

DRUG TRAFFICKING IN PAKISTAN



NATIONAL INITIATIVE
AGAINST ORGANIZED CRIME
PAKISTAN

nioc.pk

DRUG TRAFFICKING IN PAKISTAN

Policy brief

This policy brief was researched and written by Jamil Junejo Kashif Noon, consultant and research lead at NIOC. Sabino Jalal Sikandar, Joint Secretary Ministry of Narcotics Control and UNODC Country Office Islamabad provided useful input. Director NIOC Tariq Khosa provided strategic guidance. This policy brief is issued after the review and approval of the NIOC Advisory Board and with the support of NIOC Secretariat."



NATIONAL INITIATIVE
AGAINST ORGANIZED CRIME
PAKISTAN

Outline

1. Introduction
 2. Overview of Pakistan's drug problem
 - 2.1 Transit route problem
 - 2.2 Domestic drug use problem
 3. Law enforcement structures and challenges
 - 3.1 Diagrammatic display of interdictions
 - 3.2 Challenges
 - 3.2.1 Structural challenges
 - 3.2.2 Transactional challenges
 - Fractured law enforcement
 - Budgetary allocations
 4. Strategic approach to deal with Pakistan's drug problem
- Annexure-1: Interdictions (2017 to 2019)

1. Introduction

Geographically, Pakistan is a linear country with a richness of diverse and striking landscapes. It borders on four countries: China to the northeast; Afghanistan to the west and northwest; Iran to the west; and India to the east. This geographical juncture makes Pakistan a natural transit country and a staging post for global trade. This is what also makes the country a key leg of China’s larger Belt and Road Initiative, including through China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and other potential projects of regional connectivity.

Those engaged in cross-border drug trafficking also exploit this geographical significance of Pakistan. The country’s long western borders with Afghanistan and Iran are largely porous. These are being fenced but still many of their parts are remote and un-guarded and have difficult terrains. Similarly, Pakistan’s coastline is 990 km long and stretches from India to the Middle East and Iran. Despite regular patrolling, most of it remains unprotected. The international drug cartels exploit this situation and misuse Pakistani territory as transit route for international drug trafficking.



2. Overview of Pakistan’s drug problem

Pakistan has always pursued a zero tolerance policy for of all types and forms of drugs. That approach has significantly contributed in a visible reduction in drug production in the country over the past several years. For one, poppy cultivation in erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has been largely eliminated.

The drug production in Pakistan had largely been confined to [opium] poppy cultivation and processing in to Heroine, Cannabis cultivation and its processing into hashish, or charas. Pakistan has, however, never been a significant heroin producer. According to one account, opium was cultivated on 32,000 hectares in 1978, which was reduced to 5,215 hectares in 1995. In subsequent years, as noted by a UNODC report, “Pakistan’s cultivation of opium poppy largely declined... to near zero levels in 1999 and 2000.”¹ The report noted that though the poppy cultivation in Pakistan dropped to mere 213 hectares in 2001, it spiked from that point, “probably as a result of high opium prices following the Taliban’s prohibition of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.”² As a result, in 2003 poppy cultivation reached at 6,703 hectares, however by around mid 2007 the total area cultivated declined to 2,306 hectares.³

The remote areas of erstwhile FATA, which were also seen as loosely administered region, such as Tirah in Khyber, were well known as poppy cultivation areas. Pakistan’s counter-militancy operations and drug eradication efforts largely resolved the poppy cultivation problem. More recently, the constitutional

merger of former FATA into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has further reduced the possibility of poppy cultivation in erstwhile FATA agencies, which are now districts of KP.

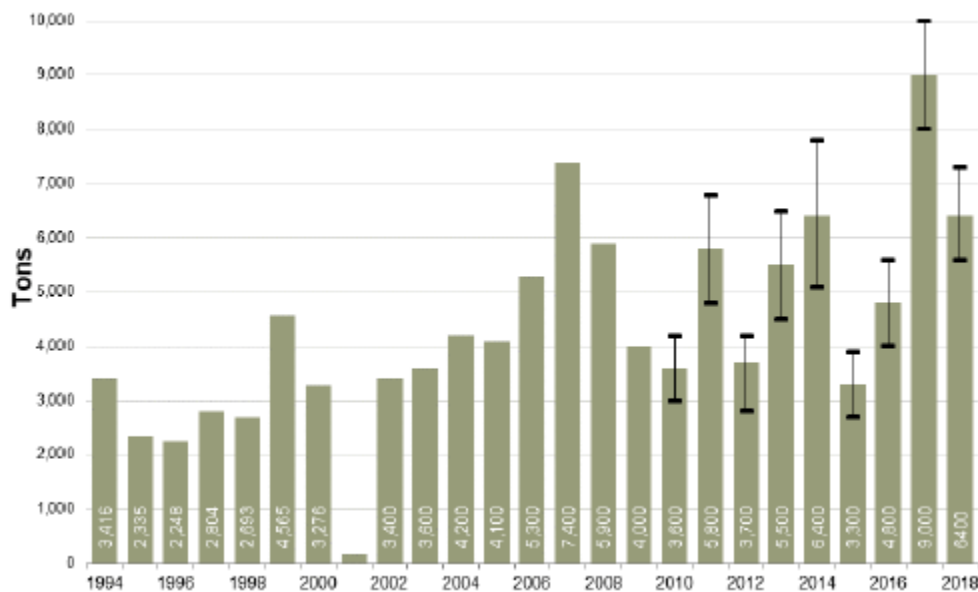
While the problems of poppy cultivation and drug production have largely been resolved, at least for now, yet two kinds of drug problem still remain in Pakistan: first, Pakistan is being used by global drug traffickers as a transit route; and secondly, the domestic drug abuse in the country is growing. Meanwhile, the collaboration and correlation of other forms of organized crime also remain strong, exacerbating 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, as cited earlier, also compounds Pakistan's drug-related problems. A 2018 UNODC report noted that Afghanistan had "continued to be the world's largest cultivator of opium poppy and the world's largest producer of opium." In 2017, the report claimed, the total area under opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan increased by 63 percent to 328,000 hectares, as compared with the previous year;⁴ similarly, the opium production also increased by 87 percent, from 4,800 tons in 2016 to 9,000 tons in 2017.⁵ These trends have not shown some significant downturn in subsequent years, and have been adding to Pakistan's drug trafficking vulnerability as well as to the risk of increased domestic drug use.

