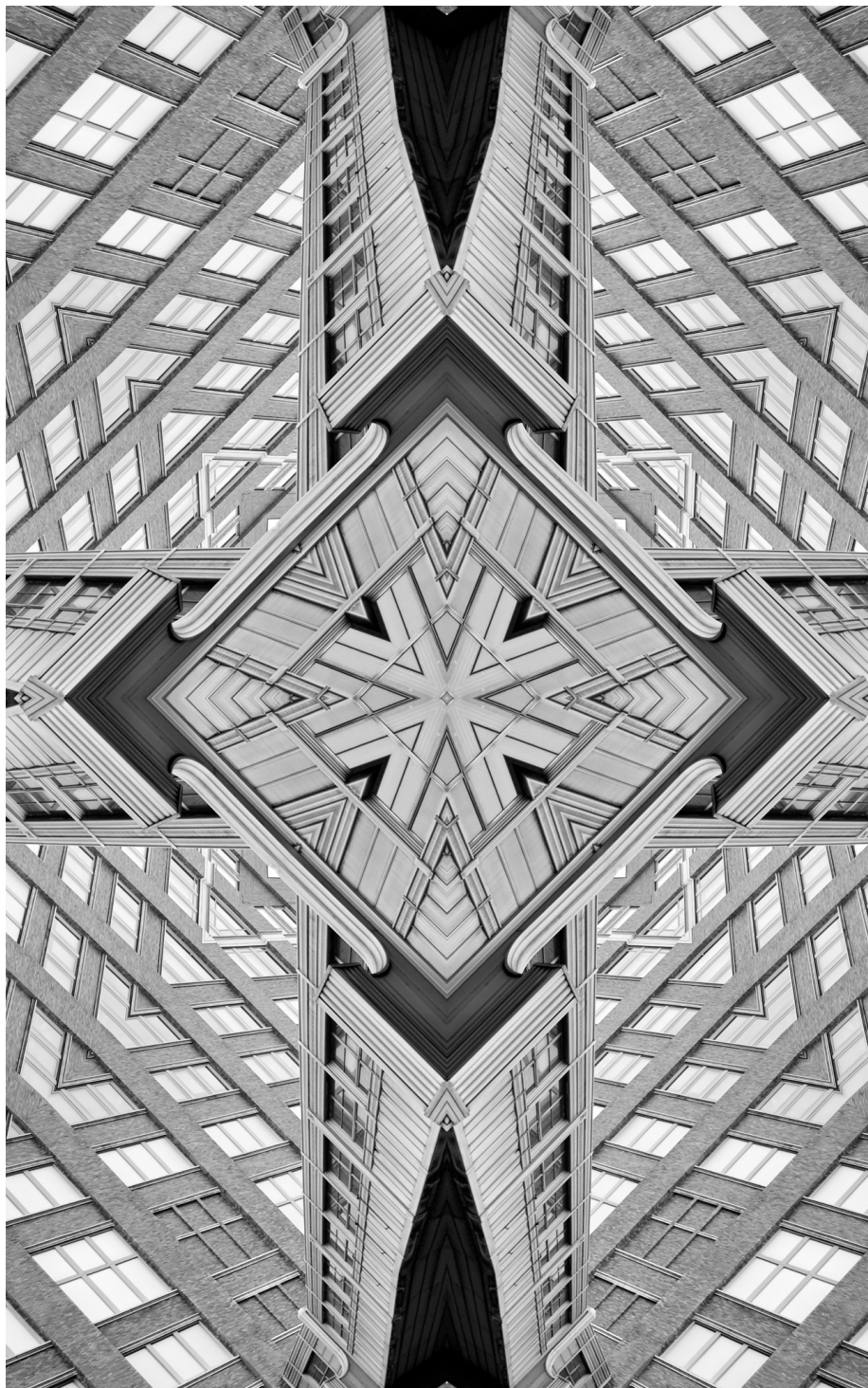


Issue

Brief

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The Narcoterrorism Challenge to India's National Security

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Abstract

Narcoterrorism—or the trafficking of illicit drugs by terrorist and insurgent groups—has long threatened India's national security. Security agencies are attempting to address this challenge, which involves various groups like Khalistani terrorist organisations, Kashmir's separatist militants, and insurgent groups in the Northeast; their efforts have achieved mixed results. This brief examines recent trends in drug trafficking and narcoterrorism and their impact on India's national security, and explores the countermeasures employed by the country's security agencies. The authors used existing literature, analysed government policies, and drew insights from interactions with law enforcement officials and the legal fraternity. The brief focuses on narcoterrorism in the Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) regions, and outlines recommendations for arresting the narcoterrorism phenomenon.

