

**To What Extent Technology Reduced War on Drug**

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For forty-eight years now, the government has been trying to combat drug trafficking in the country, a menace that has negatively impacted the population, especially the young generation. With the introduction of the internet and other technologies, cracking down on this menace has seemed difficult than before. Technology has made it possible for drug traffickers to sophisticate their crimes and make it difficult for the government to deconstruct the numerous drug organizations in the country. Criminals, drug traffickers inclusive have significantly benefited from technological advancement. The government has benefited from technology; however, this has had a negative impact on the war on drugs. Drug-related organizations and cartels have been given an online platform for executing their illegal businesses.

### **Technology has opened borders.**

Technology, and by extension, globalization, has broken the barriers that made it difficult for the drug cartels to execute their businesses. Criminals can efficiently work across borders; thus, increasing their perforation, crimes, and profits they accrue. Just like technology has revolutionized every faction of people's lives, it has become a focal point for propagating criminal activities, especially drug trafficking (Fedotov, 2017). Previously, despite there being a progressive use of technology at homes, workplaces drug-crime was very low-tech. There didn't exist any global agreement regarding heinous crimes like drug-trafficking.

Technology and precisely the internet have led to the development of the dark webs, online platforms that drug traffickers use to perform their deals, with minimal interference from the government. The internet has enabled traffickers to sell drugs to people, thus endangering the lives of people. These online sites have opened borders that previously made it difficult for these cartels to sell their illegal products (Kain, 2012). For instance, despite social media platforms allowing people to interact and share their most memorable experiences, the dark webs do the

opposite. These webs protect criminals' privacy and make it possible for them to network without being easily detected.

Through its office- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations has addressed borderless cybercrime like drug trafficking. Although there is a strong alliance for cracking down on drug-oriented crimes, UNODC is still finding it challenging due to the heightened use of sophisticated technology. According to UNODC boss, digital currencies like Cryptocurrencies help criminals sell drugs and reduce detection risk (United Nations, 2018). The general takeaway here is that unlike previous cases where drug traffickers had to meet to seal their deals physically, everything is done online. Therefore, the issue of border restriction is no longer a challenge to them.

### **Technology and drug organized crime**

Drug trafficking has evolved from a low-tech business to a highly modern one. Currently, criminals are using highly advanced technologies like narco submarines to transport these illicit substances. These criminals have advanced in organizing their crimes to counteract the government's efforts towards abolishing their operations. Organized crime is orchestrated through a unique operative code that undermines government regulations (Guerrero, 2019). It's also worth noting that organized crimes embody an element of violence in most cases. With the perforation of technology in every faction of people's lives, so has organized drug criminality heightened.

Organized drug-related criminality is more transnational and is very decentralized. Generally, the increased use of technology has globalized drug-centric crime. For the longest time, drug cartels used pyramid-like structure in their criminal groups. This is, however, almost

becoming extinct as these groups now focus on fluid networks. Using these cell-like structures is to minimize the detection risk from the government (Guerrero, 2019). With transnational drug criminality, these drug cartels find it easy to track their activities within several jurisdictions. With this approach, there is minimal risk of law enforcement; thus, they maximize their profits. Transnational drug criminality undermines the countries' efforts to combat this war; governments cannot assume that a specific criminal operation is within its jurisdiction.

The fluid networks that drug organizations are using are immensely advantageous compared to the traditional tier structure. This new structure is well protected and shows minimal connection among the involved parties. With this approach, it's effortless for these organizations to evade law-enforcement (INCB, 2001). It's vital to note that these drug trafficking organizations use modern technologies in two ways: protecting themselves and their activities and enhancing their distribution efficiency. Concerning the distribution of these products, these groups bank on modern technologies to improve their communication and secure the medium of operation.

