

# Drugs Trafficking in Pakistan: An Analysis



**NATIONAL INITIATIVE**  
AGAINST ORGANIZED CRIME  
PAKISTAN

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## *About NIOC Pakistan*

*National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC), in collaboration with the Global Initiative Resilience Fund is the first-ever initiative in Pakistan launched by a group of committed professionals and experts with law enforcement, media and other public service backgrounds. NIOC aims to build community resilience and influence public policy to combat organized crime. Initially launched as a pilot project for six months with effect from November 1, 2019, it aims to jump start not only the discussion around transnational organized crime in Pakistan, but also to facilitate the government work. With a complex governance structure having multiple layers of stakeholders, the criminal justice system and law enforcement apparatus require better coordination and capacity building. NIOC will try to identify the gaps and suggest improvements in the system.*

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By Tariq Khosa

**Setting the Context:** The National Anthem of United States of America, ends with a phrase; “from sea to the shining sea”. The Pakistani analogy would be, from the snows of Karakorum to the blue waters of Arabian Sea. Pakistan is geographically a linear country, with all kinds of wondrous landscapes. It borders five countries; Peoples’ Republic of China in the North, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in the West, Islamic Republic of Iran in the South West and India in the East. This geographical juncture makes Pakistan a natural transit country and a staging post for global trade; astraddle the ancient Silk Road. This locational advantage of Pakistan is used for trade in goods and services and with China Pakistan Economic Corridor and other projects global trade through and from Pakistan is increasing. This locational advantage of Pakistan is also exploited by transboundary drug trade. Pakistan’s long Western border is porous. It is being fenced but still many parts of the border are remote and un-guarded. The Pakistani coastline is 990 km and stretches from India to Middle East and Iran. It is patrolled but most of it remains unprotected. This situation is exploited by the international drug mafia and Pakistani territory is misused as transit route for International drug trade.

