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Narcotics trafficking impact on human security in South and Central Asia

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Abstract

Narcotics trafficking is a major threat to human security in South and Central Asian Countries. It is very interesting issue as a Non-Traditional security challenge of the region. This article explores impact of Narcotics trade and organized crime on state functioning and threat to human security. South and Central Asia has emerged as a crucial arena of international security, with an enhanced strategic importance that has replaced the region's geographic isolation and geopolitical marginalization. Narcotic threats to South & Central Asia have changed in form and structure and most visibly geographically, from being primarily a problem from Golden Crescent, with imports from Afghanistan & Pakistan to a more multifaceted threat. The origin of the world's largest exporter of heroin is today Eurasia, more specifically, Afghanistan, while other products are domestic in origin. This article traces the change in the threat posed by narcotics production and trafficking in South & Central Asia, over time and across the major parts of these regions. The research argues that the crime-terror nexus and diseases posed the greatest threat to human security in after independent to 2011; but that since then, the challenge has grown more complex and that different parts of these regions have developed in different directions: in Afghanistan and South & Central Asia, the crime-terror nexus has been eclipsed by the rapidly growing infiltration of state institutions by organized crime.

Keywords: Human security, national security, crime, corruption, drug trafficking routes, social security, community, international law, etc.

1. Introduction

South Asian Countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Maldives are most populate democratic countries emerging as a consuming market of drugs. Subsequently the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 the emerge of new independent Central Asian states and it was widely thought that a new world order based on free trade and democratic institutions would be established around the world. This new world order would inevitably lead to an international community that was less challenged by security threats. While it is true that interstate conflicts have declined considerably, the number of internal conflicts and low-intensity conflicts are still great and even increasing in some cases. The cultivation and production of opium in Afghanistan comprises over 92 percent of world output of this drug, making the country by far the most important producer of drugs in the Eurasian continent. The situation in Afghanistan directly impacts the South and Central Asian states. Trafficking is the crucial link in the chain between illicit narcotics production and consumption. According to Olcott & Udalova (2000) ^[16], "these South & Central Asian countries are located between the world's largest illicit opium producers and the most lucrative markets in western Europe".

Narcotics trafficking in South and Central Asian states are facilitated by historical, geographical, social, ethno-cultural and political factors. These have worked in favour of the traffickers who are engaged in the illegal trade of narcotics trafficking since several decades. The narcotics traffickers seem to be ahead of the drug control authorities. Political upheavals in South and Central Asia, Asia and Europe have all contributed to the creation of novel routes for narcotics trafficking. Narcotics have taken a high toll on human security in South & Central Asia. The number of addicts has risen, and with high levels of poverty, younger people especially have been lured to the world of crime and narcotics trafficking. The implications are serious, touching public health, economic development and social stability. Since the narcotics trafficking and its attendant problems know no borders, regional cooperation to stop them is imperative. The relation between international narcotics trafficking and human security is fairly manifest when considering socio-economic and political issues, which are the main issues that will be dealt with in this article.

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2. Significance of the Theme

The narcotics trafficking are very much affecting of South and Central Asian countries. The reason for this is that the socio-economic and political conditions are not well in this region. The second main reason for this is because South Asia is located between the world largest drug producing regions Golden triangle and Golden Crescent; this area is used as a trafficking corridor for drug traffickers. Due to which the socio-economic and political system of the South and Central Asian countries are being more affected. The purpose of this research on these subjects how human security is being affected by narcotics trafficking, and to study of all those human security related areas that cause have due to drugs. Therefore, in this research article of my purpose to analysis the elements that threaten human development and human security. It has long been a debate about security notions and what constitutes a security challenge to different states. During the Cold War there was a dominant realist school of “hard” security with a focus military security of states, the conflict between the superpowers and the balance of power. It has changed dramatically since 1991 and today there is a move towards a more diverse concept of security that incorporates both traditional “hard” threats and new challenges to the state and people, so-called “soft threats” (non-traditional).