In the 1980s, when it first entered the security lexicon, ‘narcoterrorism’ referred to the use of terror tactics by drug trafficking syndicates in Latin America. Today, ‘narcoterrorism’ describes the use of drug trafficking networks—routes, funding mechanisms, and incomes—by terrorist organisations.¹ The use of advanced tactics like cross-border drone sorties by drug trafficking syndicates on the India-Pakistan border, the emergence of maritime routes for narcotic smuggling, and the rise of narcoterrorism in the Kashmir Valley underline the persistence of this challenge. The imperative is for a stringent crackdown on drug trafficking and criminal and terrorist networks, as well as strengthened international cooperation.

Terrorist financing comes from multiple sources, both legitimate and unlawful. This complicates the task of countering terrorist financing. For narco-trade, engagement with drug trafficking provides terrorist organisations with lucrative sources of funding, with drug trafficking syndicates and terrorist organisations leveraging each other’s resources and networks to facilitate their operations; terrorist organisations also use drug smuggling to destabilise a country to achieve their political objectives. Drug trafficking is often perceived as a reliable and quicker way of generating cash revenue for arms and other logistical requirements.² By its very nature, drug trafficking transcends national borders through a web of criminal networks and terrorist activities.

Narcoterrorism has been defined as an “alliance between drug producers and an insurgent group carrying out terrorist attacks”.³ The term itself was coined in 1983 by the then president of Peru, Fernando Belaúnde, to describe the violent acts carried out by organised criminal syndicates against anti-narcotics law enforcement agencies in Latin America.⁴

Narcoterrorism activities can be divided into two types. First is the use of terror tactics by drug-trafficking networks, primarily in the context of Latin America. The region has a protracted history of drug-fuelled violence, characterised by the robust financial and organisational capabilities of drug-smuggling syndicates, which often surpass the weak institutional and drug-enforcement skills of local security agencies. The use of violence by drug-smuggling syndicates to capture territories, control governments, and establish dominance over large territories is a recurring phenomenon in the region.⁵

Second is the phenomenon of drug production and trade by terrorist organisations as a source of funding for their activities. In East Africa, al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Shabaab has taxed the trade and export of *khat*, a widely used narcotic plant in the region.⁶ As of 2010, the group had raised more than US\$500,000 in taxes on *khat*.⁷ In West Africa, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb has utilised funding from narcotics smuggling in the Sahel region.⁸ In Southeast Asia, al-Qaeda and its affiliates, such as the Jemaah Islamiyah, are suspected of having benefitted from the region's thriving drug trafficking hub of the 'Golden Triangle' (i.e., Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand, at the confluence of the Ruak and Mekong rivers).⁹ In South Asia, the 'Golden Crescent' drug-trafficking hub (spanning Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran) is one of the world's largest opium-producing regions providing the al-Qaeda and the Haqqani Network with benefits from the production and trade of opium.^a The efficiency-driven nature of these networks and the involvement of ideologically motivated members underscores the intricate dynamics of narcoterrorism.¹⁰ Notably, captured al-Qaeda operatives have often narrated that the movement's founder, Osama bin Laden, banned his cadres from being involved in the drug trade as it would corrupt them.¹¹

There appears to be a strong nexus between terrorist organisations and drug trafficking. While some counterterrorism scholars have critiqued the use of the term 'narcoterrorism' to describe this link,^{b,12} this brief employs the term, given its widespread use by law enforcement agencies worldwide.

a Opium is the key ingredient in heroin.

b For instance, in their study on the expanding concept of terrorism, Weinberg et al. argued that the frequent usage of the term dilutes the intrinsic meaning of terrorism as "it rarely involves any reference to violence or threat of violence." See: Weinberg et al., "The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16 (4), (2004). <https://doi.org/10.1080/095465590899768>