2.1 Transit route problem

Conflict in Afghanistan boosted poppy cultivation and drug production in the country. Pakistan shares an over 2,400-kilometer long border with Afghanistan. Pakistan's border with Iran is also over 900 km in length. Despite continuing fencing of these borders, many areas still remain unguarded, especially along the border with Iran. Drug traffickers are astute in adapting to and exploiting border controls. Paradoxically, the procedures adopted by the authorities to curb the drug trafficking provide the traffickers a pretext to increase the price or street value of the drugs and thus make more profits. The transit route issue has two dimensions: first, the smuggling of heroin and other drugs from Afghanistan to rest of the world; and secondly, an 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. A recent UNODC report underscored that about 40 per cent of the drugs (heroin & hashish) produced in Afghanistan are transited through Pakistan generating a considerable opiate supply for export as well as also for domestic use.⁶ 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, which reached to 9,000 metric tons in 2017 (highest ever; an increase of 87 percent from the year before, i.e. 2016);⁷ the UNODC-led Afghanistan Opium Survey 2018 noted a 29 percent reduction in opium production in 2018, to 6,400 metric tons,⁸ which was still the second highest.

Chart 1: Opium production in Afghanistan (1994 to 2018)

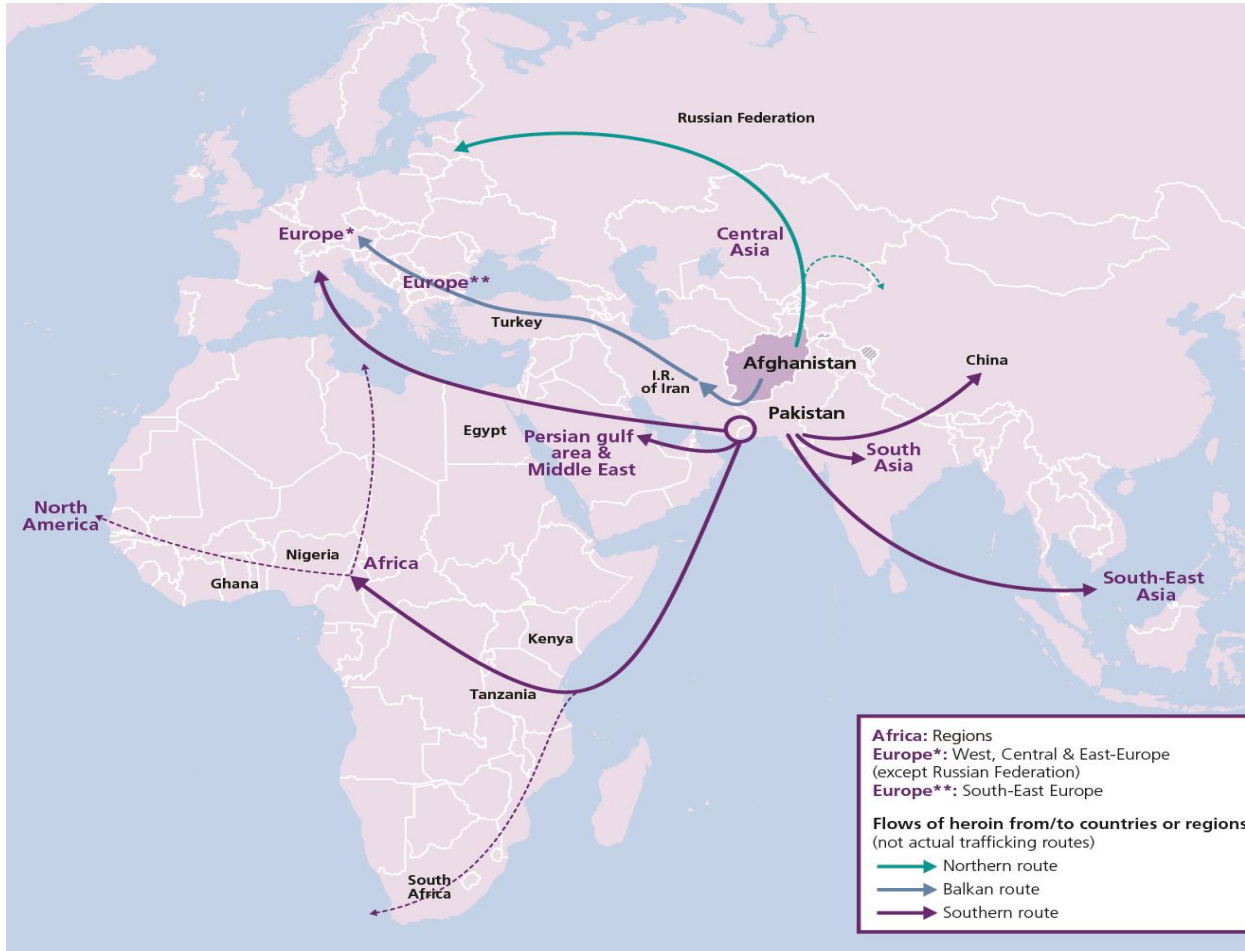


(Source: UNODC’s “Afghanistan opium survey 2018.”)