3. Objectives of the Study

This study is intended to get associated on the following:

1. To study the root causes of drug trafficking in Central and South Asia.
2. To examine the drug production and consumption market in these region.
3. To discuss about basic concept of human security in South and Central Asia.
4. To analysis the impact of narcotics trafficking on human security components.

4. Research Method

The study based on primary and secondary sources of information. Here we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in working on his research problem along with the logic behind them. It is necessary for the researcher to know not only the research method/techniques but also the methodology. The data collected from the secondary sources of information, it is classified and presented in the form of simple analysis for easy understanding. In addition to the literature collected through journals, books, articles, seminar reports.

5. Concept of Human Security

The origins of the idea of “human security” can be related (if not traced back) to the growing dissatisfaction with the prevailing notion of development and security in the 1960s–1980s. With the end of the Cold War, calls for new thinking in security matters grew rapidly. In 1994, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through its *Human Development Report*, sought, for the first time, to broaden the traditional notion of security focused on military balances and capabilities to include economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. According to Canadian approach concentrated on the goal of “freedom from fear”, calling for the safety of

people from both violent and nonviolent threats. The broadest category of definition of human security adds “a life of dignity” to freedom from want and freedom from fear (Takasu, 2000) [33]. Human security, thus, seems to appear as an endless debate between its proponents and critics and even among its advocates, who have not agreed on a single unified definition. In the words of the commission, human security means: “...to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment.

Other scholars like Mrs Sadako Ogata (1999) [15] define that threats to human security are varied political and military, but also social, economic and environmental. According to Prof. Bajpai (2000) [2] “Human security relates to the protection of the individual’s personal safety and freedom from direct and indirect threats of violence. The promotion of human development and good governance, and, when necessary, the collective use of sanctions and force are central to managing human security. States, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and other groups in civil society in combination are vital to the prospects of human security.”