These modern technologies help drug traffickers to execute their traditional activities through new methods. For instance, they can make information regarding their shipment undetectable through encrypted messages. Additionally, they can launder drug-oriented funds through electronic transfer options and currencies like Bitcoin and Cryptocurrencies (INCB, 2001). These groups have capitalized on technology to orchestrate their crimes to make it difficult for the government and its agencies to detect them. It's commonplace for these drug groups to use technology to commit offenses precisely by focusing on information warfare. The leaders of these groups launch digital attacks on intelligence activities and anti-drug agencies.

#### *Evidence from countries*

Countries have put forth evidence on how these groups have outsmarted them in combating this war. Drug traffickers utilize computers and other portable devices like hard drives and flash disks to store important information like account numbers, business associates, sales, financial transactions, etc. They have managed to beef up their networks' security, and they have resorted to using safe devices (Informatics, 2019). Drug cartels can easily program their devices to detect intrusion from the government. Additionally, these individuals and groups utilize counter-hacking techniques to destroy the investigating sources. These techniques are precious to these drug companies; thus, they don't have to waste time supervising every activity.

In China, the Narcotics police have reported that it's challenging to detect the laundering associated with drug funds. This is precisely due to the rise in sophisticated online banking facilities and electronic commerce. Currently, drug cartels communicate chiefly through mobile phones and prepaid cards. What's making it difficult for the police force to detect these criminal activities is that these gadgets and cards can be purchased anonymously (Informatics, 2019). According to the Narcotics police in Hong Kong, these criminals can evade detection by changing their particulars in the customs database. This vividly explains why some drug-related activities go unnoticed despite the imminent efforts by the government.

The Australian government has reported that drug traffickers capitalize on global courier services to trail their products within this company's platform. When they notice a delay, it alerts them that the government has launched controlled delivery. This allows these drug traffickers to protect their shipment before enforcement authorities get hold of it (INCB, 2001). The Czech Republic and the USA law enforcement agencies report that they have trouble intercepting these operations because they are done instantaneously and through digital platforms. Additionally, a 2000 report by both the USA and Columbia government indicated that internet use has made it

easy for these organizations to retrieve critical information. Thus, the drug traffickers can access information on the law enforcers and track their whereabouts. This explains why, in most cases, these trafficking groups are always ahead of the officers.

### **Impact of these technologies on drug abuse**

The best way to combat drug abuse is by blocking the outlets and platforms where these drugs are found. As already mentioned, these criminals have rolled out smarter ways of countering the government's drug war efforts. The outcome is that many illicit drugs are circulating in society, and there's increased accessibility and availability (Global Initiative, 2019). These drug trafficking groups are improving ways of protecting their operation from government seizure and mandating; they reach a wider multitude. Social media platforms are being used to disseminate information that fosters drug abuse, especially among youths.

These drug mafias benefit from these young individuals' ignorance and immaturity to inculcate in them drug-related activities. For instance, youths can easily access dark webs via internet search engines and individuals who engage in drug trafficking (Kennedy & Southern, 2020). These young people get exposed to drug-related operations through propaganda, misinformation, and brainwashing. The government has tried to censor these sites, but it's been quite challenging due to counter-attacking techniques that these groups use.

Equally, the parents and guardians are responsible for monitoring what their children do on these sites, but most have failed. The outcome is that these drug traffickers are taking advantage of these young people and using them to execute their activities and market their products. Drug and substance abuse is among the key issues affecting young people that the government is yet to solve.

According to UNODC director- John Brandolino, drug traffickers have capitalized on the eminent gaps in coordination and capacities to spread their activities. Technical challenges regarding technology and software for tracking drug crimes have fostered these criminals' activities (Reuters, 2014). The opioid crisis is very much imminent among the youthful generation because the drug trafficking organizations have thwarted the government's efforts and resources to destabilize their activities. The global drug menace now comprises of new substances that hamper efforts for cracking down their activities. With modern technology, drug traffickers have managed new ways of popularizing drug use among people, youths, and teenagers.