Narcotic Trafficking Trends and Routes

W edged between the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle, and as a theatre of protracted insurgencies and long-running cross-border terrorist activities, India has long witnessed narcoterrorism activities. Whereas the intent of narcoterrorism in other parts of the world is primarily profit-making to fund terrorism, the phenomenon is more complex in India. The experience of the past few decades suggests a symbiotic relationship between terrorist organisations and drug trafficking syndicates. This is evident from the fact that the routes used by drug smuggling syndicates are also often the same ones taken for terrorist movements, especially along the Western borders. These are the areas where terrorist organisations and drug syndicates also receive the support of Pakistani state agencies, including for the reconnaissance of routes and facilitation and guidance to cross the international border.

In the Northeast, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram share a 1,624-km porous border with Myanmar.¹³ These states have served as transit routes for illegal drugs originating in the Golden Triangle. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, after Southeast Asian countries like Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia cracked down on drug trafficking, Moreh in Manipur and Champhai in Mizoram emerged as the new preferred routes for smugglers.¹⁴ At their peak, a number of insurgent groups like the Isaac and Khaplang factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, the United Liberation Front of Asom, and the Kuki militias funded their activities by either smuggling drugs themselves or by taking a share from the profits of other smugglers.¹⁵ Today, the situation remains the same, with one recent trend being the expansion of opium cultivation in Myanmar.¹⁶

The widespread protests and armed uprising following the Myanmar military coup of 2021 led to several ethnic armed organisations and civilian resistance fighters taking control of towns and regions across the country, including cities located near the Indian border.¹⁷ The civil war and the state of lawlessness in Myanmar resulted in the expanded cultivation of opium. In 2023, opium production surged to 1,080 metric tonnes, compared to 400 metric tonnes in 2020.^{18,19} In northern Shan, as well as the Chin and Kachin states, the size of poppy fields has reportedly increased by 33 percent in 2022 compared to the previous season, with about 47,100 hectares of land dedicated to opium farming.²⁰ In 2023, 154 metric tonnes of heroin were exported from Myanmar to global markets, including India. Between January and October 2023, Assam Rifles, which guards the border with Myanmar, seized 18 weapons and drugs

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worth INR 911 crores (approximately US\$109 million) from 131 Indian and 18 Burmese nationals.²¹ Some analysts have also pointed to the role of narcoterrorism in the recent unrest in Manipur, where Kuki militants and a drug mafia have allegedly incited violence against Meitei communities.²²

There has also been an increase in opium sales and the emergence of synthetic drugs in Afghanistan following the Taliban's ban in August 2022. Afghanistan serves as an important source of revenue for terrorist organisations and insurgents in the region. After the invasion of the United States (US)-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2001, the US spent more than US\$9 billion between 2001 and 2019 to deter Afghan farmers from producing opium.²³ These efforts failed; between 2009 and 2021, opium production doubled as Afghanistan produced and supplied 80 percent of the world's opium and began to dominate the global heroin market.²⁴ The Taliban used the revenues generated from opium production to fund its campaign against the ISAF.²⁵

Not long after reclaiming control of Kabul, the Taliban announced a ban on opium poppy cultivation in August 2022. The ban, however, merely caused a price surge, making the opium harvest of 2022 the most profitable for farmers since 2017, with sales reaching US\$1.4 billion.²⁶ Some reports also noted seizures of synthetic drugs, signifying a shift from opiates to substances like methamphetamine.²⁷ In June 2023, the UN Sanctions Monitoring Team reported the involvement of the Haqqani Network in the production and trafficking of methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs. Cadres of the network were found to be working closely with criminal networks and syndicates in Southeast and Central Asia to traffic fentanyl into Europe and the US.²⁸

Another notable trend is the increased use of maritime routes for narcotics trafficking. The International Narcotics Control Bureau has noted that the South Asian nations of Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan remain vulnerable to the intensifying opiate trafficking from Afghanistan along the maritime route,²⁹ with seizures of narcotics on these channels exceeding those transiting on land.³⁰ Drug trafficking syndicates and organised criminal networks in the Golden Crescent smuggle 60 to 70 percent of their drugs to India, Sri Lanka, and South Africa by sea.³¹ Data from India's Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways highlights the seizure of 2,826 kg of drugs, comprising mostly heroin and cocaine, across India's ports and coastal waters in 2023—