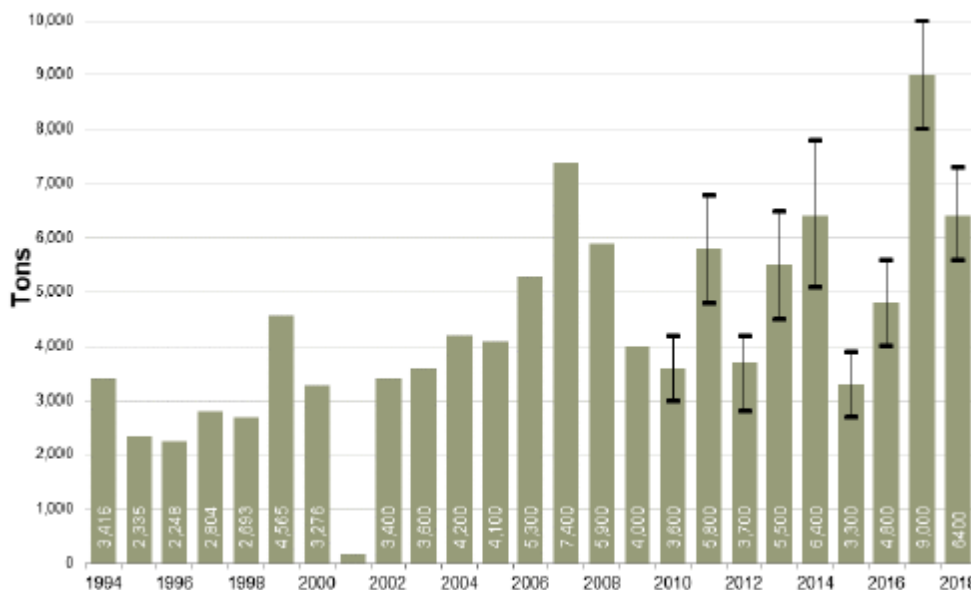


**Overview of Pakistan’s Drug Problem:** Pakistan has always pursued a zero tolerance policy for all types and forms of drugs. As a result of this relentless policy pursuit, Pakistan’s drug production has been reduced substantially. Almost to a naught. Pakistan had a poppy cultivation problem in erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The remote areas of this loosely administered region like Tirrah valley were known poppy cultivation area. Pakistan’s operations against terrorism in FATA and other efforts also eradicated the poppy cultivation problem. Moreover, the constitutional re-integration of former FATA in to KP Province has further reduced the possibility of poppy cultivation as now the former tribal agencies are regular districts of the province. Therefore, it can now be safely stated that only two kinds of drug problems remain in Pakistan; Pakistan being used by global drug trade as a transit route and domestic drug abuse in Pakistan. However, the collaboration and correlation of other forms of organized crime remains strong and has exacerbated the drug trafficking problem in Pakistan. Often drug smugglers, human traffickers and traditional smugglers collaborate and share intelligence. Sharing a long western border with Afghanistan and Iran has created a vulnerability for Pakistan. According to a UNODC report Afghanistan has

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become the largest producer of opiate based drugs. Law enforcement is confronting greater challenges, due to 63% increase in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and growing drug addicts in Pakistan (currently around 8.9 million). Afghanistan's poppy production reached almost 11000 tons in 2017 and it has increased in the intervening years. This has increased Pakistan's drug trafficking vulnerability as well as the risk of increased domestic drug use.

**Transit Route Problem:** Conflict in Afghanistan has boosted poppy cultivation and drug production in the country. Pakistan shares a border of 7,307 km. The border with Iran is 909 km. Despite fencing of border many areas remain unguarded, especially the border with Iran. Drug trafficking infamously adapts to border controls. The ironical paradox is that methodologies adopted to curb drug trafficking leads to increased street value and thus more profits for the traffickers. The transit route issue has two dimensions; a) the smuggling of Heroin and other drugs from Afghanistan to rest of the world and b) inward smuggling of Precursor chemicals. Pakistan sits on one of the world's busiest drug trafficking corridors, largely due to the cultivation of opium poppy and cannabis in Afghanistan. Latest UNODC Report on Drug Use in Pakistan, estimates 40 per cent of the drugs (heroin & hashish) produced in Afghanistan are routed through Pakistan generating a considerable opiate supply for export but also for domestic use. Other than cannabis and opium poppy, available data points to an emerging supply of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), ecstasy, and cocaine. Opium production in Afghanistan was 185 metric tons in 2001, increased to 9000 metric tons in 2017 (highest ever) and 6400 metric tons in 2018 (second highest).



Source: UNODC

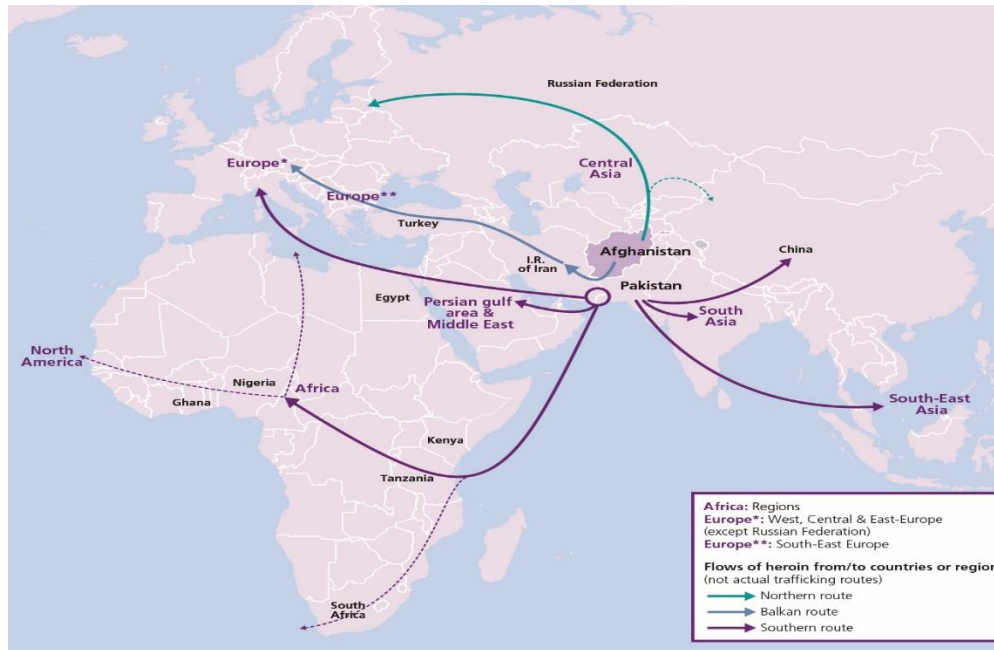
In 2018 Afghanistan produced 9000 metric tons of opium accounting for 87 percent of the global opiates market. The 2018 Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey highlights the fact that in total of 263000 hectares' opium was cultivated. Helmand remained the country's leading opium poppy cultivating province followed by Kandahar, Uruzgan and Nangarhar all bordering provinces of Pakistan.

