

Terrorism and drug trafficking

The impact on state security

RON CHEPESIUK

INTERNATIONAL drug trafficking is the world's second most profitable illicit business after arms trafficking, taking in earnings estimated to be between \$400 and \$500 billion annually. The UN estimates that at least 104 countries are involved in some way in the drug trade -- production, distribution, or laundering of the illicit profits.

Bangladesh's geographic location puts it in the midst of major drug producing and exporting countries, making the country a transit point for trafficking organisations. The U.S. State Department in its 2002 assessment of global drug trafficking concluded that "while unconfirmed reports of opium cultivation along the border with Burma exist, no evidence exists that the Bangladesh is a significant producer or exporter of narcotics."

Globally, drug trafficking's toll on society has been enormous. Each year, thousands of unfortunate people of all races, colours, ages and classes die or have their lives wrecked or derailed because of internal drug trafficking. The United Nations Drug Control Programme estimates that the U.S. population of more than 260 million consumes about 45 percent of the total amount of illicit drugs trafficked. Illicit drugs, moreover, claim an estimated 40,000 lives in the United States and the country's public health system spends \$75 billion annually in dealing with drug-related health problems.

Government and media reports in Bangladesh indicate that the country has a growing drug problem. Facts and figures are hard to find, but according to the U.S. State Department's assessment, Bangladesh experienced a quadrupling of the number of addicts in the past few years. Bangladesh may be a transit point for the movement of illegal drugs, but the traffickers still like to dump some of their product on the local market. The fact that the heroin being consumed in Bangladesh is of low quality has helped keep the price low, which means more people in the poor country can be potential consumers.

The U.S. State Department noted that the "Bangladesh authorities lack training, equipment and other resources to detect and interdict the flow of drugs in and through the

dealing with them on global scale.

With the Cold War's end, however, the U.S. and other industrialised countries has broadened the definition of national security from the narrow military-strategic focused realm to encompass the protection of vital economic and political interests that affect the fundamental state values and are vital to its well-being. This change has been in tune with the relentless advance of the most dynamic trend of the 21st century -- globalisation, a trend that has become increasingly evident in travel, economics, communications and the mass media. In today's free trade world where the borders are porous and the volume of goods moved so great, it has been difficult to stem the flow of illegal products such as illegal drugs. Reports in U.S. and Europe of huge drug busts are regular features on the TV news programs, but the authorities concede that only 10 to 15 percent of illegal drugs are ever confiscated.

International drug trafficking has been a topic of diplomacy and international law at least since the Opium Wars between China and Great Britain in 1839 and 1858. Historically, drug trafficking has been a controversial issue because governments of certain countries have used drug trafficking to further their foreign policy and national security agendas.

For instance, the colonial government of India under Great Britain in the 19th century, the French government in Indo China during the same period and the Japanese in

All that linking the War on Drugs and War on Terrorism will do is to repeat the failures of the past, put money down the drain and in the pockets of drug traffickers ... International drug trafficking poses a threat to national and international security, but let's work to take the profit out of the drug trade and out of the pockets of terrorists by de-emphasising our prohibition approach to illegal drugs. That's the best way to ensure state security.

Manchuria in the 1930s all supported the trade.

The CIA has been linked to drug trafficking in Vietnam in the 1950s and 1960s, Afghanistan in the late 1970s and Nicaragua in the 1980s.

I believe the link connection between drug trafficking and national security will continue to be controversial, as the U.S. and its allies wage war on international terrorism. But if national security is defined as not only encompassing the matter of dealing with external threats to the state but also with threats to the basic functioning and health of the state, then international drug trafficking is an important national security issue. It poses a threat not only to individuals, but also to the

international network of states because of its transnational character.

Today, international drug trafficking can no doubt threaten the military strength of the state. That's why some countries -- Colombia, Mexico, Malaysia and those in the West Indies, for example -- have responded to the national security implications of the international drug trade by incorporating the issue into their national security doctrines.

Meanwhile, some groups in the U.S. are now trying to broaden the U.S.'s War on Terrorism to include the War on Drugs.

