

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Intermediate Committee

Chair: Franklin Zeng

Co-Chair: Albert Zhuang

## Topic 1

**Drug trafficking within Latin America:** Latin America serves as a major global hub for the production, distribution, and trafficking of illicit drugs, creating severe threats to regional stability, security, and public health. Governments within the region must seek to create comprehensive strategies involving law enforcement, socioeconomic development, public health measures, and more to address the regional and global problems that Latin American drug trafficking produces.

### Introduction

Latin America has historically been considered a hotspot for the production and distribution of illicit drugs, most notably cocaine and marijuana. Key problems within the region, ranging from governmental corruption, established cartels and trafficking groups, and poor enforcement of

regulations, lead to an environment in which the drug trade thrives. Drugs produced within the region are mostly exported to outside countries, particularly the US, but also to Europe (via West Africa).<sup>1</sup> As a result of the firmly established drug trade, the region has some of the world's highest crime rates (murder, extortion, etc.).

The first major problem with the Latin American drug trade is the large economic sector it fulfills. Due to the long history of drug trafficking within the region and soundly entrenched drug cartels promoting drug smuggling, Latin America has had a hard time escaping the economic stranglehold that the narcotics industry has over the region.

Government inability is a major factor in the Latin American drug trade's dominance over the area. From poor government control and deterrence to corruption, most governments in the area either do little to nothing to discourage the illegal drug industry or participate in it, whether openly or in an underhanded manner. A notable example of government corruption shaping the drug trade comes from Mexico. In 2010, the Sinaloa cartel (arguably the most powerful drug group in Mexico and possibly even the world) allegedly bribed multiple high-ranking officials within the Mexican government, thereby enjoying either reduced or full immunity from government prosecution—this greatly reduced competition from rival cartels.<sup>2</sup> The benefits for both parties involved are clear: cartels receive immunity from government punishment, while government officials receive bribes for personal benefit. Taking into account the fact that Latin America is mostly comprised of developing countries, it is easy to conclude that such bribes are extremely powerful; most governments do not and have not attempted to provide robust

countermeasures. However, it is notable that in recent years, most Latin American countries have started anti-corruption measures. Military and police reforms have led to new, corruption-free units that actively combat the endemic corruption and bribery system instilled within governments involved in the Mexican Drug War. <sup>3</sup>

It has already been established that the drug trade plays a large role in the Latin American economy. However, even though recent reforms have led to stricter punishments for those involved in the drug sector, it remains a major player in the Latin American economy. This is likely due to poor economic structuring; there are no alternatives for those within the drug trade, therefore trapping them within the illegal industry. By examining economic indicators such as the HDI (Human Development Index) and the Gini coefficient, we can recognize the poor economic state that most Latin American states are in. Poverty and income inequality run rampant, and this is one of the major reasons many Latin American countries, especially those within the lowest economic castes, turn to the drug industry. Jobs within the illicit drug industry often have a low entry barrier, or none, as compared to jobs within other sectors, which may require extra qualifications. Another reason for entry is extortion and blackmail. Due to the sheer extent of control and obedience that cartels command, some citizens of lower socioeconomic status are indebted to cartels. Reasons include borrowing money (in which the cartel often operates like hostile loan sharks) and owing property, among others.

Key Stakeholders

1. **Government Authorities:** National governments in Latin American countries are key stakeholders in addressing drug trafficking, as they are responsible for implementing laws, regulations, and enforcement measures to combat illicit drug activities.
2. **Law Enforcement Agencies:** Agencies such as police forces, drug enforcement units, and customs and border control play a crucial role in investigating and apprehending individuals involved in drug trafficking and dismantling criminal networks.
3. **Judicial System:** Courts and legal institutions are essential stakeholders in prosecuting individuals involved in drug trafficking, ensuring justice is served and perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.
4. **International Organizations:** Entities like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), and the World Health Organization (WHO) provide support, guidance, and resources to countries in Latin America to address drug trafficking and related issues.
5. **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** NGOs working in the fields of human rights, development, and drug rehabilitation often collaborate with governments and communities to provide support services to victims of drug trafficking and advocate for policy changes to address underlying issues.
6. **International Community:** Foreign governments, particularly those in consuming countries such as the United States and European nations, have a stake in addressing drug

trafficking in Latin America due to its impact on international security, public health, and socioeconomic stability.