The 2018 Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey also highlighted the fact that, in all, 263,000 hectares of opium was cultivated in that year. Helmand remained the country's leading opium poppy cultivating province followed by Kandahar, Uruzgan and Nangarhar all bordering provinces of Pakistan.⁹

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 needs to be monitored more carefully. Pakistan is a possible transit country for precursors en-route to Afghanistan. The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) officials believe 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.¹⁰

Figure 1: Mapping the drug routes



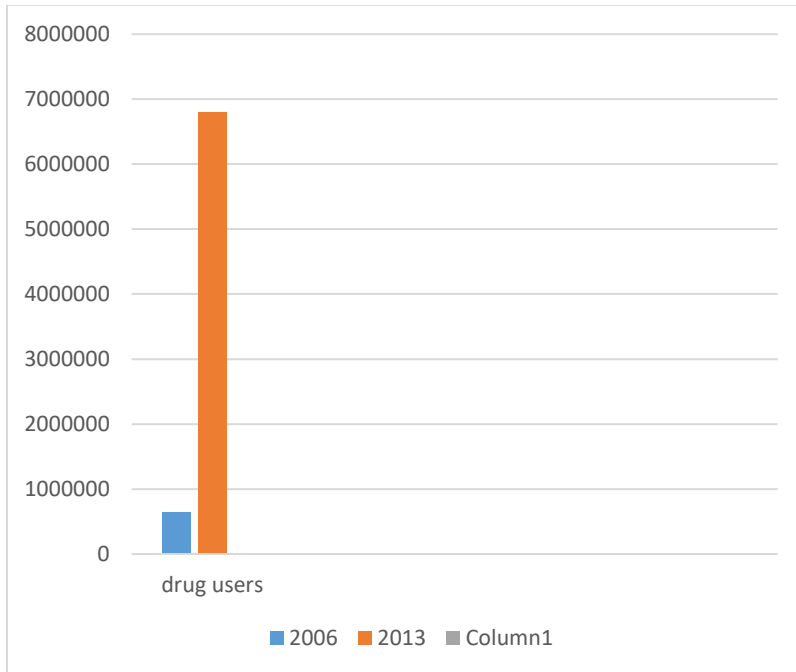
(Source: UNODC as quoted in “Drug Trafficking in Pakistan: An Analysis,” a report by National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC), published on January 7, 2020, <https://nioc.pk/article/394>)

2.2 Domestic drug use problem

The 2006 UNODC assessment of drug problem in Pakistan estimated around 640,000 opioid users in the country. Of these, around 500,000 (77 percent) were heroin users. The prevalence of injecting drug users in 2006 was estimated to be around 130,000, a number that had doubled between 2000 and 2006.¹¹ Given the massive increase of opium and heroin production in Afghanistan, this was a notable spike. According to a 2013 report by UNODC, “approximately six per cent of the population, or 6.7 million people had used any controlled substance,”¹² which was an alarming finding indicating a significant percentage increase in drug use over a period of 7 years. (See Chart 2) In last few years it has been observed that the use of synthetic drugs is increasing in the country, mainly among the youth. Ecstasy, Buprenorphine, and other psychotropic are smuggled from India, UAE, and Europe for the emerging local Pakistani market. The Pakistani affluent youths are the new target customer-base for these chemical and psychotropic

drugs, besides the traditional drugs, i.e. heroin and hashish. These drugs are peddled on educational campuses for the impressionable, making it difficult to detect by the LEAs.

Chart 2: Comparison of drug users in Pakistan (2006 and 2013)



(Data Sources: UNODC, “Problem drug use in Pakistan: Results from the year 2006 National Assessment,” 2007, https://www.unodc.org/documents/GAP/PNAS%202006%20Report_Final_Aug28.pdf; and UNODC, “Drug use in Pakistan 2013,” https://www.unodc.org/documents/pakistan/Survey_Report_Final_2013.pdf)

The 2013 UNODC report on drug use in Pakistan also stated that out of the total identified 6.7 million substance users, there were “4.25 million people who were 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.”¹³ About 700 people die in Pakistan every day due to drug-related complications. The report also presented classification data, according to which, there were 860,000 regular heroin users, 320,000 opium users and 430,000 injection drug users. The prevalence of inhalant drug use was found high among street children.¹⁴