So how does international drug trafficking threaten national security? Plenty of examples can be given to show that the threat is political, economic and social in nature. Indeed, drug traffickers in some countries have become so powerful that they have been able to take over democratically elected governments. The term used to describe this development is known as "narco democracy."

History has plenty of examples, but let me cite two. In 1980, Bolivia's drug traffickers were so concerned by the impending election of a candidate who threatened to get tough on drug trafficking that they paid a general to stage a coup, which fortunately lasted only until 1981.

In 1995 the Cali Cartel gave \$6.2 million to Ernesto Samper's financially strapped presidential campaign. Samper did become president, but the payment was exposed and he was forced to get tough on the Cali Cartel.

Some drug source countries may not have become narco democracies, but drug money and the traffickers' powerful influence has helped to damage their political institutions, which in turn has threatened their stability.

For instance, drug traffickers are believed to hold office in Uzbekistan, while alleged drug traffickers have sat in Pakistan's cabinet and the Japanese in

In the U.S., authorities have been quick to seize on drug busts that have connections to groups labeled as "terrorist." In January 2002, for instance, several men of Middle East descent were arrested and indicted on drug trafficking charges. Officials said the men were smuggling large quantities of the chemical pseudoephedrine, which is used in making the illegal drug methamphetamine, from Canada into the Midwest U.S.

"There is increasing intelligence information from the investigation that for the first time alleged drug sales in the United States are going in part to support terrorist organisations in the Middle East," DEA Administrator Asa Hutchinson told the press.

As the War on Terrorism continues, the Bush administration has made a concerted effort to establish a strong link between drugs and terrorism, a move that is blurring the distinction between the War on Drugs and the War on Terrorism. Beginning in December 2001, the U.S. government ran for several months a controversial campaign suggesting that if American consumers use drugs, they were supporting terrorism. "Where do terrorists get their money? One ad asked. The answer: "If you buy drugs, some of it might come from you."

Critics rightly point out that drug laws and drug interdiction have been more effective in putting the profit into the drug trade than law enforcement has been in taking it out. Drug prohibition has been the cause of, not the cure for the flourishing international drug trade. Why smuggle a legal profit to get the small profits legal sellers do when you can go into an illegal trade and traffic a product for which there is tremendous demand and garners huge profits?"

That's why, despite the U.S.'s best drug interdiction efforts, the price of illegal drugs such as cocaine and heroin has fallen, not risen, during the past few decades. The supply of illegal drugs has gone up, not down, in kind and quantity in the past few decades. So one can ask: Is the move to bolster the drug trafficking-terrorist link more to do with bolstering an unpopular war and the huge drug fighting bureaucracy that it does with the War on Terrorism?

In addition to its political effects, international drug trafficking can also profoundly impact on a country's economic system. Indeed, source countries can get addicted to drug money because the export earnings and foreign currency it generates is often in excess of what can be obtained from legitimate sources. That's why we still have countries that don't have laws against money laundering. No profit in killing the goose that is laying the golden eggs."

In addition, to the economic and political threats that drug trafficking poses to national security, there can also be consequences for the country's social fabric and security. For instance, transit countries can suffer an increase in drug addiction, as has been the case in Bangladesh.

When Belize became a major cocaine transhipment point in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it experienced a boom in crack houses. African transit countries, such as Ghana, Niger and Malaysia have experienced an increase in addiction. With addiction, moreover, comes a host of social problems, such as crime, violence, family dysfunction and diseases such as AIDS.

The effort to combat drug trafficking, moreover, can lead to a regional security problem. For instance, there is concern that the pressure put on the Colombian guerrillas is having a spill over effect on neighboring countries. Colombian guerrillas are known to come to Panama for rest and recreation. Venezuela border guards have clashed with both Colombian guerrillas and paramilitaries. Brazil and Ecuador have called up troops to their common border with Colombia for fear of guerrilla infiltration.

Yes, international drug trafficking poses a threat to national and international security, but let's work to take the profit out of the drug trade and out of the pockets of terrorists by de-emphasising our prohibition approach to illegal drugs. That's the best way to ensure state security. We can't afford to have our anti-terrorist efforts fail as they have in the War on Drugs.