7. **Local Communities:** Communities affected by drug trafficking and related violence are important stakeholders, as they bear the brunt of the consequences and may be involved in efforts to prevent and mitigate the impact of drug-related activities.
8. **Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs):** Criminal cartels and trafficking groups are major actors in the illicit drug trade, controlling production, transportation, and distribution networks across Latin America and beyond.
9. **Business Community:** Legal businesses operating in Latin America may be affected by drug-related violence, corruption, and instability, making them stakeholders in efforts to combat drug trafficking and promote a stable business environment.
10. **Media:** The media plays a role in shaping public perceptions of drug trafficking and related issues, raising awareness, and holding governments and other stakeholders accountable for their actions (or inactions) in addressing the problem.

#### Key Actors by Country

1. **Mexico:**
  - **Secretaría de Seguridad y Protección Ciudadana (SSPC):** Responsible for coordinating federal security forces and implementing anti-drug policies.

- **Fiscalía General de la República (FGR):** The Attorney General's Office prosecutes drug trafficking cases and investigates related crimes.
- **Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública (SNSP):** Oversees the coordination of state and municipal police forces in combating drug-related crimes.
- **Cartel Organizations:** Notable groups include the Sinaloa Cartel, the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), and Los Zetas, which control various aspects of drug trafficking operations.
- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Groups like Fundación Ríos de Vida and Colectivo por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad work on drug policy reform, victim support, and human rights advocacy.

#### 1. **Colombia:**

- **Policía Nacional de Colombia:** Responsible for law enforcement and counter-narcotics operations.
- **Fiscalía General de la Nación:** Prosecutes drug trafficking cases and investigates related crimes.
- **Ejército Nacional de Colombia:** Assists in counter-narcotics efforts, including the eradication of coca crops and interdiction operations.

- **Organización de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonía Colombiana (OPIAC):** represents indigenous communities affected by drug trafficking and advocates for their rights and protection.
- **Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP)** conducts research and analysis on drug policy, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding in Colombia.

#### 1. Peru:

- **Dirección Antidrogas (DIRANDRO):** Peru's anti-drug police force, responsible for combating drug trafficking and related crimes.
- **Ministerio Público:** Prosecutes drug trafficking cases and investigates related offenses.
- **Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas (DEVIDA):** government agency responsible for drug policy coordination, prevention programs, and alternative development initiatives in coca-growing regions.
- **Asociación Paz y Esperanza:** NGO providing support to victims of drug trafficking, including legal assistance and psychosocial support.

#### 1. Bolivia:

- **Fuerza Especial de Lucha Contra el Narcotráfico (FELCN):** Bolivia's anti-narcotics police force, tasked with interdiction operations and eradication of coca crops.
- **Ministerio de Gobierno:** Oversees drug policy formulation and implementation, including coordination with international partners.
- **Consejo Nacional de Lucha Contra el Tráfico Ilícito de Drogas (CONALTID):** Government agency responsible for coordinating anti-drug efforts and promoting alternative development strategies.
- **The Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (CIDOB)** represents indigenous communities affected by drug trafficking and advocates for their rights and protection.

#### 1. **Brazil:**

- **Polícia Federal:** A federal police force responsible for investigating drug trafficking, organized crime, and border control.
- **Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública:** Oversees national security policies, including efforts to combat drug trafficking and organized crime.



- **Secretaria Nacional de Políticas sobre Drogas (SENAD):** government agency responsible for drug policy coordination, prevention programs, and treatment services.
- **Rede Brasileira de Redução de Danos e Direitos Humanos (REDUC):** Network of NGOs and civil society organizations advocating for harm reduction policies and human rights in drug policy.