Over the course of the last few years' new routes have appeared in some regions. Since 2004, Pakistan has seized increasing levels of heroin being trafficked to China through Pakistan. This new trafficking route from Afghanistan via Pakistan to China will be monitored more

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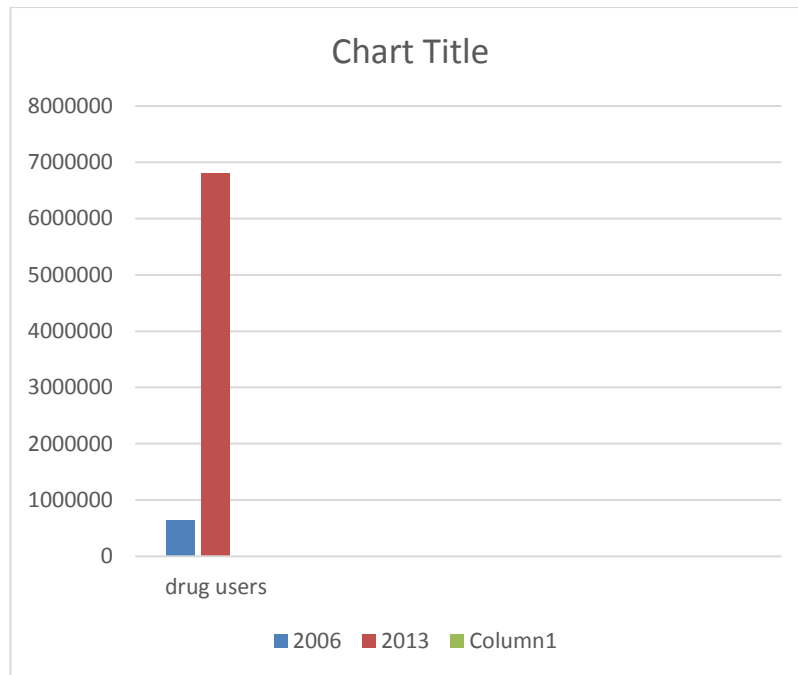
carefully. Pakistan is a possible transit country for precursors en-route to Afghanistan. The Anti-Narcotics Force Pakistan (ANF) believes that precursor chemicals are most likely smuggled through UAE, Central Asia, China, and India into Pakistan and then onwards to Afghanistan. It is also believed by Pakistan's LEAs that mislabeled containers of acetic anhydride form part of the cargo in the Afghan transit trade.

### Mapping the Drug Routes



Source: UNODC

**Domestic Drugs Use Problem:** The 2006 National Assessment Study of Problem Drug Use in Pakistan estimated 640,000 Opioid users. Of these, around 500,000 (77 percent) are heroin users. The prevalence of injecting drug users in 2006 was estimated to be around 130,000. The estimated number of injecting drug users in Pakistan has doubled between 2000 and 2006. Given the massive increase of opium and heroin production in Afghanistan, this is a notable spike. According to a 2013 report by UNODC now the number of drug users in Pakistan has reached 6.8 Million, which is alarming. In last few years it has been observed that the use of synthetic drugs by youth in the country is on increase. Ecstasy, Buprenorphine, and other psychotropic are smuggled from India, UAE, and Europe for the emerging local Pakistani market. The Pakistani affluent youth are the new target customer base for these chemical and psychotropic drugs, besides the traditional drugs; Heroin and Hashish. These drugs are pedaled on campus for the impressionable, making it difficult to detect by the LEAs. The percentage increase in drug use is astronomical over a period of 6 years.