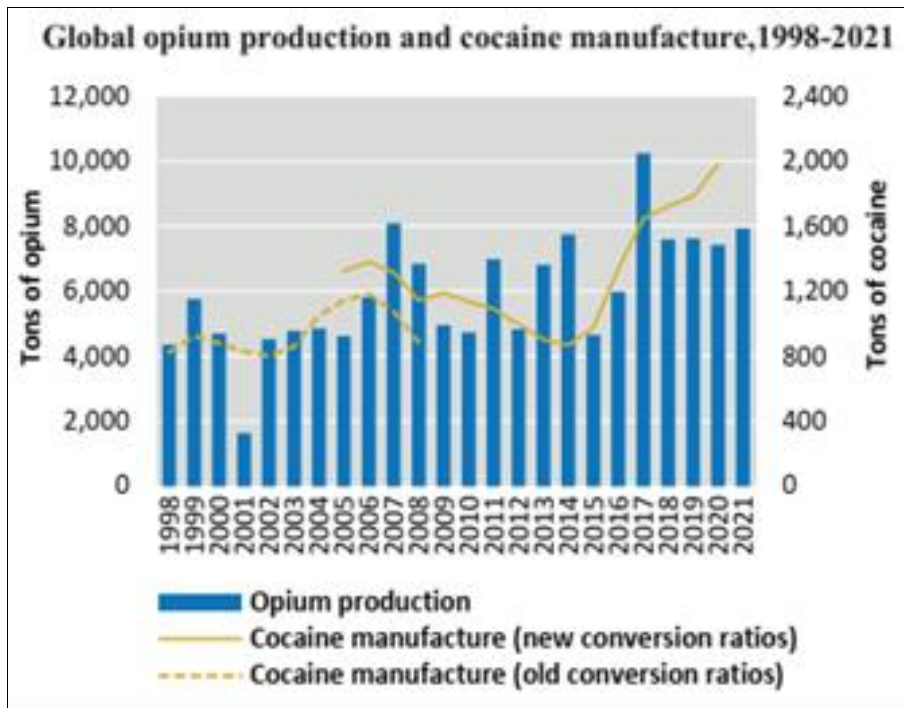
6. Narcotics Production

In addition to the Golden Triangle (consisting of Myanmar, Lao PDR, Thailand), the Golden Crescent (consisting of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran) has Afghanistan as its pre-eminent producer and remains the world’s main areas for producers of illicit opiates. These two regions have dominated the illicit cultivation of opium poppy since 1980. Although their individual market shares have changed during the past 22 years, however they have been jointly responsible for 75 percent to 95 percent of the opium supply. The combined market shares make it clear how Golden crescent and Golden triangle have become the two dominant producers. Lack of the government control and parallel rise in quasi-state authorities was the key promoting factor for the narcotics industry in these regions.

The CAR countries’ borders are located in close proximity to the countries of the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran) and, via China, have access to the countries of the Golden Triangle (Burma, Laos and Thailand), which are the world’s largest producers of illicit opiates. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan border Afghanistan. In addition, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan border China (1,533km, 858 km, and 414 km respectively) (Olcott and Udalova 2000: 5) [16]. The South Asian countries are located between world’s largest opium producers regions Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle. The South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives are threatening human security by narcotics trafficking.

7. Heroin Manufacture reaches new high, Opium Production up slightly

Global opium production has followed a long-term upward trend over the past two decades and this continued into 2021, when production was up 7 per cent from the previous year reaching an estimated 7,930 tons. This increase was primarily the result of higher opium production in Afghanistan due to higher yields, more than offsetting the decline in the area under opium poppy cultivation in the country (UNODC, 2021) [25].



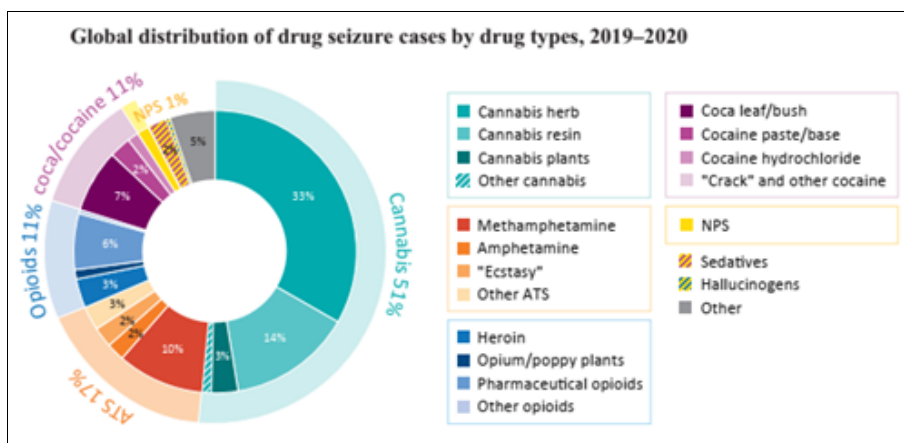
Sources: UNODC coca and opium surveys in various countries; UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire; and US Department of State, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, various years

Fig 1: Global opium production and cocaine manufacture, 1998-2021

Moreover, opium production in Myanmar also increased slightly in 2021, reversing the previous downward trend (UNODC, 2021) [26]. Global cocaine manufacture hit a record high of an estimated 1,982 tons of pure cocaine in 2020, up 11 per cent from the previous year despite the stabilization in the area of coca bush under cultivation. This increase reflects rising levels of cocaine manufacture, notably in Colombia, where, despite a clear decline in the area under coca bush cultivation, there was an ongoing concentration of cultivation in areas with high levels of coca yields and sophisticated cocaine manufacturing know-how, resulting in the high efficiency of cocaine laboratories (UNODC, 2020) [27].