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the highest in five years.³² In February 2024, in one of its biggest interdictions, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and the Indian Navy intercepted a boat carrying some 3,132 kg of drugs worth over INR 1,000 crores (approximately US\$119 million).³³ According to the NCB, while heroin is the most trafficked drug through this route, other substances like cocaine are also seized.³⁴

Drug trafficking syndicates also often use novel techniques such as drones or uncrewed aerial vehicles for smuggling drugs, even across borders. In September 2023, the Jordanian Army shot down two drones carrying crystal methamphetamine from Syria.³⁵ Similarly, Mexican drug cartels have utilised drones to move cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin across the US border.³⁶ In India, too, the Border Security Force (BSF) has noted a number of instances of drones carrying drugs. In 2023, the agency shot down 119 such drones, with drone sightings on the India-Pakistan border numbering 400-500.³⁷

While the use of aerial drones on land borders has become common, drug cartels have also been exploring the potential of underwater drones for the purpose. In 2022, Spanish police seized three underwater drones, capable of carrying 200 kg of cargo, designed to smuggle drugs across the sea from Morocco.³⁸ This use of underwater drones builds on the deployment of semi-submersible vessels by Central and South American drug cartels; they are difficult to detect without prior intelligence or aerial surveillance.³⁹ While terrorists and drug smugglers are yet to use these techniques on Indian shores, given the huge profits in the narcotics trade and the crackdown on land routes and cross-border aerial drones, the activation of such techniques on maritime routes remains a possibility.

Rising Narcoterrorism in Punjab and J&K

The proximity of India's borders with Pakistan, combined with the latter's covert support of terrorism and insurgencies in Punjab and J&K in the 1980s, led to a rise in narcotics smuggling through the Golden Crescent. According to estimates, 15 percent of the money generated from the narcotics trade was used to finance terror activities in the first decades of Kashmir's armed insurgency;⁴⁰ such financing only increased in subsequent decades. Once Pakistan was included in the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) for failing to take adequate measures to curb terror financing and money laundering, Islamabad expanded its use of narcotics to sustain its support to terrorist organisations in J&K without attribution.⁴¹ Pakistan was on the FATF grey list from 2008 to 2010, 2012 to 2015, and 2018 to 2022.⁴² As previously mentioned, the drugs and weapons smuggling into India along the international border and the Line of Control (LoC) takes place with the active involvement of the Pakistani Army and other state agencies; in 2023, Pakistani media reports noted the involvement of a Deputy Superintendent of Police from Lahore in the smuggling of illicit drugs to India.⁴³

Pakistan-based drug trafficking syndicates and terror organisations have used trade routes on the IB and LoC, such as Poonch-Chakkan da Bagh, Uri-Salemabad, and Attari Integrated Check Post routes to push narcotics, money, and weapons for terror organisations.⁴⁴ In 2019, the trade along these routes was halted due to rising incidents of narcoterrorism and growing convergence between cross-border traders in J&K and Punjab with terrorists and their Pakistani handlers.^{45,46}

In November 2018, Indian security agencies raided a module comprising terrorists from Kashmir Valley and drug peddlers from Punjab operating near Akhnoor sector. The operation took place even as a senior J&K police official warned that the drug menace posed a bigger challenge in the state than terrorism.⁴⁷ Table 1 summarises some of the most serious instances of narcoterrorism in J&K and Punjab in recent years.