Lastly, participation in the drug trade can become an integral part of the strategy of insurgent groups, particularly those in source countries. The war between drug traffickers and the state in Colombia coined

His dream still awaits fruition

AMM SHAHABUDDIN

THAT legendary demagogue who had once spat fire on the US Administration for their policy of racial discrimination and at the same time had kindled new hopes and aspirations in the minds of the down-trodden poor black Americans (now called African Americans), is no more there. But his historic speech, "I have a dream..." delivered some forty years ago, on 28 August 1963, in Washington at the Lincoln Memorial, is still echoing, reminding the US government of what still remains to be done of that noble dream of a black champion of human rights and social equality. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. made history by that memorable 'one sentence' which now serves as a truth for all lovers of human rights. And the Americans, both white and black, would be observing his birth-anniversary today (19 January).

After the mega events of September 11, 2001, 9-11, the definition of "narco terrorist" has been broadened to include not only drug traffickers, but also insurgents, guerrillas and terrorists who are believed involved in the drug trade. The Federal Court of Canada has even ruled that "narco terrorism" is a crime against humanity and those who engage in it can be deported to their homelands.

The ruling involved the case of a Sri Lankan drug dealer named Velupillai Pushpanathan who was convinced of selling heroin in Toronto, ostensibly to raise money for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam organisation (the so-called LTTE). The dealer was actually arrested in 1987, convicted and sentenced to eight years in prison. Then upon his release in 1991, Pushpanathan applied for refugee status in a bid to block his extradition to Sri Lanka. Federal immigration authorities built an unprecedented narco terrorism case against him, and in October 2002, the Federal Court agreed, ruling that Pushpanathan could be deported.

In the U.S., authorities have been

quick to seize on drug busts that have connections to groups labeled as "terrorist." In January 2002, for instance, several men of Middle East descent were arrested and indicted on drug trafficking charges. Officials said the men were smuggling large quantities of the chemical pseudoephedrine, which is used in making the illegal drug methamphetamine, from Canada into the Midwest U.S.

"There is increasing intelligence information from the investigation that for the first time alleged drug sales in the United States are going in part to support terrorist organisations in the Middle East," DEA Administrator Asa Hutchinson told the press.

As the War on Terrorism continues, the Bush administration has made a concerted effort to establish a strong link between drugs and terrorism, a move that is blurring the distinction between the War on Drugs and the War on Terrorism. Beginning in December 2001, the U.S. government ran for several months a controversial campaign suggesting that if American consumers use drugs, they were supporting terrorism. "Where do terrorists get their money? One ad asked. The answer: "If you buy drugs, some of it might come from you."

Critics rightly point out that drug laws and drug interdiction have been

more effective in putting the profit into the drug trade than law enforcement has been in taking it out. Drug prohibition has been the cause of, not the cure for the flourishing international drug trade. Why smuggle a legal profit to get the small profits legal sellers do when you can go into an illegal trade and traffic a product for which there is tremendous demand and garners huge profits?"

That's why, despite the U.S.'s best drug interdiction efforts, the price of illegal drugs such as cocaine and heroin has fallen, not risen, during the past few decades. So one can ask: Is the move to bolster the drug trafficking-terrorist link more to do with bolstering an unpopular war and the huge drug fighting bureaucracy that it does with the War on Terrorism?

In addition to its political effects, international drug trafficking can also profoundly impact on a country's economic system. Indeed, source countries can get addicted to drug money because the export earnings and foreign currency it generates is often in excess of what can be obtained from legitimate sources. That's why we still have countries that don't have laws against money laundering. No profit in killing the goose that is laying the golden eggs."

In addition, to the economic and political threats that drug trafficking poses to national security, there can also be consequences for the country's social fabric and security. For instance, transit countries can suffer an increase in drug addiction, as has been the case in Bangladesh.

When Belize became a major cocaine transhipment point in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it experienced a boom in crack houses. African transit countries, such as Ghana, Niger and Malaysia have experienced an increase in addiction. With addiction, moreover, comes a host of social problems, such as crime, violence, family dysfunction and diseases such as AIDS.