8. Global seizures topped by plant-based substances

The bulk of seizure cases in the period 2019–2020 continued to be in plant-based substances (more than 70 per cent), most notably cannabis, while only a fifth of all seizures involved synthetic drugs. Growth in quantities seized, however, has been significantly outpaced by synthetic drugs, such as ATS, synthetic opioids and synthetic NPS over the longer-term period of 1998–2020. For most drug types, except NPS and opioids, total worldwide seizures (in terms of quantities) in 2020 were greater than in 2019. While seized quantities of opiates increased, seizures of synthetic opioids declined in 2020 (UNODC, 2021) [25].



Source: UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire.
 Note: Based on data from 78 Member States reporting, on average, 2.1 million seizure cases per year to UNODC over the period 2019–2020

Fig 2: Global distribution of drug seizure cases by drug types, 2019-2020

The largest quantities of drugs seized globally were again of cannabis herb, which, as in previous years, accounted for

more than double the amount of cannabis resin seized. This was followed, in terms of quantities seized, by coca and

cocaine-related substances and opioids. Quantities of cocaine hydrochloride seized continued to be larger than those of coca base, coca paste and “crack” cocaine. Quantities of opium seized continued to be larger than those of heroin or morphine; however, expressed in heroin equivalents, total heroin seizures were again greater than opium seizures. The largest ATS seizures continued to be for methamphetamine, followed by amphetamine and “ecstasy”. Seizures of plant-based NPS concerned primarily kratom, followed by khat in 2020 (UNODC, 2021) ^[26].

9. Narcotics Impact on Human Security

Narcotics trafficking and socio-economic development is inversely correlated. Poverty, unemployment, lower social status of women, youth and children, lack of opportunities and prospects for the future, compel and facilitate people to get involved in narcotics trafficking activities. Many of the social services that existed under the Soviet system are no longer available. Health care and education systems are closed or deteriorated due to lack of funding (Olcott and Udalova 2000: 1-33) ^[16]. The economic situation continues to worsen with more and more men losing their jobs; which put them into a spiral of drugs and abuse of the family at home. Increasingly, women have become the victims of such domestic violence. Domestic violence is one of the major reasons why children run away from home. Street children, in turn, are especially vulnerable for being recruited by drug traffickers. Such insecure socio-economic status of women, children and youth facilitate drug trafficking. With limited amounts of arable land in many parts of the region along with high poverty and unemployment, the region is rapidly transforming into a new hub for drug production. The weak local government and law enforcing agencies tempted by a strong external demand work as instrumental force in promoting drug trafficking in the region. The Central Asian countries face some of the most serious socio-economic development challenges.

9.1 Social

The therapeutic property of these drugs is well-known. But its widespread abuse is a matter of concern. Drug trafficking has caused a deterioration in the society. Social life and public health is at stake due to increase in drug trafficking. The stigma of poverty ameliorates the situation as more and more people are getting involved in the business of drug production and trafficking. A high percentage of people while cultivating drugs, are also getting addicted to it. As a result of this the public health standards are deteriorating. This also gives rise to harmful diseases including AIDS. There is also a decline in education and other industries. The youth of the region are lured through drugs into terrorism and other illegal activities. The ‘get rich quick’ mentality seems to be gaining momentum.

9.2 Health

There has been an increase in HIV/AIDS in both the regions of Caucasus and Central Asia and South Asia over the last few decades. According to the recent figures the HIV/AIDS epidemic among addicts is between 55 percent in Russia and 88 percent in Central Asia (UNODC 2005: 119). The health situation is made worse by the lack of medical care in the region. A large proportion of the population in the region lies below the poverty level and are deprived of the medical

and rehabilitation facilities. Studies have shown that, human security, have been most affected by drug trafficking through the rise of addiction rates and the increase in cases of HIV/AIDS. Research shows that there is a direct correlation between occurrences of addiction and diseases along the well-known trafficking routes (Swanstrom 2003: 5) ^[20].

