

<b>Committee:</b>	Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
<b>Issue:</b>	Implementing measures to tackle the illicit drug-production and trafficking in the Golden Triangle
<b>Student Officer:</b>	Stella Athanasoglou
<b>Position:</b>	Deputy President

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## PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Stella Athanassoglou and I am currently attending the 10th grade in the German School of Athens. This year I have the honor to serve as the Deputy-President of the Economic and Social Council in this year's ACGMUN conference. This will be my first time as a Student Officer and truly hope my excitement and passion will be transmitted to you throughout these two days. Seeing as how this is our first introduction, I would like to welcome you all to our committee and cannot wait to see and hear all your different ideas and points. I am sure you will give your best efforts and do good preparation.

This Study Guide intends to provide basic information on illicit drug production and trafficking mechanism in the Golden Triangle and their negative impact on human rights violation, the economy, and the financial sector of the countries involved. It will provide you with the necessary information to understand the problem of illicit drug-production and trafficking in the Golden Triangle. Its purpose is to assist you as a good starting point. However, to achieve sufficient preparation, it is crucial to conduct individual research and find out about your country's policy. As a result, you should come up with ideas, that could effectively tackle and combat illicit drug production and ensure legal economic growth and work.

Our goal is to hear opinions from all parts of the globe while evaluating and debating so I would appreciate seeing your interest and actively participating during the conference. Having said that, the links in the bibliography may seem useful to your research.

For any further questions or inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact me at: [stellaathanassoglou@gmail.com](mailto:stellaathanassoglou@gmail.com).

I wish you the best of luck and cannot wait to meet you all in April!

Best regards,

Stella Athanassoglou

## TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Drug trafficking has long been a problem in the Golden Triangle, one of the world's major opium cultivation and heroin-producing areas, a 150,000-square-mile, mountainous region located where the borders of Burma, Laos, and Thailand meet<sup>1</sup>.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States was the first to utilize the term "Golden Triangle" to portray this area. Approbatory contingencies, subsuming unstable political status in the region and its geographical seclusion, permit multinational organized lawbreaking syndicates to produce and assort illicit drugs. In the 1990s, it was evaluated that Burma delivered more than 50 percent of the world's raw opium and refined as much as 75 percent of the world's heroin (Southeast Asian Information Network 1998)<sup>2</sup>. During that time, Burma was also the largest source of heroin for the U.S. market, accountable for 80 percent of the heroin accessible in New York City. Shan State is the area that produces the uttermost opium in Myanmar, esteeming 82 (331 metric tons) of the country's complete output (405 metric tons) in 2020<sup>3</sup>.

Most recently, development has been noticed from the more "traditional" drugs such as opium and heroin to more lucrative and highly addictive synthetic drugs, namely amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) like methamphetamine. According to a Regional Report of the Council of the European Union State dated 26 October 2017, *"Significant quantities of opiates, ATS and precursors continue to be trafficked through the Lao PDR to neighboring countries, from where some of it is re-exported to markets with higher purchasing power and demand."*<sup>4</sup>.

Measures have been taken from time to time by the governmental authorities of the countries involved, with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), but it is self-evidential that the illicit drug cartels operating in the area can overcome any such measures.

The consequences of illicit drug production and trafficking are immense and affect negatively not only human rights but also the economy and financial sector of the countries. There are damages to public health, environmental degradation, and human rights violations. To address this issue, governments, and governmental authorities in the region, with the assistance and support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and other non-governmental organizations, have implemented various strategies to diminish illicit drug trafficking in the area. As an example, the Mekong Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Drug Control is one of the measures taken. Thailand even applies the death penalty for drug trafficking,

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<sup>1</sup> The Golden Triangle and Burma. (2010, December 15). De Gruyter. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.7591/9780801458439-003/pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Drug control: U.S. heroin program encounters many obstacles in Southeast Asia. (n.d.). GovInfo | U.S. Government Publishing Office. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GAOREPORTS-NSIAD-96-83/html/GAOREPORTS-NSIAD-96-83.htm>

<sup>3</sup> UNODC report: Opium production drops again in Myanmar as the synthetic drug market expands. United Nations: UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific. <https://www.unodc.org/roseap/2021/02/myanmar-opium-survey-report-launch/story.html>

<sup>4</sup> Council of the European Union. (2017, October 26). Australian Regional Chair of the Dublin Group. data.consilium.eu. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13600-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

because of which, a few hundred people have been executed. In this respect, it is noteworthy that drug policies may even lead to violation of human rights.