The effort to combat drug trafficking, moreover, can lead to a regional security problem. For instance, there is concern that the pressure put on the Colombian guerrillas is having a spill over effect on neighboring countries. Colombian guerrillas are known to come to Panama for rest and recreation. Venezuela border guards have clashed with both Colombian guerrillas and paramilitaries. Brazil and Ecuador have called up troops to their common border with Colombia for fear of guerrilla infiltration.

Yes, international drug trafficking poses a threat to national and international security, but let's work to take the profit out of the drug trade and out of the pockets of terrorists by de-emphasising our prohibition approach to illegal drugs. That's the best way to ensure state security. We can't afford to have our anti-terrorist efforts fail as they have in the War on Drugs.

Lastly, participation in the drug trade can become an integral part of the strategy of insurgent groups, particularly those in source countries. The war between drug traffickers and the state in Colombia coined

boldly announced on 28 August 1963 at the foot of that great martyr Abraham Lincoln's Memorial.

Why not a black US President?

Unfortunately, to-day's America, after traversing over almost one and half century since the martyrdom of Abraham Lincoln, cannot claim to be a land of milk and honey for the African Americans. America is still suffering from the legacy of the old disease of racial discrimination because some are still being haunted by the 'ghost' of slavery. Otherwise, how come not a single black American had been elected President of America during the last one and half century since the abolition of slavery in 1865? Are the blacks of less calibre and efficiency than the white Presidential candidates? How is it that neither the Democrats, nor the Republicans are yet ready to put up a Black candidate? Why this apathy in the world's most popular democratic country, a world champion of human rights?

Time has come for their soul-searching and stock-taking. If a Black American can become a most successful Foreign Minister and a redoubtable C-in-C, then why not a President? Is it not a mockery for the world's largest democracy that when the black American athletes become world champions in the field of sport and bring the most coveted laurels for the country, they are worshiped as national heroes, but when the question of Presidentship comes they get the 'smell' of the blacks?

That is why a Canadian columnist in the daily Toronto Star had aptly said sometime back that "the racial inequality is a central and not a peripheral feature of American life... The deep structural inequalities that affect every aspect of American life begin with the institution of slavery which made the African-Americans a permanent 'other' in the American life." Hence, the earlier America can get rid of these remnants of the social inequality, the better for them.

Victory in civil war: A turning point

The US civil war was a straight fight between two opposite camps -- one representing the northern farm lands who were known as 'anti-slavery north' and the other representing the 'cotton-growing south,' which wanted the continuation of Negro slavery to work in their plantations. With the emergence of Abraham Lincoln, as the President the pro-slavery southerners were increasingly scared by the growing popular anti-slavery movement. And as first step towards secession from the Union, they had already formed the 'Confederate States of America,' and adopted the 'institution of Negro Slavery.' But the anti-slavery crusade declared by Lincoln turned the apple cart down of the southern rebels, when after long four-year war from 1861 to 1865, the great victory was achieved by Lincoln in 1865 on 9 April, with the surrender of the pro-slavery rebels, thus putting an end to their 'Confederacy' dream. And divided USA again stood up as one united country. It opened a new bright chapter in US history, bringing for the first time the black and white Americans at par, at least constitutionally. But the tragedy is that the architect of this great achievement, President Lincoln couldn't carry on his mission as he was assassinated on 14 April, 1865.

Now

the black children still suffer from "poor health-care, schools and homes in New York's impoverished South Bronx," adding that "these kids are innocent; their only crime is being poor in a rich society at a cruel moment in history." Mr Kozol also pointed out that "a five percent tax on the wealth of the Wall Street's 100 richest men would lift them out of poverty." What a revealing contrast shocking poverty growing in the dark backyard of America, while spending billions of dollars every month for maintaining US marines in Iraq! This is a clear indication that Martin Luther's 'dream' is still far from its fruition.