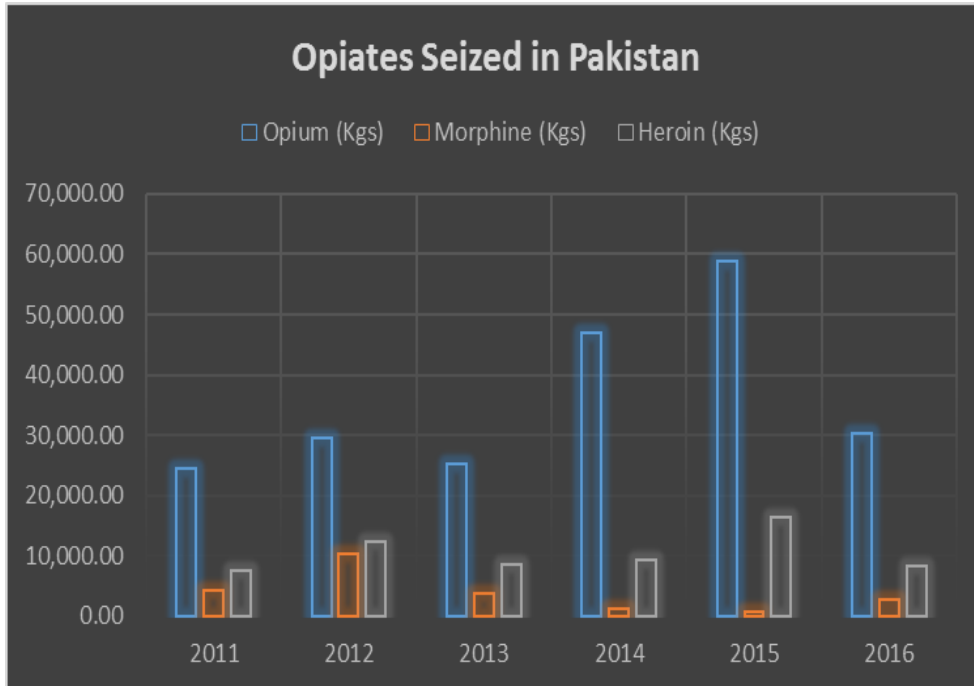
The prevalent use of psychotropic drugs is undocumented yet, but there is a risk that use of these drugs is on the rise especially through on-campus drug peddling. There is anecdotal evidence that drug peddling is done by students and the prevalence is high across the gender divide, especially the use of party drugs.

3. Law enforcement structures and challenges

Pakistan has a robust law enforcement infrastructure in place. It spans across multiple departments on the level of federal and provincial governments. There are many legislative instruments in place to criminalize the trafficking and use of all forms of narcotics substances. Following laws cover the spectrum of abuse of drugs:

- a) Control of Narcotics Substance Act (1997)
- b) Customs Act 1969
- c) Pakistan Penal Code 1860

Chart 3: Opiates seized in Pakistan (2011-2016)



(Source: “Drug Trafficking in Pakistan: An Analysis,” a report by National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC), published on January 7, 2020, <https://nioc.pk/article/394>)

Under the CNSA 1997, possession of 100g and more of heroin, cocaine or any other opium and coca derivative carries a life term or death sentence. The punishment varies for opium and any other substance not classified under the Act. Precursor chemicals fall under this undefined category within the Act.

LEAs responsible for drug interdictions: There are four federal government ministries/divisions, which are mandated to interdict illegal drugs. Similarly, all provincial police forces also carry the same mandate under the legal framework. Following is the list of law enforcement apparatus:

- i. Anti-Narcotics Force working under Narcotics Control Division
- ii. Pakistan Customs working under Federal Board of Revenue
- iii. Pakistan Rangers under Ministry of Interior
- iv. Frontier Corps under Ministry of Interior
- v. Pakistan Coast Guards under Ministry of Interior
- vi. Frontier Constabulary under Ministry of Interior
- vii. Provincial Police Departments

3.1 Diagrammatic display of interdictions¹

a) Precursors interdictions

Chart 4: Amphetamine seized in Pakistan in Kgs (2013-16)