#### Key Terms

1. **Illicit Drugs:** Substances prohibited by law, including cocaine and marijuana, are produced and distributed illegally.
2. **Cartels:** large criminal organizations involved in the production, transportation, and distribution of illegal drugs. They often control significant portions of the drug trade and exert influence through violence and corruption.
3. **Trafficking Groups:** criminal networks responsible for the transportation and distribution of illicit drugs across borders.
4. **Governmental corruption** is the misuse of public office for private gain, including accepting bribes or turning a blind eye to illegal activities such as drug trafficking.

5. **Enforcement of Regulations:** The implementation and enforcement of laws and regulations aimed at curbing illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, by government authorities.
6. **Crime Rates:** The frequency of criminal activities within a given area is often measured by indicators such as murder and extortion rates.
7. **Economic Sector:** A specific segment of the economy, in this context referring to the illicit drug trade's significant role in the economic activity of Latin American countries.
8. **Immunity from Prosecution:** Legal protection from being prosecuted or punished for criminal offenses, often granted through bribery or corruption.
9. **Bribes** are payments made to government officials or other individuals to influence their actions or decisions, typically for personal gain.
10. **Countermeasures:** actions taken to prevent or respond to illegal activities, such as implementing anti-corruption measures or reforming law enforcement agencies.
11. **Military and Police Reforms:** Changes made to the structure and operations of military and law enforcement agencies to improve their effectiveness and reduce corruption.
12. **Endemic Corruption:** Widespread and systemic corruption within a society or institution, often resulting in a culture of impunity and bribery.

13. **Human Development Index (HDI):** A composite statistic that measures a country's average achievements in key dimensions of human development, such as health, education, and income.
14. **Gini Coefficient:** A measure of income inequality within a population, with higher values indicating greater inequality.
15. **Economic Structuring:** The organization and distribution of economic resources within a society, including the availability of alternative opportunities for employment and livelihoods.
16. **Socioeconomic Status:** An individual's position within society is based on factors such as income, education, and occupation.
17. **Extortion** is the practice of obtaining money or property through coercion or threats, often used by criminal organizations to exert control over individuals or businesses.
18. **Blackmail** is the act of threatening to reveal embarrassing or damaging information unless payment or other concessions are made. It is often used as a tactic by criminal groups to intimidate or extort individuals.

## References

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## Topic 2

**Human Trafficking within the Golden Triangle:** The Golden Triangle, encompassing Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand, is notorious for its involvement in human trafficking, particularly in the form of forced labor and sexual exploitation. This region's limited government control has enabled human traffickers to thrive, making it a critical concern for all nations. Addressing this issue requires a coordinated effort to rescue victims, prosecute perpetrators, and strengthen local governance to eradicate human trafficking in this high-risk area.

## Introduction

The Golden Triangle, a region spanning parts of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and portions of Vietnam and China, has historically been associated with illicit activities, notably opium production and drug trafficking. However, in recent years, it has gained notoriety as a hub for human trafficking. This research paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon of human trafficking within the Golden Triangle, examining its root causes, complexities, challenges, and implications. By adopting an informative and unbiased approach, this paper seeks to elucidate the multifaceted dynamics of human trafficking in the region, drawing upon a range of sources and perspectives to present a well-rounded analysis.

Human trafficking within the Golden Triangle represents a complex and multifaceted phenomenon characterized by the exploitation and movement of individuals across borders for various purposes, including forced labor, sexual exploitation, and servitude. The region's geographical location, characterized by rugged terrain, porous borders, and a limited law enforcement presence, provides conducive conditions for traffickers to operate with impunity. Moreover, the convergence of human trafficking with other illicit trades, such as drug trafficking and organized crime, further complicates the landscape, creating synergies and interdependencies between different criminal enterprises.

Several underlying factors contribute to the prevalence of human trafficking within the Golden Triangle, including socioeconomic disparities, political instability, ethnic conflicts, and a lack of governance. Marginalized communities, including ethnic minorities and displaced populations, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, with traffickers capitalizing on their desperation for economic opportunities and livelihoods. Gender-based violence, discrimination, and a lack of access to education further exacerbate vulnerabilities, particularly among women and children. Additionally, the demand for cheap labor and commercial sex drives the perpetuation of trafficking networks, fueling a cycle of exploitation and abuse.