### **Technology has helped shorten supply chains for drugs.**

Organized crime organizations are intensifying means of distributing these drugs across the globe. Shortening their supply chains also reduces risk exposure during the entire process. One such innovative approach is creating generic versions of these substances like fentanyl and synthetic heroin (Kennedy & Southern, 2020). With this, approach these syndicates don't have to transport their cargo across regional borders physically. Hence, they manage to minimize transportation costs while marketing their products too. These drug syndicates use some innovative technologies: blogging websites, VOIP programs, social media networks, email encryption, private virtual chat rooms, etc.

Even with the ongoing pandemic, drug trafficking rings minimize their one-on-one interactions and ensure their operations still go on. However, the pandemic has created new avenues for selling these illegal substances, and their prices have heightened too. The government has focused on containing the pandemic, which has made it possible for drug traffickers to capitalize on the available technologies.

These trafficking groups have managed to determine solutions for mitigating the logistical issues they face during this pandemic. Therefore, it's worth noting that the available technology, precisely the digital platforms, has been focal in addressing the logistical challenges (Kennedy & Southern, 2020). The general takeaway here is that borders are more permeable, making it easy for drug trafficking to progress even in difficult situations. There's a need for the government to heighten its investigative measures to have a firm grip over this war on drugs.

### **Challenges in combating drug-related crimes**

Government structures, precisely law enforcement organizations, are significantly challenged by transnational drug crime, despite multilateral treaties to combat them. The government hasn't leveled up to meet the drug traffickers' rapidity on maximizing modern technologies. It's worth noting that the challenges law enforcement organizations face are divided into four: resource, mindset, technical, and legal challenges. In connection to this, there are issues like privacy and specific rights that thwart these efforts.

#### ***Mindset challenges***

Structural reforms to combating the drug war were implemented after the cold war. However, with the intensification of drug criminality and advanced technology, the government finds it difficult to mitigate the menace. Therefore, it's vital for the government and its agencies to use both a structural and mindset approach in dealing with the drug-trafficking issue (INCB, 2001). Cross-jurisdictional drug operations have intensified borderless drug-related activities; governments cannot specifically determine if an illegal operation falls within their jurisdiction.

The telecommunication sector is presently liberalized, and this has unwanted repercussions on these anti-drug agencies. The government cannot completely curb illegal usage



of online platforms without disrupting the licit operations. Traditional investigative strategies are undermined by sophisticated drug crimes (Informatics, 2019). The over-emphasis on the traditional approach to combating drug trafficking has made it difficult to realize drug syndicates' real implications worldwide. This is a nebulous field where drug crimes are still vaguely-defined, and it's difficult to determine the drug traffickers and their location.

Therefore, drug law agencies need to roll out new cooperation, coordination, strategies, and modern professional skills. These will be resourceful in unearthing the dealings of these traffickers across borders. The lack of stable and functional networks within these law enforcement agencies has created leeway for drug traffickers to perform their activities (United Nations, 2018). In this light, it's fundamental for countries to coordinate their efforts in creating intelligence relations in combating this issue—the only way to win this war by minimizing the existing gap between their investigative capacities. Technology has offered these criminals a platform for smoothly executing their illegal activities. Therefore, the government and law enforcement agencies should conduct relevant research to outsmart these criminals.

### ***Legal challenges***

Technology has both positive and negative implications based on how it's used. Technical innovations have social, legal, ecological, and economic repercussions that might undermine their intended purpose. In drug-trafficking, a similar corollary applies, and so far, technology has manifested itself on both sides (Kain, 2012). The most significant legal challenge that technology has had on the war against drugs is manning drug-related offenses within the electronic environment. There is minimal legislation for addressing drug-related violations committed within online platforms, and interestingly some countries lack laws to govern them.

The prevailing laws are not sufficient to thwart transnational drug-related crime, which derails efforts to completely abolish drug trafficking. Currently, there are zero guidelines regarding which country's regulations should be used to pursue an offense. The general takeaway here is that the increased use of technology in performing these criminal activities has affected cross-border law enforcement (Reuters, 2014). Specifically, governments are finding it challenging to enforce inter-border court decisions. Transnational drug criminality brought by technology has exposed the discrepancies that exist in cross-border regulations.