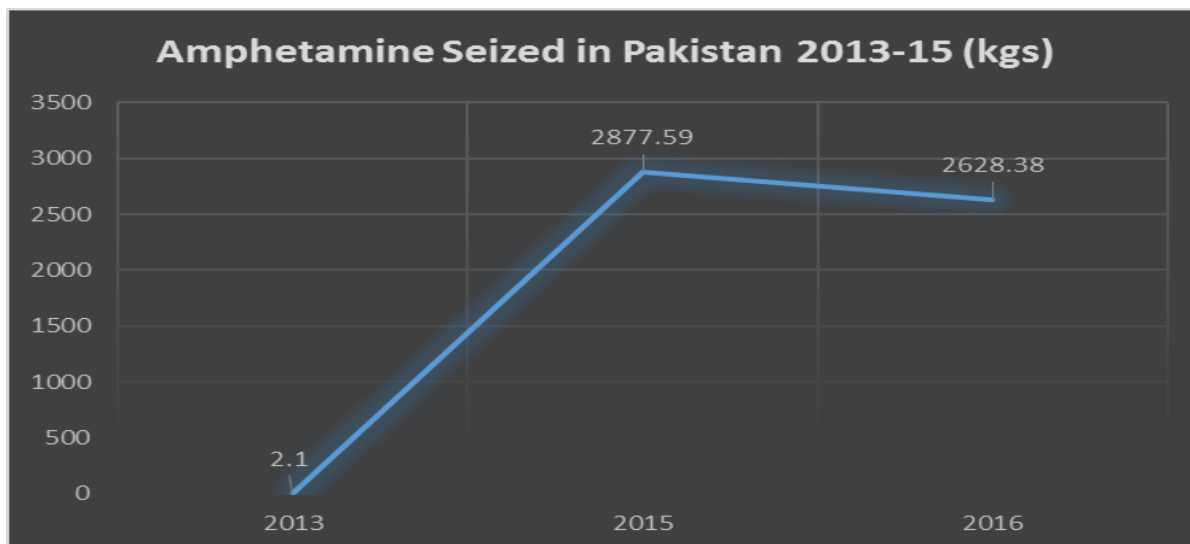
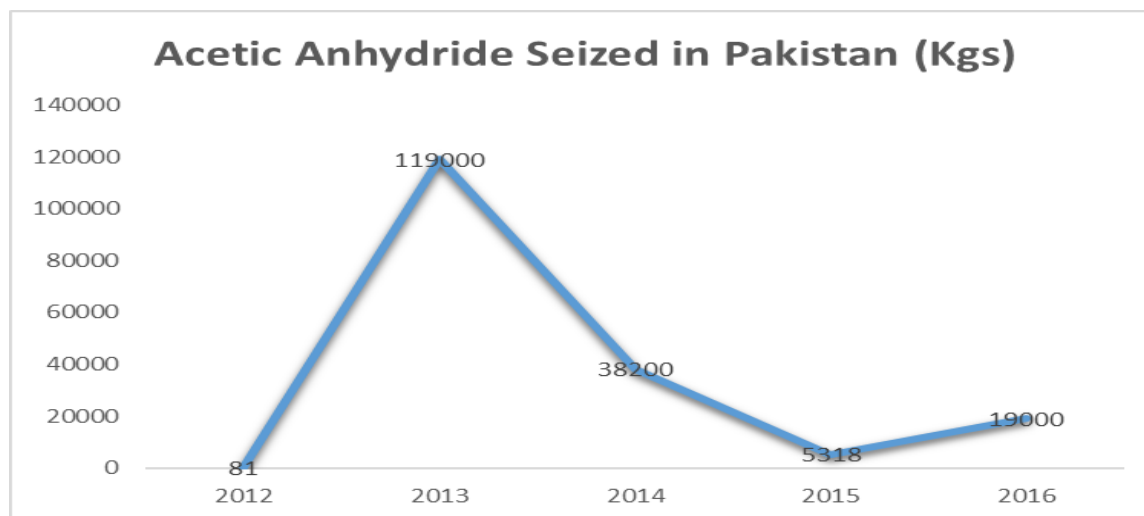


Chart 5: Acetic anhydride seized in Pakistan in Kgs (2012-16)



¹ All charts in this section are drawn from an NIOC 2020 report titled “Drug Trafficking in Pakistan: An Analysis,” which can be seen here <https://nioc.pk/article/394>

b) Party drugs interdictions

Chart 6: Methamphetamine seized in Pakistan in Kgs (2013-2016)

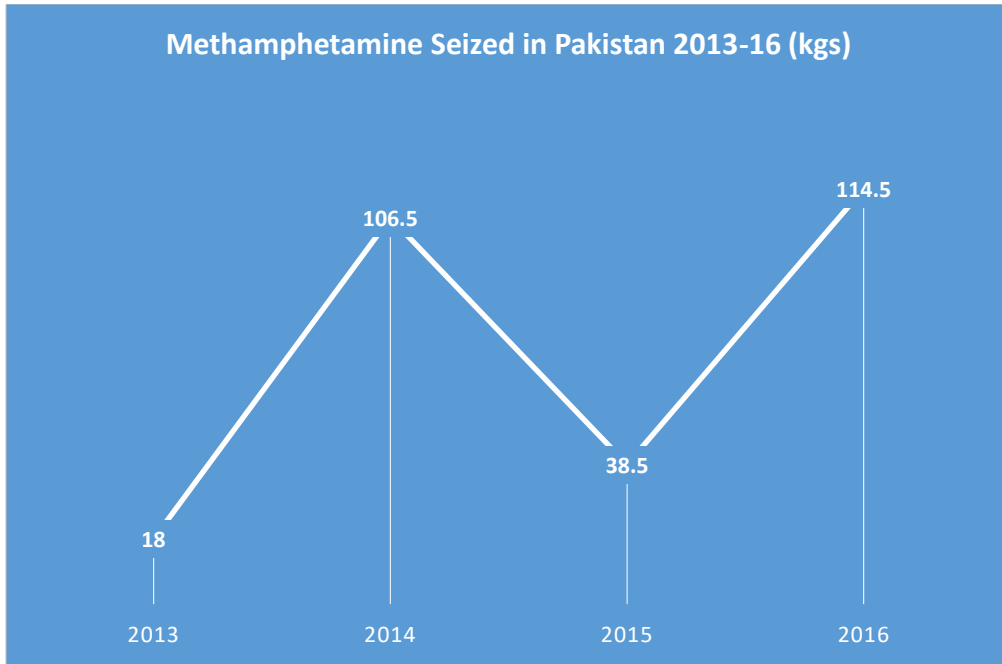
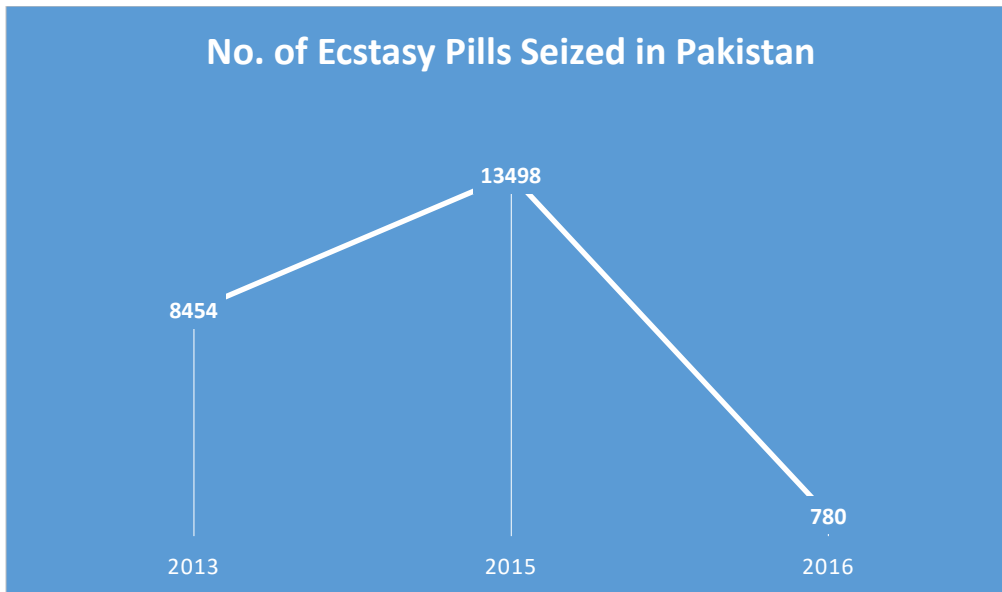


