on the European market today. South American and West African drug traffickers smuggle cocaine from producer regions to West African cities and from there onward to the major centers of consumption in Europe. Heroin, similarly, is produced in Asia and smuggled in smaller quantities via Africa to the U.S. and Europe.



The current concern about the West African drug trade has been driven by mounting drug seizures and arrests, yet little else is known about the West African drug nexus. In fact, the subregion has played an important role in the global trade in psychoactive substances for centuries -- even heroin and cocaine have been traded through West Africa for more than 30 years. The recent significant increase in trade in those substances is due to shifts in the global markets and the measures used to control the

drug trade. International policy responses to West Africa's drug problems have only recently gained momentum, to largely ambiguous effect. These international efforts have helped to direct attention to West African drug traffic, further international counternarcotics cooperation and increase drug seizures and arrests in the region. However, they have also tended to support repressive policy responses by West African governments.

The West African Connection:

Africa has long played an important role in the trade in legal and illegal psychoactive substances, such as kola, alcohol and cannabis. The light stimulant kola, which lends its name to the popular caffeinated beverage, has been traded in the region and across the Sahara to the Mediterranean for centuries. Similarly, West Africa's role in the seaborne Atlantic trade of the past millennium was not restricted to the export of slaves and tropical commodities but also featured the large-scale importation of American rum, French brandy and Dutch gin for more than 500 years. At some points in this history, as in the late-19th century, half of the gin produced in Holland was shipped to West Africa. Indeed, many colonial regimes in the region survived by taxing the alcohol trade, in contrast with other parts of colonial Africa, where it was illegal to trade the same substances. The cannabis trade has had a comparatively shorter history, as it was traded in West Africa only from the first half of the 20th century onward, but it has seen a steady increase as an export crop since World War II.

Given West Africa's longstanding position in global trade and drug networks, the arrival of heroin and cocaine shipments through the region beginning in the late-1970s should not have come as a surprise. The first reports of heroin smuggled from India, Pakistan and Thailand to West Africa and then onward to Europe and the U.S., as well as cocaine smuggled from Brazil via West Africa to Europe, can be traced to that period. This trade began on a relatively small scale but was predestined to expand, as it was less risky to transfer drugs via West Africa than shipping them directly from producer to consumer regions, both of which were under the watchful eye of law enforcement in the 1980s. Economic crisis and deteriorating living conditions in many West African countries gave further impetus to the expansion of West African involvement in the trade.

By the 1990s, the transit trade in heroin and cocaine through the subregion was well-established. Many West African commercial centers -- above all the Nigerian city of Lagos with its major airports and seaports -- served as waystations for the heroin and cocaine trade. Annual cocaine and heroin seizures in the subregion still amounted to relatively small overall volumes, though, especially compared to volumes in major producer and consumer countries. Annual heroin and cocaine seizures in Lagos remained generally less than 440 pounds throughout the 1990s. In consumer countries, the combined seizures from West African smugglers were similarly small. However, the number of individuals arrested was large, as a sizeable number of West African couriers carried drugs in the range of two to four pounds to decrease the risk of detection by law enforcement. In general, though, arrests and seizures from the 1990s show that the transit trade was on a relatively small scale compared to the direct traffic from producer to consumer countries.

To date, local trafficking networks control most of the smuggling through West Africa. Except for a few individual smugglers who finance, organize and carry drugs abroad all by themselves, most West African trafficking networks are made up of flexible, project-based groups of three to eight smugglers. Members of these smuggling groups normally include one or more sponsors, who provide the capital to buy drugs and pay for flights and hotels for several couriers carrying the drugs from producer states to Africa or onward to the West. A separate organizer is often in charge of major logistical issues such as booking flights and hotels as well as recruiting couriers. West African networks commonly also include a person who receives couriers and sells the drugs in the destination country. Nationality, ethnic identity and familial relationship can be important organizing factors for smuggling operations, although the role of some ethnic groups in the trade, such as Igbos from southeastern Nigeria, has been clearly exaggerated in public discourse. In most cases, the backgrounds of the couriers as well as smuggling routes are chosen very carefully in order to avoid law enforcement suspicion.

In the past five years, a larger-scale type of smuggling operation has become more widespread. Tons of Latin American cocaine have recently been shipped via West Africa to the burgeoning European cocaine market, where profits from the trade are higher

and the level of detection comparatively smaller than in the Americas. This type of smuggling is often led by foreign operators from Latin America or Europe who use the region mainly to reroute their cargo on its way to Europe. These operations have utilized new transit hubs, in particular Gambia, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, and have also drawn on means of drug transport previously unknown in the region, such as private airplanes and yachts as well as container ships. More-established transit hubs have remained important in this new type of trade as well, as a reported seizure of 15.7 tons of cocaine in Lagos in June 2006 shows.

