



### The Cosa Nostra: A Study in Transnational Organized Crime and Law Enforcement.

- Srijan Mukhopadhyay (II B.A.LL.B)

The early 1800s saw the establishment and rise of the Sicilian Mafia. What started out as a self-styled justice family, now stands as a sinister emblem of arduous organized crime in the world. From drug & human trafficking to extortion, real-estate crime, protection rackets, money laundering, and more, the Cosa Nostra leaves a mark on global security every day. With tentacles extending everywhere, they challenge international law's capacity to combat transnational crime. In the contemporary world, they transcend borders and destabilize global security. The Pizza Connection case is one of the biggest contributions to criminal statistics by the Cosa Nostra. This had brought to light a billion-dollar heroin smuggling ring, connecting Türkiye, Sicily, and The United States. This, in turn, has fuelled corruption, drug-related deaths, arms smuggling, and geopolitical conflicts. The crime cabal has historically used the Mediterranean routes for human trafficking and criminal extraction. Countless individuals have been thrown into

forced labor, involuntary prostitution, and exploitation in direct violation of ICESCR and CEDAW. The American Mafia thrived on the stilts of bootlegging during the era of 1920s Prohibition. Their financial operations are no less insidious; sophisticated money laundering strategies leverage Switzerland's banking secrecy, Luxembourg's tax advantages, the British Virgin Islands' asset protection mechanisms, and Panama's corporate anonymity to operate offshore shell companies with impunity. Their influence extends further into political corruption, exemplified by the assassinations of anti-mafia magistrates Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, which exposed their capacity to undermine state authority.

The Cosa Nostra is a grave challenger to international law, exploiting gaps in extradition treaties, asset seizure mechanisms, and jurisdictional conflicts. Instruments of political consensus such as RICO and UNTOC seek to curb organized crime, but they flounder against entrenched networks and changing criminal trends. The powerful provisions frequently suffer from the 'innocent owner' defense. The

### News at a Glance

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and 24 civil society groups urged Sri Lanka's new president to prioritize press freedom, highlighting decades of violence and repression against journalists. They called for repealing laws like the Online Safety Act and proposed structural reforms to ensure media independence. For more information, see here.

Thousands of Serbian university students protested alleged civil rights violations by the government, standing in silence to honor victims of a 2023 railway station collapse. The demonstrations, part of broader anti-corruption rallies, call for accountability from top officials and highlight discontent with President Vučić's increasingly autocratic rule. For more information, see here.



'cabal exploits this by obscuring ownership or by blending illicit finds with legitimate avenues to evade asset seizure. Authorities cannot then establish a link between the funds and criminal conduct, and the offenders evade justice. The Valachi case has exposed mafia-led operations but revealed the impotence of the enforcement approach. Jurisdictional tussles, potential civil liberties violations and failed infiltration attempts give way to more resilient networks. The Mafia's use of encrypted channels makes it harder for LEOs to gather admissible evidence. Marcelle Padovani says, "The mafia [...] becomes State where the State is tragically absent." Power vacuums frame mafia growth and systemic corruption is exploited. Strengthening cross-border collaboration, unifying legal standards, empowering whistleblowers, and addressing governance failures are critical to dismantling the syndicate and reinforcing global stability.

### The Global Impact of Illicit Firearms on Organized Crime and Armed Conflict

- Devansh Bhat (V B.A.LL.B)

Illicit firearms trafficking is the

most significant contributing factor in fueling organized crime, armed conflict, and violence internationally. To understand the functioning of this system, an overview of the sources of illegal weapons, their impact on crime, and the regulatory frameworks is essential.

These firearms make their way into illegal markets through different channels, contributing to armed conflicts and organized crime. The most significant of them is the stockpile looting and battlefield captures, where the collapse of states or armed conflicts results in unsecured weapons falling into the hands of non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and organized criminal groups (OCGs). Poorly secured national stockpiles and corruption also are a major factor. This results in firearms reaching into illegal hands, including those operating in conflict zones. Legacy weapons from past conflicts are yet another source to illicit markets. These arms, with their long lifespan, continue to circulate and fuel both criminal activities and ongoing conflicts, creating a perpetual cycle of violence.