9.3 Women & Children

The age when people begin to take drugs has dropped, while the number of women addicts has grown, as has the number of crimes linked to narcotics. People are switching from more expensive vodka to cheaper heroin, and heroin users are starting to switch from smoking or snorting to injection, which increases the health risks. Transmission by injecting drug users is responsible for 85 per cent of all HIV cases in Central Asia, making it the region’s primary mode of transmission. There is very limited awareness among drug users and the general population about the risks of transmission through sharing infected needles and paraphernalia. The majority of the infections are related to injecting drug abuse. The region of South Asia is also getting effect by narcotics trafficking. Young people are the worst affected, with those in the margins of economy particularly vulnerable. Low levels of awareness among police and officials handicap efforts to deal with the problem of human trafficking, as do corruption and the lack of cooperative links between sending, transit and receiving states.

9.4 Youth

The both region’s future will be shaped by its young people. The majority of South and Central Asian population is under the age of 25, provides enormous potential for development. Such a large youth bulge, when combined with poverty and political disaffection, adds another element of volatility in the region. They have higher rates of illiteracy, unemployment, poor health and drug use they are more likely to be victims or perpetrators of violence. Few regions have seen such sharp declines in the welfare of their youth (UNODC CAS Report 2007: 18) ^[29]. The combination of declining living standards with a demographic bulge brings increased risks of political instability and conflict.

The Crime became a way of survival because the entire social and economic system collapsed along with state control, and it became easy to obtain weapons, connections, documents and money to commit crimes. The Central Asia and South Asia regions are particularly undermined by criminal groups because drug trafficking is increasing through the regions from Afghanistan. Most ‘high-level’ crimes that were carried out by organised groups have been absorbed to a greater or lesser extent into state structures. Mafia groups have either been taken over by law enforcement agencies or they operate with the full knowledge and often support of government officials. Petty and street crime is the result partly of economic decline, but also of the simple boredom of unemployed youth. Drug-consumption and AIDS must be addressed as top priorities considering the way they are rapidly threatening youth and future generations.

9.5 Economic

Economic security is under a constant threat through corruption that co-opts the economy and weakens the legal

markets by the sheer size of the drug markets. The drug trafficking increases the inflation and resource depletion by bad management and resource waste. There are also severe productivity costs due to addiction and rehabilitation; costs that weak and the relatively poor countries cannot afford to bear the brunt (Kumar, 2006) ^[7]. The economic consequences of the international drug trade for Central Asia and the Caucasus though crucial, as a significant proportion of the regional economies are controlled by drug trafficking.

9.6 Corruption

A modest estimate suggests that an estimated 30-100 percent of the GDP in Tajikistan is controlled by drug money (Swanstrom 2005: 13) ^[20], in other states in the region the international drug trafficking has a smaller share of the economy but it is still remarkable (1.5-4.5 percent). Corruption and money laundering are two sides of the same coin. All illegal money transfers are made generally through money laundering. Money laundering which is rampant in the region has affected the whole economy of the Central Asian Region. The main impact is that it has weakened the entire banking system of the region and destabilizes the state financial condition and sometimes leads to hyper inflation and boom in the economy. Money laundering and drug-dependent economies have risen because of drug trafficking. Drug trafficking represents an indirect, yet persistent threat to the continuity of political regime (Marat 2006: 3) ^[13]. Corruption in law enforcement structures and increased involvement of the population in drug trafficking undermines the ability of the state. In addition, many times political actors themselves are engaged in drug dealership. The involvement of drug traders in parliamentary or government structures secures the continuity of the shadow economy (ICG Report 2001: 45) ^[5].

9.7 Political

Political sector of South and Central Asian regions seems to be under the serious threat from narcotics trafficking, threats especially to the institutions and the idea of state. All SA & CAs are rather vulnerable to the political threats, since all of them are rather young, thus they are going through state building process and their institution are rather weak. Studies (Ayoob 1995: 75) ^[1] reveal a detailed picture of the Central Asian Countries political security is about protecting idea of state and the institutions that develop that ideology. They have been become acute enough to acquire political dimension and threaten state boundaries, state institutions, or regime survival.