Estimates of the extent of this new type of smuggling, compared to the smaller-scale established trade, vary widely. Interpol estimates that approximately 330 tons of cocaine are shipped annually through West African ports and waters, whereas U.S. authorities put the figure slightly lower, at 270 tons. In contrast, the U.N. estimates that a much more modest 44 tons with a wholesale value of \$1.8 billion transits through the region annually. Disparities aside, all these assessments agree that the quantity of drugs transported through the subregion has generally increased during the second half of the past decade.

Nonetheless, the great diversity of estimates points to an underlying problem: the lack of reliable data on West Africa's role in the drug trade. This problem has been highlighted by academics as well as international drug officials. Apart from official announcements of drug seizures and arrests, little information is available to authorities making estimations and designing counternarcotics policies. In contrast to major consuming and producing countries, large-scale surveys of drug use or aerial observation of drug cultivation are unavailable as means of drug trade assessments in West Africa. The nationally reported seizure and arrest figures are by themselves also unreliable means of measuring the trade, as it is unclear whether increases in seizures signify an increase in the trade or more-vigilant law enforcement. In addition, seizure and arrest figures are not systematically collected in many West African states, and at times individual seizures are highly problematic, as was the case with an immense seizure in Lagos in 2006, when 15.7 tons of cocaine seized later turned out to be a blend of cocaine and cement.

Finally, West African experts working in the field of drug treatment for users have argued

that the local effects of the drug trade also remain largely ignored in existing data and research, although it is highly probable that the use of cocaine, in particular crack cocaine, has increased in the past five years due to spillover from the growing transit trade. The major reason why further research on the local use of drugs has not been conducted is that international policymakers have prioritized the suppression of drug supply emanating from the region rather than its local use.

International Responses:

International drug agencies have concentrated on the transit trade in heroin and cocaine through the subregion for a surprisingly long time. While West Africa was described as a region without a drug problem throughout the 1970s, starting in the early 1980s the growing number of arrests of West African heroin and cocaine smugglers changed perceptions of the region in international drug-policy circles. From then on, the U.N. and the U.S. government have had drug officials on the ground in West Africa, in particular in the region's major drug transit hub of Lagos.

Cooperation between the U.S. government -- the major player in international drug-policy circles -- and West African governments has become increasingly close. U.S. involvement in the region has concentrated on Nigeria since the 1980s, with a large number of agents from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency and other agencies stationed in the country. The U.S. has also dedicated significant funding to improving Nigerian enforcement capabilities, for example through the donation of interception equipment, such as body scanners. U.S.-Nigerian drug cooperation had some low points in the 1990s during the pariah regime of Gen. Sani Abacha. However, overall, the U.S. has exercised a continuous influence on Nigerian drug-control efforts. For instance, the country's major drug agency was modeled on its U.S. counterpart in the late-1980s, and joint U.S.-Nigerian drug-enforcement operations have been a solid backbone of the close relationship. U.S.-led enforcement operations have been conducted on a much smaller scale in West Africa than in Latin America, but U.S. initiatives have nonetheless been important at shaping Nigerian drug-law enforcement. U.S. drug-control interests in West Africa have been further strengthened since the inauguration of the U.S. military's African Command (AFRICOM) in 2007. While AFRICOM has not had much of a physical presence

on the ground, it has been able to provide additional sources of bilateral aid supporting drug control in the region.

In contrast, Ghana's relationship with the U.S. has a shorter history. U.S.-Ghana counternarcotics cooperation is becoming closer of late, especially as the country has come to be seen as a major trading hub for cocaine. Other Western countries have also pursued bilateral anti-drug relationships in the subregion, although they have never been as extensive as the U.S. presence. The Ghanaian government has over the past few years permitted the stationing of U.K. law enforcement officials at Ghana's international airport, with the aim of increasing the interception of cocaine before it reaches London.

After the U.S. government, the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is by far the most important partner for many West African states in the field of drug control. Early U.N. initiatives in the subregion concentrated on treatment of users, but since the public attention to the transit trade in heroin and cocaine has grown, a greater emphasis has been placed on implementing U.N. donor projects that strengthen the control of drugs eventually destined for the drug markets of donor countries. For instance, throughout much of the 2000s, the UNODC led a project to set up a regional drug-control academy where law enforcers from the subregion would be rigorously trained in drug-law enforcement and airport interception.

The U.N.'s role in the control of West Africa's drug trade has been further strengthened recently, as the issue of the cocaine trade and its effects on the security of West African states has been raised at the highest levels of the U.N. In 2007 and 2009, the U.N. Security Council held special sessions concentrating on drug trafficking as a new security threat, with a specific focus on Guinea-Bissau. This high-level attention, as well as the increased arrests and seizures, has led to stronger donor interest in U.N. projects in West Africa, in particular from the U.K., France and the European Commission.