Now these illicit firearms fuel criminal networks and facilitate

### News at a Glance

President Lula da Silva of Brazil signed a law enabling offshore wind energy projects, aiming to boost Brazil's energy security, create jobs, and promote renewable energy. The law defines project locations and mandates community consultations, while vetoing unrelated provisions to prevent higher energy tariffs. For more information, see [here](#).

Human Rights Watch called on Lebanon's new president, Joseph Aoun, to ensure judicial independence, government transparency, and accountability for corruption and past crimes. His election ended a two-year political crisis but raised questions about its compliance with Lebanon's Constitution. For more information, see [here](#).



other illegal activities, such as drug trafficking and human trafficking. The OCGs act as suppliers of weapons and ammunition to NSAGs and governments. Even individual arms dealers and brokers play a significant role in selling weapons to both OCGs and NSAGs. This creates an effect, where smaller or less well-connected groups gain access to illicit arms indirectly through weapons initially sold to more prominent groups operating in the same vicinity.

The [Global Organized Crime Index 2021 by GI-TOC](#) ranks arms trafficking as the third most prevalent criminal market globally, with major activity in Africa, the Americas, and Asia. [The Firearms Protocol](#), under the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), tried to regulate arms flows, prevent diversion to illegal markets, and aid in prosecuting arms-related crimes. However, implementation among 121 signatory states still remains a question. Similarly, the [Arms Trade Treaty \(ATT\)](#), effective since 2014, involves 111 state parties and 30 signatories yet to ratify. It sets global standards to regulate the arms trade and prevent illicit transfers, offering a framework for

national laws, approval processes, and compliance before cross-border arms transfers. However, challenges, such as the delayed adoption of the [UNTOC Review Mechanism](#) and insufficient transparency, limit the assessment of the Firearms Protocol's impact. In 2018 London summit launched a [Franco-German initiative to combat illicit arms trade in the Western Balkans](#). The "Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse, and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)" also aims to align regional laws with EU standards, aiming to reduce firearm trafficking, ammunition misuse, and criminal arms flows through evidence-based and intelligence-led policies.

Firearms trafficking necessitates registration, licensing, and tracing however ammunition regulation is often overlooked. The Firearms Protocol includes ammunition but lacks specific measures for its sale and registration. In contrast, Article 3 of the ATT mandates national systems for ammunition export control. However, many countries struggle with tracking and safeguarding ammunition.