The same UNODC report states that there are, 4.25 million people who are thought to be suffering from drug use disorders and drug dependence, reporting significant challenges controlling or reducing their use and experiencing negative personal consequences as a result of their drug use. About 700 people die in Pakistan every day due to drug-related complications. The reports also present classification data, according to which, Regular heroin users are 860,000, Opium users 320,000 and Injection drug users 430,000. The prevalence of inhalant drug use is high among street children. There is a substantial drug use problem in Pakistan. The prevalent use of psychotropic drugs is undocumented yet and there is a risk that use of these drugs is on the rise especially through on-campus drug peddling. There is anecdotal evidence that drug peddling is done by students and the prevalence is high across the gender divide, especially the use of party drugs.

### **Strategic Approach to Deal with Pakistan’s Drug Problem**

It is proposed that a three pronged strategic approach may be adopted to deal with Pakistan’s drug problem:

- a) Address the drug transit route problem through following proposed measures:
  1. Formation of a Regional Task Force (RTF) for reduction and eradication of outflow of processed drugs from Afghanistan and reduction and eradication of inflow of precursor chemicals in to Afghanistan through Pakistan. The proposed RTF can inter-alia do high frequency intelligence sharing on outward smuggling from Afghanistan, coordinate with precursor chemical production industry for data sharing on production, collect data on legitimate use of precursor chemicals and keep record of surpluses if any, Coordinate with LEAs of point of origin of chemical drugs and party drugs like amphetamine, ecstasy et all and have periodic meetings for coordination.
  2. Under the UNODC’s Paris Pact initiative, Pakistan hosted a round table meeting in March 2005. The international community expressed wholehearted support towards capacity building of LEAs by pledging to

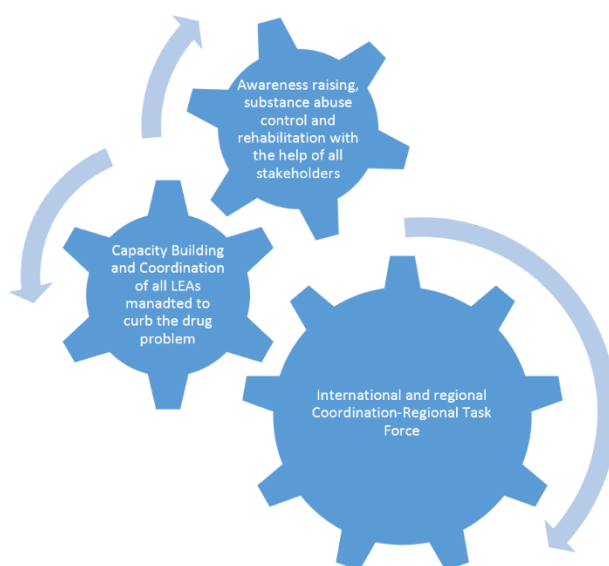
mainstream drug control measures in their development assistance programs, providing evidence-based intelligence information and cooperating in combating the smuggling of acetic anhydride into Afghanistan. The Government of Pakistan supports UNODC's Triangular Cooperation Initiative which will ensure practical cooperation to strengthen border controls between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. Triangular Initiative forum was activated after 6 years in 2018 where it was pledged by participants that the forum will be utilized optimally to fight drug abuse. A ministerial meeting is planned in 2019.