Chart 7: Number of ecstasy pills seized in Pakistan (2013-2016)



3.2 Challenges

There is a multitude of factors and challenges, which impedes law enforcement agencies in their efforts to control the drug problem in Pakistan. These challenges can be categorized as follows:

3.2.1 Structural challenges: As cited earlier, Pakistan's geography and proximity to Afghanistan, and the latter's continuing and increasing drug production constitute a structural challenge, which cannot be addressed until peace is established in the region or drug demand is reduced globally. As long as there is a market for drugs, these will be produced, processed, smuggled, peddled and consumed. Secondly, there is something of an ironical paradox associated with drug trade. With high frequency and quantity of interdictions, the street value of drugs increases, adding more profit margins to the drug traffickers. The drug traffickers use these windfalls to invest in new routes, ways and means for circumventing the law enforcement infrastructure. These structural challenges cannot be overcome in short to medium term.

3.2.2 Transactional challenges: Transactional challenges however can be mitigated. They can be further sub-categorized according to the two major drug related problems plaguing Pakistan: a) transit route problem; and b) domestic drug use problem. As cited earlier, there are multiple law enforcement agencies, part of the bigger infrastructure to prevent trafficking, smuggling and peddling of drugs. Despite this comprehensive response, the precursor chemicals are still being transited through Pakistan and processed drugs being transited back. Similarly, drug use is on the rise in Pakistan, especially the new kinds of party drugs like ecstasy pills that are being smuggled from the Gulf and European countries. This state of affairs presents transactional challenges, which can be addressed in short to medium terms reducing the transit route flows as well as by checking the domestic drug use problem. Following is an analytical classification of these transactional challenges:

- **Fractured law enforcement:** There are four federal government ministries/divisions and as many on the level of provincial governments, which are responsible only for drugs interdiction and seizures. When counted together along with departments/divisions looking after rehabilitation and reintegration of drug users, then the number of ministries or departments would increase. There is no forum or platform for all these divisions and departments to coordinate, discuss and develop a coordinated response for reducing transit of precursors and processed drugs and reduce Pakistan's drug transit problem. It is also pertinent to mention that the police departments under the provincial governments have huge capacity gaps in terms of even recognizing the precursor chemicals and party drugs.
- **Budgetary allocations:** The Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) allocation for Narcotics Control Division for fiscal year (FY) 2019-20 is PKR 135.240 million. This allocation is also meant for completion of three ongoing infrastructure projects of ANF police stations and barracks, as well as two new schemes for similar infrastructure projects. Only one project is dedicated for building a Model Addiction Treatment and Rehabilitation Center (MATRC), with the current FY allocation of PKR 50 million for this project.¹⁵ In the following table a roughly estimated contra factual is presented, in which the cost of drug problem is compared with investment in drug problem.

Table 1: PSDP budgetary allocations for the year 2019-20

Drug Problem	Investment (PSDP Budgetary allocation FY 2019-20)	Cost (PKR)	Resource Gap
Drug Use Problem	50,000,000 (MATRC)	3,000,000 per person for a 30-day program of rehabilitation ¹⁶	Significant
Transit Route Problem	85.24 million PKR (on infrastructure schemes like PS and barracks)	3600 Metric Tons (@40% opiate from Afghanistan being transited and used in Pakistan ¹⁷	Significant

These facts are enough to provide a glimpse of huge resource gap for handling the drug problem in Pakistan. This estimate however does not capture the human resource gap. The total number of trained personnel in ANF is very small as compared to people involved in drug trafficking and peddling.

4. 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:

- i. ***Formation of a Regional Task Force*** (RTF) is proposed for reduction and eradication of outflow of processed drugs from Afghanistan and reduction and eradication of inflow of precursor chemicals into 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; and coordinate with LEAs of point of origin of chemical drugs and party drugs like amphetamine, ecstasy etc., and have periodic meetings for coordination. The CNSA 1997 provides for doing Mutual Legal Assistance (MLAs) and Extradition Treaties with foreign countries. This regime can be enhanced strengthened and further streamlined by establishing standard operating procedures.
- ii. ***[Take benefit of] International consensus and cooperation:*** 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.