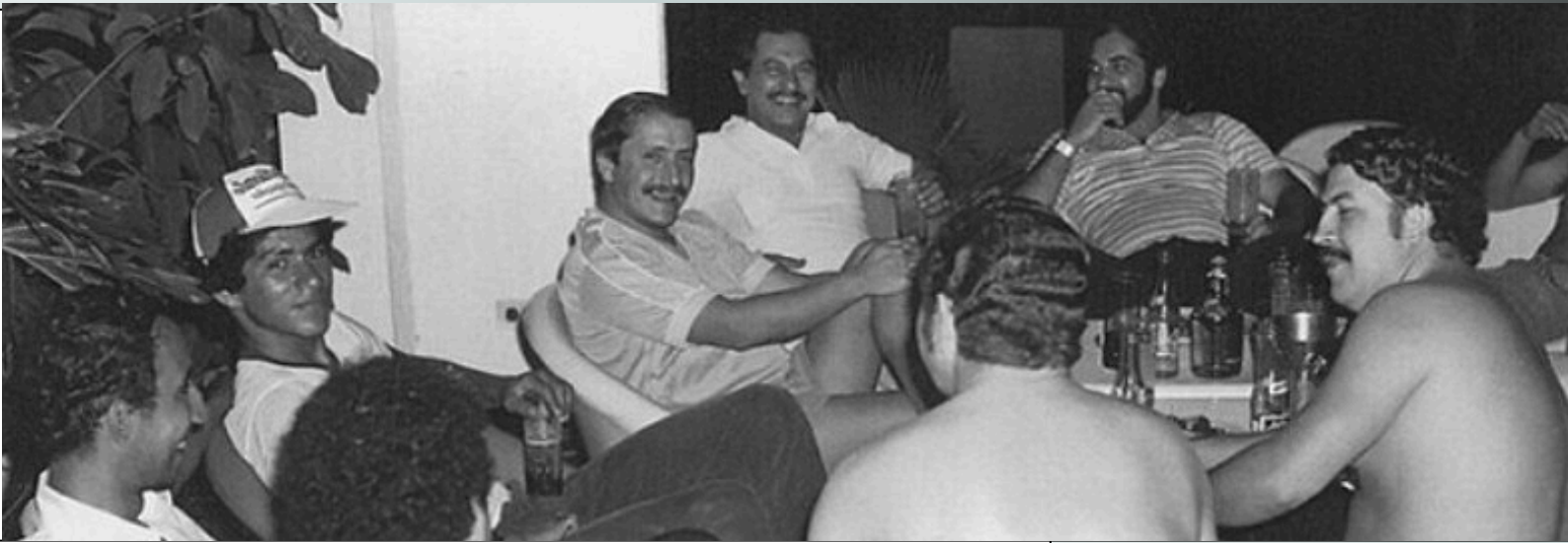
While looking for a solution it is

### News at a Glance

Reporters Without Borders urged the Venezuelan government to reveal the whereabouts of Carlos Correa, who disappeared under suspicious circumstances on January 7. The organization demanded his immediate release, access to medical care, and protection of his well-being. For more information, see [here](#).

The High Court of Kenya delivered a landmark judgement ruling that criminalizing suicide attempts is unconstitutional. The court agreed with petitioners that those attempting suicide need care, not punishment. It stated that suicide is a mental health issue, not a "willed act," and criminalizing it leads to discrimination. For more information, see [here](#).

The Ukrainian parliament passed a law banning organ harvesting from military and civilian casualties of Russia's invasion, ensuring broader protections for victims. The law also introduces stricter oversight of organ donations and the establishment of a National Transplantation Committee. For more information, see [here](#).



important to understand that to combat illicit firearms trafficking, strengthening international cooperation and determining the accountability of states must be emphasized upon. Treaties like the Arms Trade Treaty and the Firearms Protocol may provide frameworks, their success suffers due to inconsistent implementation and non-transparent reporting. Focusing on the regulation of ammunition alongside firearms is important. Increased intelligence-sharing and capacity-building for law enforcement agencies, and addressing corruption in state institutions would significantly reduce the leakage of arms into illegal markets.

### Retrospective Relevance: Analysing Escobar Reign with UNODC's Themes

- Avantika Patra (II B.A.LL.B) and Kashish Bansal (II B.A.LL.B)

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the reign of "Pablo Escobar", an infamous and powerful drug lord. His reign was characterised by unparalleled violence, corruption, highlighting exploitation and justice evasion, revealing the glaring absence of a cohesive international framework

to combat such crimes.

In "Transnational Organised Crimes", criminal networks operate across borders, orchestrating illegitimate activities which are governed by legally binding instrument UNTOC (United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crimes), aided by its secretariat UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes) which implements frameworks and facilitates global cooperation.

UNODC was established in 1997, after Escobar's reign ended. It has devised five thematic areas to address these crimes. This article attempts to present a peek at how the circumstances could have been if the UNODC's 5 thematic areas existed during Escobar's regime, helping us underscore the importance of international organisations and frameworks.

The first thematic area deals with the World Drug Problem by supporting members to implement international drug policies, prevention techniques, medical & rehabilitation processes. The second thematic area is based on transnational organised crime. Pablo Escobar's Medellin Cartel in Columbia had grown into a

### News at a Glance

Armenia's government has approved a bill to begin the process of joining the European Union. The bill will now be debated in parliament. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan explained that the next step will be to discuss a roadmap with the EU. However, any EU membership will depend on a referendum. For more information, click [here](#).