3. Have more coordinated border control regime through Customs Cooperation and other Border control LEAs.
- b) Enhanced Coordination and Capacity Building of all LEAs mandated to curb drug smuggling through following means:
1. More budgetary allocations for the LEAs dealing with drug smuggling and introducing a system of performance reward for seizures and interdictions.
  2. Capacity building of LEAs dealing with drug smuggling, including but not limited to training, detection equipment and enhanced skilled human resources.
  3. High frequency coordination of Inter-agency task force (IATF) under Ministry of Narcotics Control, including ANF, Pakistan Customs, Pakistan Rangers, Pakistan Coast Guards and Frontier Corps. Inter-Agency coordination should also be strengthened through regular meetings of the Policy Review Board (PRB), the Narcotics Interdiction Committee (NIC) and Inter Agency Task Force (IATF). The NIC needs to be revitalized to include discussion on assets forfeiture and drug generated money laundering. The emphasis on drug demand reduction, including the enforcement of regulations related to over the counter sale of narcotic and psychotropic substances need to be enhanced
  4. The slow and cumbersome process of realizing the value of forfeited drug generated assets is a serious shortcoming. It is recommended that dedicated wings be established within the ANF for assets forfeiture for which additional resources have been allocated. A computerized database on drug trafficker's assets is proposed to be established to curb drug related money laundering. Fast tracked realization of forfeited assets will generate significant deposits in the National Fund for the Control of Drug Abuse established under the Control of Narcotics Substances (CNS) Act 1997. The procedure for the utilization of these funds is cumbersome and needs revision for quick liquidation of assets accumulated through drug trade.
- c) Control on campus and off campus drug use among the youth and other vulnerable groups. This can be done by adopting following measures:
1. Awareness of Campus administrations on the prevalence of drug use and peddling methodologies. It is also useful to have regular coordination with local police and campus authorities on this key issue of substance abuse on campus.
  2. The awareness, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of drug use requires interventions and programs at multiple levels; combining school based programs, community based prevention, health promotion activities and targeted prevention and intervention programs focusing on street children and Most At Risk Adolescents (MARA). Drug treatment

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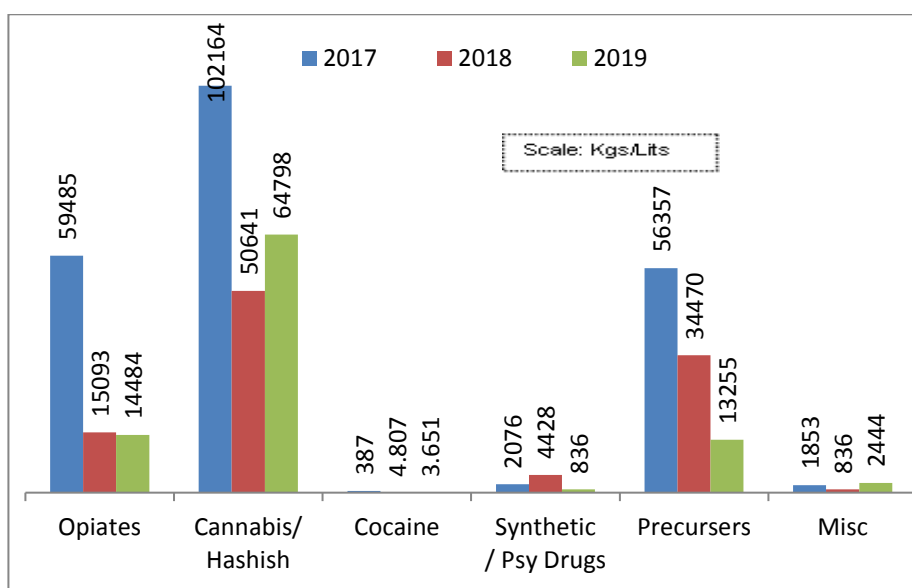
services must be able to adapt to meet the emerging and diverse needs of drug dependent persons, especially those with co-morbidities such as HCV, HIV, STDs and TB. The area of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation requires capacity building (including specialized drug demand reduction staff in the ANF).

The Public Sector Development Plan (PSDP) of Ministry of Narcotics Control may include special projects on raising awareness on drug abuse with all stakeholders, including but not limited to CSOs, Bar Associations, Traders Associations and other indigenous civil society organizations. The awareness raising projects may be implemented in tandem with prevention projects in schools and higher education institutions.



### Annexure A

#### Despite the Challenges: Interdictions





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