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Table 1: Major Instances of Narcoterrorism in J&K and Punjab

Date	Incident Details
November 2018	A joint operation conducted by the Indian Army and intelligence agencies at Chamb in Akhnoor sector IB seized 21 kg of heroin and two pistols. In a subsequent ‘sting’ operation, a joint team of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and the Indian Army apprehended a group of drug smugglers and killed one terrorist. The team recovered an AK-56 rifle, 15 grenades, five pistols, and several improvised explosive devices (IEDs). This was the first case of clear convergence between terrorists operating in Kashmir Valley and drug peddlers of Punjab.
April 2021	The National Investigation Agency (NIA), in a charge sheet, accused seven people of being part of a narcoterrorism ring linked to the banned terrorist group Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) that raises money by selling drugs. The smuggled weapons were meant to be used by BKI members for attacks.
May 2021	Police conducted a raid on a narco-terror module, seizing 8 kg of heroin in Kupwara district along the LoC; they arrested a terrorist associate who was in touch with Pakistan-based terror organisations.
June 2021	J&K Police arrested ten individuals who had a heroin consignment valued at INR 45 crores (approximately US\$5.3 million). The authorities also seized ten China-made grenades, four China-made pistols, four magazines, and 20 rounds.
June 2021	Security forces foiled an infiltration attempt in Tangdhar sector along the LoC. They recovered six packets of heroin worth INR 30 crores (approximately US\$3.5 million), along with an AK-47 rifle, a pistol, two grenades, and ammunition.
October 2021	In a sweeping Valley-wide operation, J&K police detained 430 Over Ground Workers (OGWs) associated with terrorist organisations.
April 2022	The State Investigation Agency set upon a cross-border terror syndicate following its investigation into a hawala case involving a local politician. The accused involved were three cadres of Hizbul Mujahideen.
June 2023	Security forces collared a drug-trafficking ring with terrorist links in the Rajouri-Poonch area. They arrested eight people and seized 44 kg of heroin, along with weapons.

Source: Authors’ own

Rising Narcoterrorism in Punjab and J&K

Pakistan has used narcoterrorism to fund terror activities and gain logistical support for terrorists from OGWs. According to security agencies, Pakistani terrorists operating in the Valley and Rajouri-Poonch districts collude with drug addicts to gain logistical support, luring them with drugs, cash, or weapons;⁴⁸ they also force them to act as informants on the movement of security forces or for delivery of weapons. This tactic has proven effective for terror groups. The shift in terrorist activities from Kashmir Valley to the south of Pir Panjal Range has led to a similar movement among drug smugglers.⁴⁹ In June 2023, security forces picked up a drug-trafficking ring supplying drugs to Punjab and weapons for terrorists operating in J&K.⁵⁰

Table 2: Narcoterrorism Cases Registered in J&K (2022-23)

Zone	Number of cases registered	Number of persons arrested	Recoveries
Kashmir	15	20	Heroin: 100.8 kg Brown Sugar: 3.2 kg AK-47: 19 AK-47 Mag: 34 Pistols: 11 IEDs: 2
Jammu	11	29	Heroin: 178.8 kg AK-47: 4 AK-47 Mag: 6 Pistols: 11 IEDs: 03
Total	26	49	

Source: J&K Police⁵¹

In the past two years, security forces have registered 26 cases of narcoterrorism in J&K, of which 11 are from the Kupwara district in Kashmir Valley and seven from the Rajouri-Poonch districts. The security agencies have filed charge sheets in 15 cases and others are under investigation. Of the 26 narcoterrorism cases, LeT is linked to 17. Some of these cases go beyond Pakistan, Punjab, and J&K; in one instance, the suspects were from Türkiye, France, and Canada.⁵²

Rising Narcoterrorism in Punjab and J&K

Drug abuse, overall, has emerged as a significant security challenge in J&K, even as the security establishment has managed to curtail terrorism and related violence. The growing problem of illicit drug use is causing social disruption, endangering the lives of Kashmiri youth and weakening the strong sense of community. A Government Medical College (GMC) study found that J&K saw a 2,000-percent rise in heroin abuse in 2022, surpassing the incidence in Punjab.^{53,54} While heroin smuggled from Pakistan is the most widely used narcotic substance in the state, others like brown sugar, cocaine, and marijuana have also come to the notice of authorities. To counter the vast network and choke the financing for narcoterrorism, the J&K administration has started seizing the properties of drug peddlers.

Challenges in Tackling Narcoterrorism

Regulating organised drug-smuggling syndicates and cracking down on terrorist financing is a complex task for law enforcement and intelligence agencies. In India, this challenge is further complicated by issues of corruption, lack of capacity, and poor inter-agency coordination. The Indian government is working to expand efforts to address this security threat.