And the leaders and groups that organised last year's celebration of Martin Luther's historic 1963 speech were conscious of this. That is why a broad coalition of more than one hundred organisations, representing the socialists, the communists, opponents of US policy on Cuba, Iran and Iraq, as well as people asking for a better US education policy, assembled to raise a united voice for fulfilling Martin Luther's dream. Moreover, the event also kicked off a 15-month campaign to highlight their concerns about racial, environmental and economic issues and, above all, Bush Administration's much-hyped "war on terror." Undoubtedly, Martin Luther's historic speech, delivered forty years ago, was a "defining moment" for the American civil rights movement.

Now let us have a glimpse of the history of US civil war (1861-1865) waged during the presidency of Abraham Lincoln who had played a dominant role not only to abolish Negro Slavery from the US constitution, but also had heroically

saved America from disintegration into two warring blocks of pro-and-anti slavery of the northern and southern areas.

Victory in civil war: A turning point

The US civil war was a straight fight between two opposite camps -- one representing the northern farm lands who were known as 'anti-slavery north' and the other representing the 'cotton-growing south,' which wanted the continuation of Negro slavery to work in their plantations. With the emergence of Abraham Lincoln, as the President the pro-slavery southerners were increasingly scared by the growing popular anti-slavery movement. And as first step towards secession from the Union, they had already formed the 'Confederate States of America,' and adopted the 'institution of Negro Slavery.' But the anti-slavery crusade declared by Lincoln turned the apple cart down of the southern rebels, when after long four-year war from 1861 to 1865, the great victory was achieved by Lincoln in 1865 on 9 April, with the surrender of the pro-slavery rebels, thus putting an end to their 'Confederacy' dream. And divided USA again stood up as one united country. It opened a new bright chapter in US history, bringing for the first time the black and white Americans at par, at least constitutionally. But the tragedy is that the architect of this great achievement, President Lincoln couldn't carry on his mission as he was assassinated on 14 April, 1865.

It took about a century to start the new race from where Lincoln had left it. And that was the 'dream' that Martin Luther King Jr. had

AMM Shahabuddin is a retired UN official.

confidence in the future. The secretary of commerce has spoken about growth of 5-6 points in his quarter. The economy showing signs of improvement will help the reelection campaign. However, the Bush economic plan has not been considered credible because it has failed to stimulate job creation. And the massive income tax cut is considered typically pro-rich. The budget deficit is high and an unbalanced budget takes credibility away from government expansion plans like public work programmes and other measures to improve health care and welfare programmes. The Clinton Presidency reversed the Regan era legacy of massive budget deficit, as Democratic Party spin-doctors would say. And they might go on to add that President Clinton left a budget that was in surplus. Democrat Howard Dean could claim the Clinton mantle of balancing the budget. The Iraq war is no exception. We have the issue of the missing "weapons of mass destruction" and the daily rise in the body count, as more and more US soldiers die in Iraq.

The state of the US economy will fare prominently in the various debates and forums. The Democratic Party would show that the Bush administration has been unsuccessful in improving the economy. In most cases, Mr. Bush would have a hard time keeping up with the criticism against his performance. The economy, though showing signs of an improvement by and large is not doing too well. The main worry as always will be, the number of jobless, and the number of new jobs being created.

The recent figures state that, the economy has been recovering steadily. The number of factories being purchased has shown steady growth signaling greater entrepreneurship and consequently chances of more jobs. Purchase of homes and consumer spending has picked up signifying the economy is

confidence in the future. The secretary of commerce has spoken about growth of 5-6 points in his quarter. The economy showing signs of improvement will help the reelection campaign. However, the Bush economic plan has not been considered credible because it has failed to stimulate job creation. And the massive income tax cut is considered typically pro-rich. The budget deficit is high and an unbalanced budget takes credibility away from government expansion plans like public work programmes and other measures to improve health care and welfare programmes. The Clinton Presidency reversed the Regan era legacy of massive budget deficit, as Democratic Party spin-doctors would say. And they might go on to add that President Clinton left a budget that was in surplus. Democrat Howard Dean could claim the Clinton mantle of balancing the budget. The Iraq war is no exception. We have the issue of the missing "weapons of mass destruction" and the daily rise in the body count, as more and more US soldiers die in Iraq.