Several countries are not duly prepared to mitigate the challenges associated with a sophisticated drug crime. Governments are reluctant to update their laws that govern drug-related crimes within digital platforms. The lack of clearly spelled out rules has made it easy for internet service providers to overlook the legal framework and aid these criminals in executing their illegal activities (INCB, 2001). The government's inadequate supervision has opened avenues for drug traffickers to communicate and ship their illicit products. Drug-related activities performed through the internet are hard to track, and in most cases, these traffickers go unnoticed. It's therefore essential to enact new reforms to streamline the operations of these law enforcement organizations.

#### ***Resource and technical issues***

Technology requires keeping abreast with updates and having necessary resources for ensuring maximum benefits are reaped from it. Law enforcement agencies are facing technical challenges in combating drug crimes, especially those that are highly sophisticated. Tackling drug-related activities executed within online platforms requires adequate human resources to mandate appropriate and timely investigation (Global Initiative, 2019). These two challenges majorly affect third-world countries because they lack enough workforce and technical resources

to keep abreast with sophisticated drug crimes. This widens the gap between their investigative capacities, making it hard to have appropriate measures for reducing this menace of drug trafficking and abuse.

The imminent technical challenges create data havens for drug traffickers to store their highly sensitive data. They have learned ways of encrypting their messages and data such that these law enforcement agencies cannot reach them. Countries that fail to equip their anti-drug trafficking agencies with electronic security are disadvantaged by these drug syndicates and organizations (Fedotov, 2017). This thwarts the government's efforts to combat the drug war because these criminals can even tap into their networks and block their messages. There are not enough skilled drug-crime investigators with relevant expertise for appropriately executing their investigative duties. The major issue contributing to this is the lack of finances to invest in high technologies and training workers to gain these skills.

It's impossible to overlook the presence of technology in our lives. As earlier mentioned, drug trafficking has become a sophisticated enterprise; traffickers have resorted to technology to sell these products, trail their shipments, and communicate. Despite law-enforcement responding appropriately to these illegal activities, there are still discrepancies (Kain, 2012). The issue, however, isn't on these agencies to collect relevant data on addressing these crimes. The most challenging this is that these agencies fail to collect valuable data that undermine an investigation process. Therefore, countries need to coordinate their efforts in ensuring that the strategies they put in place support the laid down laws.

There's a need to address these challenges because global illegal drug syndicates are among the main issues that threaten social stability. Drug trafficking has several negative effects on addicts, and it generally affects the entire population too. Drug abuse affects family cohesion

and has a prolonged negative impact on kids across the nation (FAS, n.d.). It's therefore disturbing that the very generation that the government has struggled over the years to protect is what these syndicates are highly targeting. Thus, the government and its agencies find it difficult to win this war because children and young adults are also using the technologies that drug traffickers utilize to orchestrate their activities. It's difficult to manage the sites that these children access despite adequate social media censorship measures.

### **Conclusion**

The main takeaway here is that technology has negatively impacted the government's efforts to combat the war on drugs. Despite the government embracing new ways of tracking these drugs and the traffickers, there are still gaps in their capabilities. Additionally, these drug-crime organizations have sophisticated their approach in executing these crimes. Technological advancements like fluid networks, mobile phones, credit cards, websites, and portable devices have eased these traffickers' duties. In the same light, drug cartels and syndicates have come up with more advanced ways of thwarting the government's efforts to reduce drug trafficking.

Other than the more advanced means of accessing law enforcement organizations' the government has failed itself too. There are no clearly spelled out laws for governing offenses committed within electronic and online platforms. Besides, these agencies lack highly skilled investigators to deal with these tech-oriented drug crimes. This shows a need for institutionalizing reforms that will streamline and strengthen these agencies' investigation procedures. With a clear legal framework, enough resources, and extensive research on modern-day drug-related offenses, the government will mitigate the challenges technology levy on combating the war on drugs. It's equally essential to embrace a collaborative approach in

addressing this war; technology developers should mandate their devices and software don't aid these drug trafficking organizations.

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