The fight against human trafficking within the Golden Triangle is fraught with challenges and impediments, ranging from inadequate legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms to entrenched corruption and impunity. Limited resources, institutional capacity gaps, and geographic constraints hinder efforts to combat trafficking effectively. Moreover, the transient nature of trafficking routes and the adaptability of criminal syndicates pose significant challenges for law enforcement agencies and international cooperation efforts. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that encompasses prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships at the local, regional, and international levels.

International cooperation is essential in addressing human trafficking within the Golden Triangle, given its transnational nature and cross-border implications. Regional initiatives, such as the Mekong-Mekong Cooperation Framework and the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, provide platforms for collaboration and information sharing among member states.

Additionally, the United Nations Palermo Protocol and other relevant international instruments offer a legal framework for combating human trafficking and protecting the rights of victims. However, effective implementation and enforcement of these agreements remain a challenge, highlighting the need for sustained efforts and political will.

In conclusion, human trafficking within the Golden Triangle represents a significant challenge with far-reaching social, economic, and humanitarian implications. By understanding the root causes, complexities, and challenges associated with this phenomenon, policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and civil society organizations can work towards developing targeted interventions and strategies to combat trafficking effectively. International cooperation, strengthened legal frameworks, and coordinated action are essential in addressing this scourge and ensuring justice for victims. Through concerted efforts and collective action, we can strive to eradicate human trafficking within the Golden Triangle and uphold the principles of human rights and dignity for all.

#### Key Stakeholders

1. **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC):** As the leading UN agency responsible for addressing human trafficking and related organized crime, the UNODC plays a central role in coordinating international efforts and providing technical assistance to member states in combating human trafficking within the Golden Triangle.

2. **Member States:** Member states of the United Nations, particularly those within the Golden Triangle region (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and China), have a vested interest in addressing human trafficking due to its cross-border nature and implications for regional stability and security.
3. **National Governments:** National governments in the Golden Triangle region are responsible for enacting and enforcing laws against human trafficking, as well as implementing policies and programs aimed at preventing trafficking, protecting victims, and prosecuting perpetrators within their respective jurisdictions.
4. **Law Enforcement Agencies:** Local, national, and international law enforcement agencies play a crucial role in investigating and prosecuting cases of human trafficking, dismantling trafficking networks, and rescuing victims from exploitation within the Golden Triangle.
5. **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** NGOs working on the ground provide essential support services to victims of human trafficking, including shelter, legal assistance, healthcare, and reintegration programs. They also advocate for policy changes and raise awareness about the issue within affected communities.
6. **Civil Society Organizations:** Civil society organizations, including grassroots movements, community-based organizations, and advocacy groups, play a vital role in



raising awareness about human trafficking, empowering vulnerable populations, and holding governments and other stakeholders accountable for their responses to the issue.

7. **International Organizations:** Other international organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organization (ILO), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), collaborate with the UNODC and member states to address human trafficking within the Golden Triangle and provide support to victims.
8. **Regional Bodies:** Regional organizations and initiatives, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Mekong River Commission (MRC), and Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Economic Cooperation Program, play a crucial role in facilitating regional cooperation and coordination efforts to combat human trafficking within the Golden Triangle.
9. **Academia and Research Institutions:** Academics and researchers contribute to understanding the root causes, dynamics, and trends of human trafficking within the Golden Triangle through research, analysis, and data collection, informing evidence-based policies and interventions.
10. **Media:** The media play a significant role in raising public awareness about human trafficking, exposing trafficking networks, and influencing public opinion and government responses to the issue within the Golden Triangle and beyond.

## Key Actors by Country

### **Myanmar:**

1. **The Government of Myanmar** is responsible for enacting and enforcing laws against human trafficking and implementing policies and programs to combat the issue within its jurisdiction.
2. **Myanmar Police Force:** tasked with investigating cases of human trafficking, dismantling trafficking networks, and rescuing victims within Myanmar.
3. **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Various NGOs operate within Myanmar to provide support services to victims of human trafficking and advocate for policy changes.