The Japanese government announced sanctions freezing the assets of 11 Russian individuals, 29 entities, and three Russian banks in response to the ongoing war in Ukraine. The measures also include an export ban on items for Russian industrial capacities and sanctions on foreign entities supporting Russia's war effort. For more information, see [here](#).



multinational industry - peasants cultivating coca leaf in Peru and Bolivia for supply of raw materials, smugglers buying coca paste for processing and shipping as powder to distributors & dealers in the United States (then to other regions) with extensive supply chains across border. UNODC's techniques and tools for drug prohibition could have been leveraged on to reduce such extensive monopoly. Only if all the countries affected by Escobar's business could have coordinated and dismantled the network as a cumulative force, he wouldn't have gained the power he did.

Third and fourth thematic areas are preventing and countering corruption and terrorism respectively. One of the major contributors of Escobar's rise to prominence was his policy of "plata o plomo," i.e. "silver" (bribes) or "lead" (bullets). He greased officials' palms to get work done & could pull strings of politicians who were financially backed by him. Alternatively, the cartel group "Los Extraditable" directed a seven year war on terror, killing anyone who spoke against them, once exploding a bomb killing more than 100 people on a jetliner. Furthermore, it successfully

pressurised the Constituent Assembly into amending the constitution, prohibiting extradition of natives. [1] [2] It was because of this amendment, the government could negotiate & convince him to surrender in 1991 but in a luxurious private prison or a penthouse suite, La Catedral. UNODC's operations, if accounted for during the Escobar regime, could have prevented him from gaining dominance over authorities.

The last theme is crime prevention and criminal justice which almost failed in Escobar's case since he could be sentenced to a total of no more than 30 years for his crimes and extradited as per US-Colombia Extradition Treaty of 1979 but wasn't. Hence, UNODC aims at taking prevention initiatives to target root causes of crime. Pablo was finally shot dead by police in 1993, a day after his 44th birthday.

The scenario almost three decades after the UNODC establishment is different. Recent times have witnessed increased global cooperation efforts to overthrow such networks and cartels. Some prime instances being Operation Azure, targeting to capture synthetic opioid trade. Launched

### Upcoming Activities

RGNUJ Punjab: International Conference On Ethics, Regulations, And Sustainability In AI

RGNUJ is hosting a conference on "Navigating the Future: Ethics, Regulations, and Sustainability in the Age of Artificial Intelligence," bringing together experts and stakeholders for a multidisciplinary dialogue on AI's societal impact. Submit your abstract by 15 January, 2025. For more information, view [here](#).



by the CRIMJUST global programme, it successfully demonstrated massive capacity building activities among 153 officials across 12 nations. Another instance is INTERPOL's "Operation Lionfish" to combat cocaine trafficking in Latin America. However, despite several such bilateral and international initiatives, drug trade has surged. This can be attributed to developed trade routes through air, water, mules etc, concurrently, Asian countries provide necessary chemical precursors for producing drugs which make these regions lucrative destinations for market expansion.

Thus, the 5 thematic areas can aid in evolving standard codes and frameworks for effectively dismantling such activities. Reflecting on the past, acknowledging lessons and challenges of Pablo's case, it becomes clear that the themes are not just tools but necessities. With sustained commitment and global solidarity, the international community must aim not to let history repeat itself!

### Nexus between Drug trafficking and Terrorism

- Sumitra Rupankar (II B.A.LL.B) and Geetanjali Mancharkar (II B.A.LL.B)

Historically, the issues of drug trafficking and terrorism have long been tackled separately. Both of these issues have been merged since the 1980s due to the growing connection between drug trafficking and organized crime groups. It was estimated by UNODC that 20 % of drug trade profit is funding terrorist organizations. This enables them to fund operations, purchase weapons, and expand terror networks globally. Although their motives can differ but growing similarities such as the use of similar tactics and businesses or charitable organizations as fronts to mask their activities, covertly operated operations from underground networks, ruthlessness, and violence make it challenging to tackle these issues separately. The term 'Narco-terrorism' was coined by Peruvian president Fernando Belaúnde Terry, to describe the collaboration between drug traffickers and terrorist groups in 1983. After the Cold World War, there was a significant shift in the nature of