For one, the NCB has begun focusing on improved coordination between central and state agencies and the Indian Coast Guard. The NCB's mandate comes from the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act of 1985, which serves as the central legislation to initiate and implement drug-enforcement measures.^{c,55}

Since the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in 2008, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has emphasised inter- and intra-agency coordination to prevent oversights and sync their actions. That same year, the MHA set up the Multi-Agency Centre (MAC), along with subsidiary MACs in state capitals.⁵⁶ The MAC brings together security agencies to share terrorism-related operational intelligence and analyses. Some years later, in 2016, the ministry established the Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) to comprehensively view the drug menace.⁵⁷ To support NCORD's activities, the MHA set up a portal for data integration and knowledge management. The MHA has also established a Joint Coordination Committee to pursue investigations.⁵⁸

While the NCB and NCORD have been aimed at addressing drug trafficking, the NIA, as the principal counterterrorism agency, focuses on terrorist financing, particularly in J&K. The agency has a Terror Funding and Fake Currency Cell to conduct focused investigations, and between January 2018 and November 2021, the Central Government transferred 64 terrorist financing cases to the NIA.⁵⁹

At the global level, India is strengthening cooperation with like-minded partners and international organisations like Interpol^d and the Shanghai

^c The Act prohibits the cultivation, production, sale, purchase, trade, import, export, use, and consumption of psychotropics and narcotics, except for scientific and medical purposes.

^d Interpol comprises 195 countries and is an effective platform for controlling crime worldwide. In 2022, during Interpol's 90th General Assembly, the government urged member states to create a system of real-time information on the nexus of narcotics and terrorism to increase coordination among anti-narcotics law enforcement agencies. See: <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-urged-interpol-to-create-system-for-narco-terrorism-nexus-amit-shah-3627044>

Challenges in Tackling Narcoterrorism

Cooperation Organisation (SCO).^e Despite these efforts, however, much of the drug trade in the Afghanistan-Pakistan and Central Asia regions has gone unnoticed, providing a significant funding source for regional terrorist organisations. Moreover, the growing divergence between the SCO and the Pakistani deep state has expanded the involvement of terrorist groups and anti-state actors in the drug trade.

To be sure, there is today greater coordination between central and state agencies in efforts to address narcoterrorism; yet, challenges remain. Drug trafficking often overlaps with other criminal activities and networks like human trafficking and the smuggling of counterfeit currency. Moreover, the thriving sale of drugs on darknet marketplaces compounds the challenge.⁶⁰ Porous borders and corruption among security forces also complicate efforts by enabling drug-trafficking activities. According to data from the MHA, in Punjab, between 2014 and 2018, 68 personnel from the state police, jail and home guards departments, the BSF, the Railway Protection Force, and Chandigarh Police were arrested for engaging in drug smuggling.⁶¹ Similarly, despite increasing surveillance, effective border protection—both on land and along coasts—is a persisting challenge.

Operational-level inter-agency coordination remains ad-hoc and arbitrary despite the MHA's push for institutionalisation. Some representatives of state law-enforcement agencies have also noted that the excessive powers of central agencies hinder effective centre-state coordination.⁶²

The increasing consumption of drugs in India is another challenge: a 2019 survey by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment estimated that about 1.2 percent (approximately 1.3 crores) of the Indian population used illegal cannabis products, whereas about 2.1 percent (approximately 2.26 crores) had used opioids.⁶³ Indeed, the demand for narcotic substances is alive which, in turn, fuels the drug trade and acts as a revenue generator for terrorist organisations. Moreover, some experts have highlighted that low conviction rates and procedural delays in punishment under the NDPS

e The SCO, since its inception, has pushed its member states to work together to stop drug smuggling and terrorism through its Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure. In 2018, it hosted the meeting of the Paris Pact Initiative to deepen international cooperation against drug trafficking and narcoterrorism. See: https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d514d3059544e30457a6333566d54/share_p.html

Challenges in Tackling Narcoterrorism

Act lessen the deterrent value of legal mechanisms.⁶⁴ In 2021, for instance, the average national conviction rate was 77.9 percent for all states and 59.2 percent for Union Territories (UTs).⁶⁵ For certain states and UTs, the rate was abysmal—J&K, for instance, recorded a 41.3 percent conviction rate. This also underlines how inadequate personnel and training in state police forces undermine the overall push against narcoterrorism.