These recent international efforts have also been channeled into regional West African initiatives. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been at the forefront of these efforts, convening meetings and drawing up regional action plans to strengthen drug-law enforcement across the region. The underlying idea of these

regional initiatives is that uncoordinated national initiatives by themselves will merely result in the diversion of the trade from one state to another. Most ECOWAS activities on drug control have until now been conducted at high political levels, but some regional law-enforcement initiatives, such as the U.S.-sponsored and Nigerian-coordinated West African Joint Operations exercise, have seen some successes in interdictions.

In general, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of any of these international policy responses, as it is impossible to estimate the effect they have had on the actual drug trade. In terms of public awareness, West Africa has clearly been placed on the map as a major drug-trading hub, especially in the Western media and in international policy circles. Also in official African circles there is now more support for drug-control efforts and cooperation. However, dissenting voices have pointed to the complete lack of West African attention to domestic drug-related problems, particularly the use of drugs. Second, seizures and arrests have risen in part due to the international efforts to strengthen West African drug-law enforcement. Large-scale seizures are testimony to the efforts of national and international control efforts. However, it remains unclear if increased seizures are a consequence of the escalating trade or greater enforcement successes.

Domestic Responses:

Domestic responses to the drug trade have paralleled the diversity of the countries themselves. At one end of the spectrum, Guinea-Bissau has received the most international policy attention of late, as it has been labeled a “narcostate,” supposedly captured by drug traffickers, with its armed forces actively involved in the cocaine trade. A relatively small and poor coastal state, Guinea-Bissau is economically reliant on agricultural exports and has faced several periods of political instability, coups and military rule, as well as a brutal war of independence and civil war in its recent history. Considering its political and economic problems, drug-control efforts had not been the highest priority in Guinea-Bissau before the recent international attention. Thus, many of the drug-control initiatives established there since 2005 were driven by U.N. and donor interests, which focused specifically on better interdiction of cocaine shipped through its ports and waters. With continued political instability and economic underdevelopment,

however, few long-term effects from these control policies should be expected.

At the other end of the spectrum, Nigeria, West Africa's most populous and strategically important state, has a much longer history of drug control. The Nigerian state, which also faced long periods of political instability and dictatorial rule until the late-1990s, has not only cooperated closely with international drug agencies and led subregional drug-enforcement operations since the 1980s, but has also recently been portrayed as a model of African drug policy in international policy circles. In particular its emphasis on cracking down on heroin and cocaine transshipments through its territory, as well as its domestic campaign to brutally eradicate cannabis cultivation since the mid-1990s, have brought the Nigerian government extensive foreign praise. According to international drug agencies, other West African states should look to Nigeria's drug war as a model.

The Nigerian success story has had its fierce critics, however, in particular within Nigeria and its nongovernmental and medical communities. From these perspectives, the international praise has glossed over the repressive, human rights-violating approach taken by Nigerian drug control efforts as well as the corrupt nature of Nigerian law enforcement and the Nigerian state. Violent and indiscriminate eradication campaigns that at times left farmers dead, illegal arrests and detentions, the frequent request of bribes at road checkpoints as well the harassment of international travelers at airports is the day-to-day face of drug control for many Nigerians. Most importantly, the critics have argued that, apart from seizures of drugs at airports, the Nigerian drug war has had little to show in terms of successes. The drug trade through Lagos, which has existed since the 1970s, seems not to have been affected much by these efforts. Finally, in addition to repression and lack of success, the drug war has been seen as a policy unsupported by evidence, as little research informs its implementation. It has also blatantly ignored the growing consumption of drugs in Lagos and instead promoted a policy that is more in line with Western rather than Nigerian interests.

Such alternatives to the mainstream narrative of drug control exist in many other West African states that have more recently been affected by the transit trade and that have initiated similarly repressive countermeasures. In Guinea, for one, a military regime began a particularly repressive campaign to expose suspected drug traffickers by

organizing military trials on live TV. Despite being criticized for violating human rights, these campaigns have been seen in a favorable light in international drug-policy circles. Thus, one of the indirect effects of international policy responses in West Africa has been the strengthening of repressive drug control policies over alternatives driven more by research, health or development goals.

A Look Ahead:

In the short term, the still-growing interest in the West African drug trade in international policy, law-enforcement and media circles is destined to produce more large-scale seizures of cocaine and heroin smuggled through West Africa. Due to the increased focus on specific countries, such as Guinea-Bissau, new alternative transit hubs in the region or elsewhere in Africa may well appear. It is also likely that some existing hubs for cocaine have not yet been discovered by law enforcement, which is always one step behind the drug smugglers. In the long term, the best-case scenario, for West Africa if not for international counternarcotics efforts, would be a dislocation of the trade away from West Africa to some other region. In the absence of such a scenario, the transit trade may simply become consolidated, with domestic consumption increasing further, leading to ever-more-repressive policy responses. Ultimately, however, few fundamental changes are likely as long as the demand for cocaine and heroin remains as strong in the West and drug smugglers can earn generous incomes getting it there.



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