Overall, despite the numerous efforts by organizations apart from the United Nations to assist in implementing measures to tackle illicit drug production and trafficking in the golden triangle, little has changed. It is crucial to address the dangers that people face while considering the multifaceted nature of the problem. Working collaboratively as a committee, delegates must resolve the systemic flaws prevalent in the illegal world of drugs and achieve a safer and legal working place and economic growth once in for all.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS)

Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) are drugs. They can be legal or illegal. They are legal when they are prescribed by a doctor and used to treat health problems such as obesity, narcolepsy, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Using amphetamines can lead to addiction. ATS are illegal when they are used without a prescription to get high or improve performance. In this case, they are known as street, or recreational drugs, and using them can lead to addiction.<sup>5</sup>

### Corruption

Corruption is defined as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. Corruption erodes trust, weakens democracy, hampers economic development, and further exacerbates inequality, poverty, social division, and the environmental crisis<sup>6</sup>.

### Drug cultivation

Drug cultivation is a type of drug crime that involves the growing of plants that are classified as controlled substances. Typically, this refers to growing illegal plants such as marijuana, opium, and other types of intoxicants or hallucinogenic plants. Drug cultivation is not necessarily the same thing as drug possession. The cultivation of drugs typically involves some element of possession because the individual must possess the substance to cultivate or grow the drugs. It is commonly linked to the intent to distribute substances or drugs<sup>7</sup>.

### Drug-trafficking

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<sup>5</sup> *Substance use - amphetamines*. MedlinePlus - Health Information from the National Library of Medicine. <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000792.htm>

<sup>6</sup> *What is corruption?* (2019, November 10). Transparency.org. <https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption>

<sup>7</sup> LaMance, K. (2022, January 5). *Drug cultivation lawyers*. LegalMatch Law Library. <https://www.legalmatch.com/law-library/article/drug-cultivation-lawyers.html>

Drug trafficking is a global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution, and sale of substances that are subject to drug prohibition laws<sup>8</sup>.

### Drug-production

The production of illicit drugs involves many methods, from horticulture to laboratory synthesis. The drugs occur in a wide variety of forms, ranging from dried leaves to tablets, white powders, and clear liquids<sup>9</sup>.

### Golden Triangle

The Golden Triangle is the meeting point of the borders of Myanmar and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, at the junction of the Ruak and Mekong rivers. The name "Golden Triangle" is commonly used more broadly to refer to an area of approximately 950,000 square kilometers (367,000 sq mi) that overlaps the mountains of the three adjacent countries<sup>10</sup>. It is a rugged, mountainous area, and it is sparsely populated. The Myanmar portion of the Golden Triangle is by far the largest and the poorest, and that is also where most opium has always been grown<sup>11</sup>.

### Opium

Opium is a powerful drug made from the juice or sap of a type of poppy. Opium is used in medicines that relieve pain or help someone sleep<sup>12</sup>.

### United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been helping make the world safer from drugs, organized crime, corruption, and terrorism. The UNODC is committed to achieving health, security, and justice for all by tackling these threats and promoting peace and sustainable well-being as deterrents to them<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Drug trafficking. United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> Production of drugs. EMCDDA www.emcdda.europa.eu. [https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/production-of-drugs\\_en](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/production-of-drugs_en)

<sup>10</sup> Golden Triangle (Southeast Asia). (2022, December 24). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved February 27, 2023, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden\\_Triangle\\_\(Southeast\\_Asia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Triangle_(Southeast_Asia))

<sup>11</sup> Richardson, R. (2023, January 20). Guide to investigating organized crime in the Golden Triangle — Introduction. Global Investigative Journalism Network. <https://gjin.org/2022/11/28/guide-to-investigating-organized-crime-in-the-golden-triangle-introduction/>

<sup>12</sup> Opium - Wiktionary. Wiktionary, the free dictionary. <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/opium>

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/AnnualReport/Annual-Report\\_2018.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/AnnualReport/Annual-Report_2018.pdf)