This fact has been attested by other scholars like Buzan (1998: 25) ^[3] thus it could be said that corruption and money laundering of proceeds obtained from drug trafficking in South and Central Asia by transnational criminal groups reached the level, when they become acute enough to acquire political dimension. Weak states are rather vulnerable to the political threats, where the administrative, financial, legal and political institutions are weak, thus corruption and money laundering is posing a menace and hampers the smooth transition to the democracy. A senior United Nations official- Pino Arlacchi, has warned that the vast heroin and opium trafficking in Afghanistan is endangering the political stability in Central Asian Republics.

9.8 Crime and Terrorist Activities

Traditional and Non-traditional threats to security are today the major issue in South and Central Asia. There is a range of different threats such as religious extremism, terrorism and drug trafficking. Terrorism-crime convergence effects security in terms of community, state, regional and global levels, as well as in different sectors, societal, political, economic and military. Scholar has explained the threat of terrorism and drug trafficking which is closely related to the domestic situation in the week South and Central Asian Countries, its economic and social conditions, as well as internal policy of the these states governments. Even though there are outside elements interested in promoting Islamic state in South and Central Asia, domestic conditions contribute to the unrest much more directly.

The problem of terrorism motivated by drug trafficking has been addressed by many scholars. (Makarenko, 2002: 3) ^[11] raises the issue of narco-terrorism. The study states that the term 'crime-terror nexus' refers to a security continuum with traditional organized crime on one end of the spectrum and terrorism on the other. In the middle of the spectrum is a 'gray area' where organized crime and terrorism are indistinguishable from one another. Drug trafficking has been the strongest factor for sponsoring terrorism. (Shah and Dikshit 1996: 57) ^[19] depict through their study, how the stealthy hand of drug related crimes are disrupting social life. They document the criminal activities perpetrated by drug traffickers.

9.9 Corruption in Politics

More generally, the drug trade undermines economic and political stability by fostering corruption in ways that spin into a vicious cycle. The weak governance of South Asian Sates (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives, and Sri Lanka) and Central Asian states (Kz, Tz, Uz, Tu, Ky) facilitates illicit drug transit, while the resulting criminalization of the region has further weakened government structures and undermined the potential government response. The illicit drug business diverts resources and entrepreneurial capacity to the criminal sphere and black markets, and hinders the emergence of viable legal economies. It undermines and discredits the bureaucracies as well as the upper echelons of governments if officials are linked to illicit transactions. There can be little doubt that narcotics trafficking has increased petty crime and violence among militants and criminals, and led to the organization of groups known as the narco-mafia. There have been reports that the drug trade has also contributed to financing terrorism and extremist groups in the region.

10. Concluding Remarks

After overall examining those elements, it becomes clear that the world's largest producing regions, the golden triangle and golden crescent, pose a great threat to the human security of the countries of South and Central Asia. Also, narcotics' trafficking has directly challenged the internal and external security of these two regions. The narcotics trafficking because even more evident in the areas through which it passes; the break havoc social and economic status and political instability are clearly visible. It is also clear from the research that the production, demand and supply market of drug is also very easy flourish in this

region. So, that terrorism, disease like HIV/AIDS, poverty, unemployment, human trafficking, money laundering and corruption is spreading rapidly. The economic and political existence of South and Central Asian countries are increasingly under threat due to which the democratic institutions are also directly affected, the production and trafficking of narcotics are causing political instability in many of these countries. Recently, the South Asian countries governments like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and others countries has to withdraw because of the increasing threat of narcotics trafficking and terrorist activities.

In concluding remarks we can say that if human security is to be established in this region then terrorism, drug trafficking has to be stopped. This requires national, regional and international cooperation to prevent illicit narcotics trafficking and terrorism. At the same time, education and democratic values have to be promoted so that human development and human security can be established.

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