### Upcoming Activities

Call for Papers: International Conference on Integration of AI and Natural Intelligence for Creating a Better World by FIMT School of Law, Delhi:

FIMT School of Law and IQAC is organising a two-day International Multidisciplinary Conference on "Integration of Artificial Intelligence and Natural Intelligence for Creating a Better World" on 28th March 2025- 1st March 2025. Submit your abstract/full paper to [fimtinternationalconference@gmail.com](mailto:fimtinternationalconference@gmail.com) by 26 January, 2025. For more information, view [here](#).



terrorism; it primarily stemmed from Political motivations include the power vacuum after the USSR collapse, the rise of religious-political ideologies, anti-western sentiments, and geopolitical changes.

Narco-terrorism is a transnational crime. As per the UN, it is the convergence of illegal drug trafficking and terrorist activities. It is the biggest threat to the state authority and international security and this connection is our biggest threat in today's scenario. Narco-terrorism is employed via several routes to advance production, transportation, and trafficking like the Golden Triangle, Golden Crescent, Balkan Route, etc. The illegal drug business—growing, processing, moving, and selling drugs—fuels much of the violence and destabilizes society; however, a key function of many terrorist groups involves facilitating the movement of drugs from production to consumer markets. This entire supply chain generates substantial revenue and capital for the organization. Many countries couldn't solve the problem of narco-terrorism. Afghanistan is the largest opium-producing country with 85% of global production. In Afghanistan, the Taliban is

constantly dependent on heroin and opium production as the primary source of revenue to fund terrorist groups. A huge supply of illicit drugs in the U.S. fuels the functioning of transnational drug Cartels like the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration recognizes this nexus, acknowledging that drug trafficking plays a crucial role in funding and supporting terrorist activities. The merger of these two significant phenomena presents a growing threat because they connectively sabotage regions, erode government authority, fuel violence, and corruption, create fear in people's minds, and ruin people's lives. Mitigating narco-terrorism at the global level needs strong coordinated efforts by states, non-states, and international organizations, and multiple strategies by law enforcement agencies to address the issue effectively. Financial Action Task Force is a leading international organization that fights against money laundering from the drug trade, by setting global standards and publishing best practices and guides to stop illicit finance. UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000 addresses the global

### Upcoming Activities

Call For Papers: 2nd GNLU GCESCJ International Conference On Climate Justice And Sustainable Environment (ICCJSE):

The Centre for Environment, Sustainability and Climate Justice established by GNLU (GCESCJ), offers to study, research, and provide expert consultation in environmental matters. The Centre aims to provide a platform and voice to all stakeholders, including people at the grassroots, the government, industries, experts and administrative authorities. Submit your abstract by 20 January, 2025. For more information, view [here](#).



challenge Against transnational organized crime including drug trafficking & Terrorism. To counter the issues of narco-terrorism the initiatives taken by regional organizations like SAARC, OAS, EUROPOL, AU, ASEAN, etc. are Intelligence swapping, synchronized operations, educating communities about narco-terrorism, Policy developments, and Awareness campaigns.

Terrorist groups provide security to the drug traffickers in exchange for Protection fees so they directly participate in the drug trade. The strong correlation between drug trafficking and terrorism makes it noticeable that addressing these issues collectively is more effective than dealing with them separately.

### Upcoming Activities

International Conference on Law, Human Rights and Cultural Studies:

International Conference on Law, Human Rights and Cultural Studies , on 12th Feb 2025 at Satara, Maharashtra, India . ICLHRCS will provide an excellent international forum for sharing knowledge and results in Law, Human Rights and Cultural Studies. The aim of the Conference is to provide a platform to the researchers and practitioners from both academia as well as industry to share cutting-edge development in the field. This event will be organized by Techno Conferences at the city of Satara, Maharashtra, India. For more information, view [here](#).

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