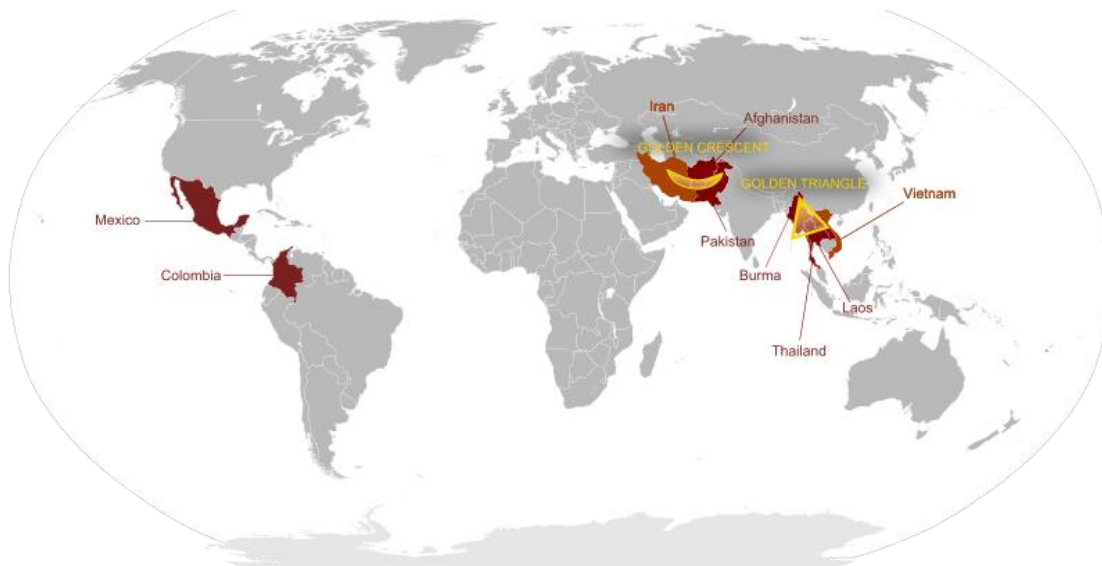
## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Drug production and trafficking in the Asia Pacific

Regarding drug policies in Asia, there exists a widespread recognition among all countries in the region of the adverse consequences of illicit drug use, production, and trafficking on social welfare, as well as their implications for the societal, economic, political, and security frameworks of a nation. Every Asian nation under consideration has drug usage reduction (often to zero), drug trafficking, the cultivation of illegal crops, and/or drug production as a prominent governmental objective. The deployment of a variety of supply and demand tactics, including the strict enforcement of laws, community-based preventive methods like school-based education, and the implementation of treatment and recovery for drug users, are tactics used to accomplish this aim. Different nations use these tactics differently in terms of emphasis and intensity.

**Figure 1:** Major heroin production regions, including the Golden Triangle<sup>14</sup>

### Development and change from Opiates to amphetamines in the Golden Triangle



The area was formerly well-known for its enormous opium plantations, which met a large portion of the global demand for the narcotic. Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) have lately replaced opiates as the preferred drug in Southeast Asia, despite opiates still having a sizable production and usage base there for Golden Triangle producers. This shift can be attributed to rapid and significant financial returns, simplicity and adaptability of manufacturing, and a lack of thorough control