- iii. ***Customs Cooperation*** is a key area. Establish more coordinated border control regime through Customs Cooperation and other Border control LEAs.

b) Work for enhanced coordination and capacity building of all LEAs, mandated to curb drug smuggling, through following means:

- i. ***PSDP allocation and National Fund for control of drug abuse:*** More budgetary allocations are needed for the Narcotics Control Division and all other divisions focusing especially on curbing drug smuggling dealing. A system of performance reward for seizures and interdictions should be introduced. Currently under Control of Narcotics Substances Act 1997, a National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse is established. The forfeiture of properties and proceeds of their sale can also be deposited in the said fund (Section 54 clauses 2-5). This fund can be used by Narcotics Control Division to introduce a reward scheme as well as establish more MATRCs. Currently there are 5 MATRCs in five provincial capitals and Sukkur.¹⁸
- ii. ***Work for capacity building*** of LEAs (including police departments) dealing with drug smuggling, including through training, detection equipment and enhanced skilled human resources, among others.
- iii. ***Precursor identification and interdiction courses*** may be run in all Police Training Centers (PTCs) by ANF specialists so that capacity of maximum law enforcement officials is increased in interdicting such chemicals. Under CNSA1997, a police officer of the level of sub-inspector can act under the law for interdiction. The courses may be conducted for all officer of sub-inspector level. Narcotics Control Division may like to include it as a scheme in 2020-21 FY PSDP.
- iv. ***Establish 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 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, needs to be enhanced.
- v. ***Establish dedicated ANF wing for forfeiture of drug-acquired properties.*** 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 can be allocated. A computerized database on

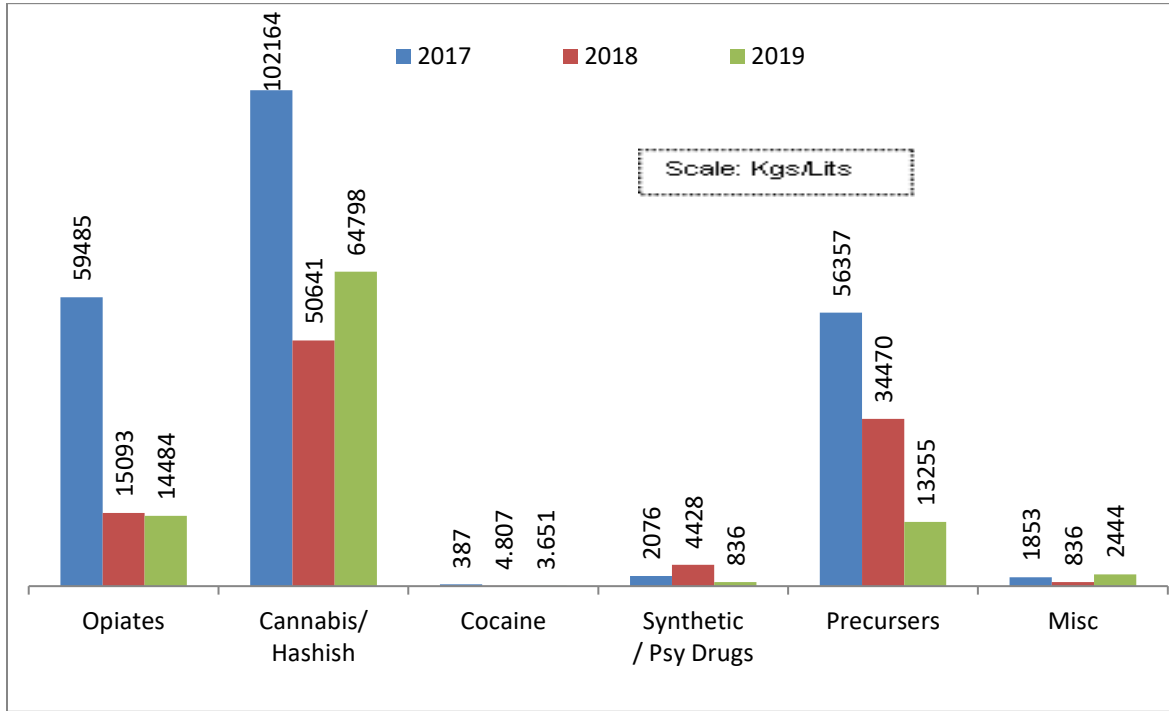
drug trafficker's assets be established to curb drug related money laundering. Fast tracked realization of forfeited assets will generate significant deposits in the National Fund for the Control of Drug Abuse established under the Control of Narcotics Substances (CNS) Act 1997. The procedure for the utilization of these funds is cumbersome and needs revision for quick liquidation of assets accumulated through drug trade.