Since 2014, India has initiated collaborations and signed 44 bilateral memoranda of understanding on drug-related matters and security cooperation with like-minded countries. These bilateral agreements involve real-time collaboration with drug liaison officers from various countries, such as the Drug Enforcement Agency of the US, the National Crime Agency of the United Kingdom, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police of Canada, the Australian Federal Police of Australia, and the French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction of France. India has also initiated talks with neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Iran, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Singapore, and Afghanistan to chalk out policies and information sharing.

India has taken proactive steps to counter narcoterrorism, but the battle ahead is long and difficult. Terrorist organisations rely on drug-trafficking networks for funding, making it vital to disrupt their financial networks. Similarly, drug cartels have persisted for decades, showing adeptness in adapting to clampdowns by law enforcement agencies. A risk-mitigation approach can help strengthen India's response.

Some additional measures in this regard can focus on identifying vulnerabilities and loopholes that terrorist organisations and drug trafficking syndicates exploit. One measure being suggested by law enforcement officials and legal practitioners is strengthening the legal mechanisms; this would include creating a standalone legislation for dealing with narcoterrorism. This proposed legislation should empower the investigation agencies, fast-track prosecution (by specialist legal teams), and prescribe punishment equivalent to that meted out for terrorist acts. The legislation should also discard the distinction between the intermediate and commercial quantity that works to the advantage of narco-traffickers.

Others have suggested amendments to the NDPS Act, arguing that preventive detention under the law is inadequate; its upper limit, which is currently one year within special circumstances, is recommended to be extended to two years. Moreover, dedicated courts staffed with public prosecutors need to be established so that they can dispose of narcoterrorism-related cases expeditiously. Clear timelines should be prescribed for disposing of cases under the NDPS Act. Experts have also suggested decriminalising the recreational uses of traditional narcotic substances like cannabis.

Another aspect to consider is the NIA investigations. The agency currently investigates eight acts under scheduled offences, such as the Atomic Energy Act of 1962 and the Anti-Hijacking Act of 1982. The NDPS Act should be added to this list of scheduled offences of the NIA to ensure that the agency can investigate narcoterrorism-related cases.


Forensics is another area that plays a critical role in drug enforcement investigations and prosecution. Forensic evidence helps build a more robust legal case. While the NCB has undertaken efforts to expand its forensic capabilities, given the rapid shift towards synthetic drugs, more capacity building is needed in drug-identification techniques, laboratory facilities, and training. Another area that requires capacity building is the tracking of

suspicious transactions to disrupt the money-laundering operations of terrorist groups. In tackling terrorist financing activities, agencies need to explore the role of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence and blockchain.

International cooperation through intelligence sharing and joint operations is also vital to disrupt the narcotics supply chain. Through the Interpol, India has already proposed creating a system of real-time information dissemination. As transnational criminality is a shared responsibility,⁶⁶ the focus needs to expand to joint operations by coordinating with the drug and law enforcement agencies of neighbouring states to interdict transnational narcotic deliveries. Rapid response at border points is often crucial in disrupting supply.

Finally, with Pakistani state agencies being found to be directly involved in narcoterrorism, India must pursue this matter at the diplomatic level. New Delhi should provide adequate documentation to the FATF and other global platforms, such as the United Nations; the aim would be to put pressure on Islamabad.

Changing tactics of terrorist organisations and drug traffickers have exacerbated the challenge of narcoterrorism. While India has taken steps to respond, including strengthening border security, empowering law enforcement agencies, and deepening international cooperation, the evolving nature of the drug trade necessitates continuous vigilance and more targeted strategies.

To effectively combat narcoterrorism, New Delhi must implement a comprehensive risk-mitigation approach with new legislation and more power to central investigating agencies. This approach demands stricter border controls, the disruption of the financial networks of drug cartels, and joint transnational operations. Fostering closer regional and international cooperation is imperative to stem the flow of drugs and terrorist activities to safeguard India's national security and secure a better and healthier future for its citizens. 

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