### **Thailand:**

1. **Government of Thailand:** charged with enacting and enforcing laws against human trafficking and implementing policies and programs to address the issue within Thailand.
2. **Royal Thai Police:** responsible for investigating and prosecuting cases of human trafficking as well as rescuing victims within Thailand.
3. **The Thai Ministry of Social Development and Human Security** oversees efforts to provide support services to victims of human trafficking and implement preventive measures.

4. **NGOs:** Numerous NGOs in Thailand offer assistance to victims of human trafficking, raise awareness about the issue, and advocate for improved policies and enforcement.

**Laos:**

1. **Government of Laos:** responsible for enacting and enforcing laws against human trafficking and implementing anti-trafficking measures within its borders.
2. **Lao People's Army:** involved in efforts to combat human trafficking, particularly along Laos' borders.
3. **Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare:** Responsible for coordinating efforts to provide support services to victims of human trafficking and implementing prevention programs.
4. **NGOs:** Several NGOs operate in Laos to provide assistance to victims of human trafficking and raise awareness about the issue.

**Vietnam:**

1. **Government of Vietnam:** tasked with enacting and enforcing laws against human trafficking and implementing policies and programs to combat the issue within Vietnam.
2. **Vietnamese Ministry of Public Security:** responsible for investigating and prosecuting cases of human trafficking as well as rescuing victims within Vietnam.
3. **Vietnamese Women's Union:** involved in efforts to support victims of human trafficking and raise awareness about the issue among vulnerable communities.

4. **NGOs:** Various NGOs in Vietnam provide support services to victims of human trafficking and work to combat the issue through prevention and advocacy efforts.

### **China:**

1. **The Government of China** enacts and enforces laws against human trafficking and implements policies and programs to address the issue within China.
2. **Chinese Ministry of Public Security:** Responsible for investigating and prosecuting cases of human trafficking and rescuing victims within China.
3. **All-China Women's Federation:** Engaged in efforts to support victims of human trafficking and raise awareness about the issue among the public.
4. **NGOs:** Several NGOs operate in China to provide assistance to victims of human trafficking and advocate for improved anti-trafficking measures.

### Key Terms

1. **Human trafficking** is the illegal trade of humans for the purposes of forced labor, sexual exploitation, or commercial exploitation.
2. **Golden Triangle:** A region spanning parts of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and portions of Vietnam and China, notorious for its involvement in illicit activities including human trafficking.

3. **Forced labor** is the exploitation of individuals for labor against their will, often involving threats, coercion, or deception.
4. **Sexual Exploitation:** The coercion, manipulation, or abuse of individuals for sexual purposes, often involving prostitution, pornography, or forced marriage.
5. **Porous Borders:** Borders that are poorly guarded or regulated, facilitating the movement of traffickers and their victims across international boundaries.
6. **Trafficking networks:** organized criminal groups or syndicates involved in the recruitment, transportation, and exploitation of trafficked individuals.
7. **Victim Vulnerability:** Factors or circumstances that increase an individual's susceptibility to being trafficked, such as poverty, lack of education, social marginalization, or displacement.
8. **Transnational Crime:** criminal activities that occur across national borders, such as human trafficking, drug trafficking, and organized crime.
9. **Law Enforcement:** Agencies and organizations responsible for enforcing laws and combating criminal activities, including human trafficking, within their respective jurisdictions.
10. **Prosecution:** The legal process of charging and trying individuals or organizations accused of human trafficking offenses in a court of law.

11. **Victim Protection:** measures and services aimed at ensuring the safety, well-being, and rights of trafficked individuals, including shelter, healthcare, legal assistance, and psychosocial support.
12. **Prevention:** strategies and interventions aimed at reducing the incidence of human trafficking through education, awareness-raising, economic empowerment, and addressing root causes.
13. **International Cooperation:** Collaboration and coordination among countries, organizations, and stakeholders at the international level to combat human trafficking and address its cross-border dimensions.
14. **Policy Frameworks:** Legal and institutional frameworks at the national and international levels that guide efforts to prevent, investigate, prosecute, and address human trafficking.
15. **Victim Identification:** The process of identifying individuals who have been trafficked and providing them with appropriate assistance and protection.