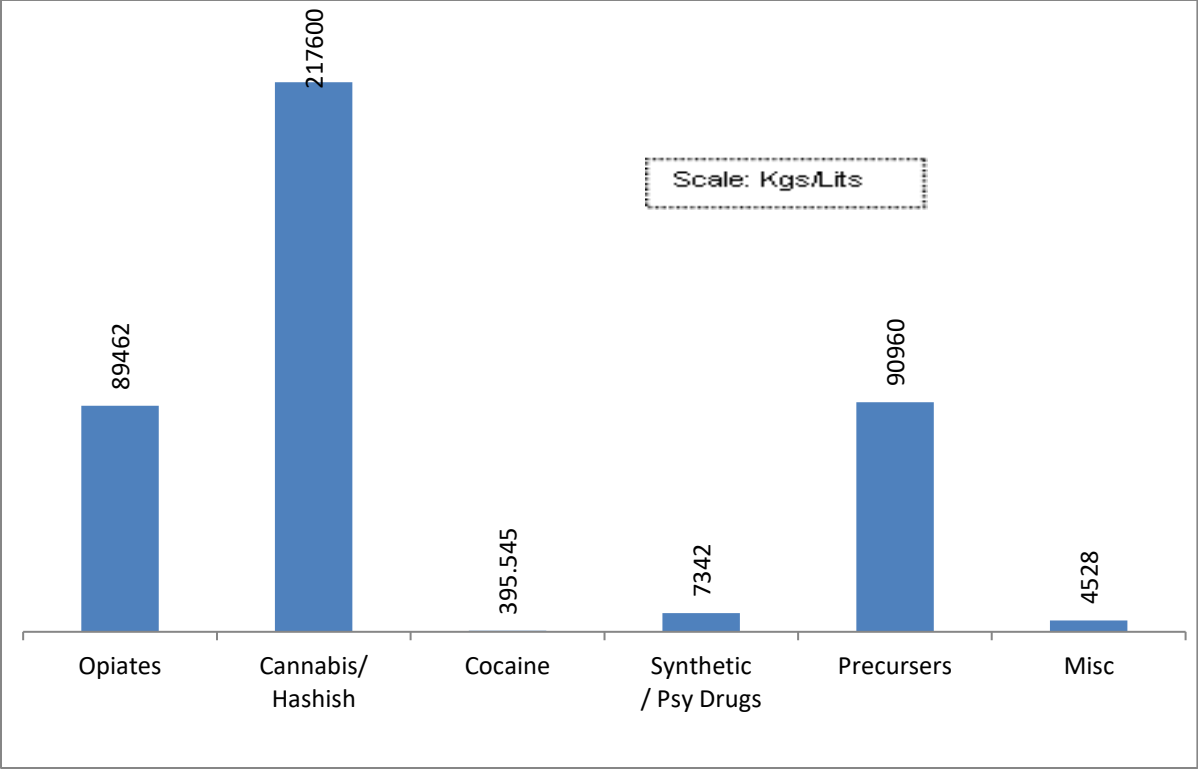
c) Control on-campus and off-campus drug use among the youth and other vulnerable groups.

This can be done by adopting following measures:

- i. ***Raise 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 campuses.
- ii. ***MATRCs*** scope may be extended to awareness, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programs on multiple levels, such as through school-based integrated programs, community-based prevention measures, health promotion activities, and targeted prevention and intervention programs focusing on street children and Most At Risk Adolescents (MARA). Drug treatment services must be able to cater to 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).
- iii. ***The Public Sector Development Program*** (PSDP 2020-21) 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-1: Interdictions (2017 to 2019)





Notes

¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), “Illicit drug trends in Pakistan,” April 2008, https://www.unodc.org/documents/regional/central-asia/Illicit%20Drug%20Trends%20Report_Pakistan_rev1.pdf

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ UNODC, “Afghan opiate trafficking along the northern route,” June 2018, https://www.unodc.org/documents/publications/NR_Report_21.06.18_low.pdf

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ As quoted in Tariq Khosa, “Drug Trafficking in Pakistan: An Analysis,” National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC), January 7, 2020, <https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://nioc.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Drug-Trafficking-in-Pakistan.pdf&hl=en>

⁷ UNODC, “Afghan opium production jumps to record level, up 87 percent: Survey,” November 15, 2017, https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2017/November/afghan-opium-production-jumps-to-record-level--up-87-per-cent_-survey.html

⁸ UNODC, “Afghanistan opium survey 2018: Challenges to sustainable development, peace and security,” July 2019, https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2018_socioeconomic_report.pdf

⁹ UNODC, “Afghanistan opium survey 2018.”

¹⁰ Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs [at the US Department of State], “International Narcotics Control Strategy Report,” Volume I (March 2010), <http://anf.gov.pk/library/global/Narcotics%20Control%20Strategy%20Report.pdf>

¹¹ UNODC, “Problem drug use in Pakistan: Results from the year 2006 National Assessment,” 2007, https://www.unodc.org/documents/GAP/PNAS%202006%20Report_Final_Aug28.pdf

¹² UNODC, “Drug use in Pakistan 2013,”

https://www.unodc.org/documents/pakistan/Survey_Report_Final_2013.pdf

¹³ UNODC, “Drug use in Pakistan 2013.”

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Government of Pakistan, “Public Sector Development Programme 2019-20,” June 2019, https://www.pc.gov.pk/uploads/archives/PSDP_2019-20_Final.pdf

¹⁶ Addiction Center, “Cost of drugs and alcohol rehab,” <https://www.addictioncenter.com/rehab-questions/cost-of-drug-and-alcohol-treatment/>

¹⁷ UNODC, “World Drug Report 2013,” May 2013, https://www.unodc.org/unodc/secured/wdr/wdr2013/World_Drug_Report_2013.pdf

¹⁸ For details, see “Quick Facts” on the ANF website: <http://anf.gov.pk/qf.php>