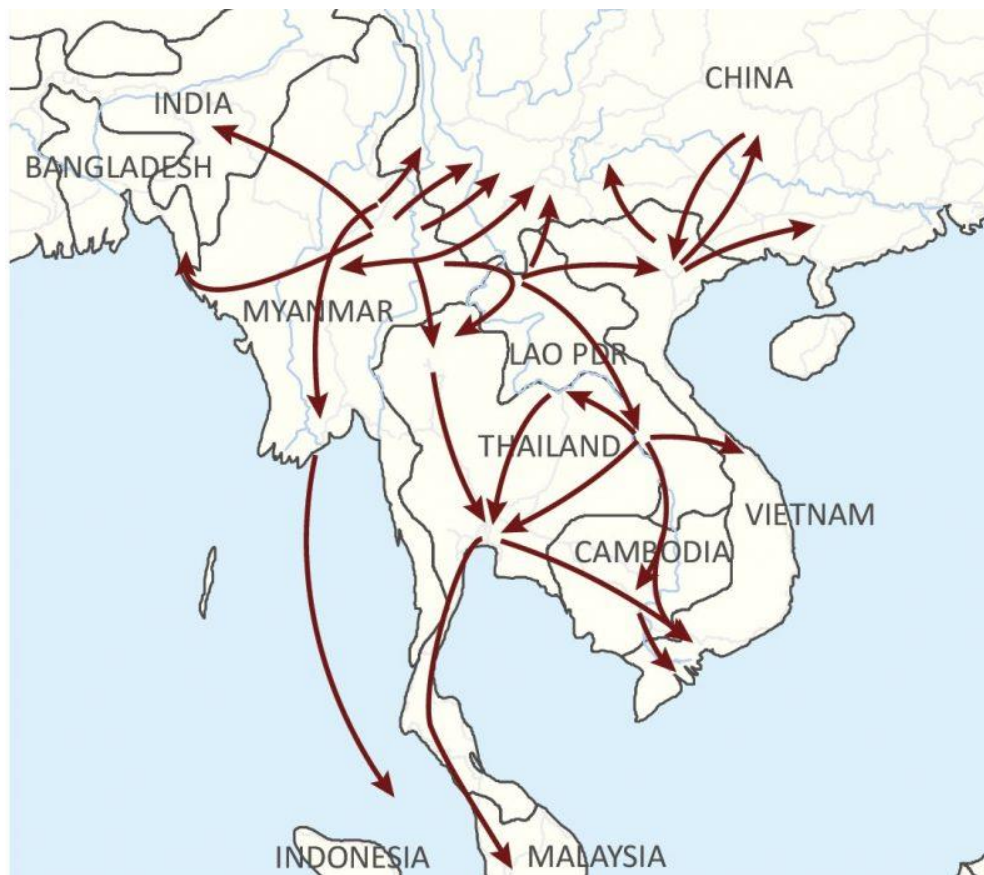
<sup>14</sup> Wikimedia Commons. Retrieved February 27, 2023, from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HeroinWorld-en.svg>

over synthetic drugs (primarily ephedrine). Due to this, ATS trafficking in the area sharply surged in the late 1990s, and its clientele quickly grew to include students, laborers, sex workers, landowners, and fishers as well as urban and rural youngsters. Because of its performance-enhancing properties, which are ideal for capitalist manufacturing, and since urban clubgoers are more interested in said drugs," ATS is becoming more and more popular manufacturing and exhibition. These are fundamental aspects of the corporate capitalism that has come to represent the thriving Southeast Asian economies most prominently. The region's economy has been significantly impacted by the switch from opiates to amphetamines. Many villages within Golden Triangle still heavily rely on the drug trade for their revenue, and the switch to methamphetamines has made it possible for these communities to do so despite intensified law enforcement operations. The increasing law enforcement measures to stop the manufacture of opiates are one of the key causes of this trend. Opium production and trafficking have decreased as a result of the region's governments prioritizing the reduction of the drug trade. Additionally, the transition has been influenced by shifting consumer preferences for drugs on the market.

Amphetamine use has replaced opium in the area, with serious ramifications. As competing gangs seek for market domination, methamphetamine manufacture and trafficking have increased drug trafficking. Drug lords utilize their riches and influence to pay officials and threaten anyone who get in their way, which has contributed to corruption and bloodshed. The rationale for significant rises in ATS usage is that they allow advanced and ideal sorts of subjectivity in which traditional characteristics like opium addiction, sluggishness, and "primitiveness" are traded for an innovative business trader identity. At the same time, the use of ATS encourages new kinds of psychological and physical harm, crime, social exploitation, and exclusion.

### **Drug cartels bypassing governmental frameworks that control drug trafficking**

Drug cartels operating in the Golden Triangle have used several strategies to elude law enforcement attempts. These can involve paying off government officials. In order to evade detection and prosecution, cartels have been known to bribe government representatives. This can apply to law enforcement, border guards, and government representatives who, in exchange for payment, may turn a blind eye to the cartels' actions. The potential for exploitation of permeable borders is endless. Due to its location in an isolated, mountainous territory with loosely supervised borders, the Golden Triangle locale makes it simpler for cartels to carry narcotics across international boundaries.



**Figure 2: Flows of methamphetamine trafficking in the Mekong region<sup>15</sup>**

Additionally, cartels seem to be able to cross borders with narcotics by employing shady means of transportation including boats, aircraft, and even animals. They also disguise their operations and elude law enforcement by using intricate supply networks that include middlemen and intermediates. Cartels are frequently agile and adaptive, altering their techniques and routes in reaction to government enforcement initiatives. Authorities find it challenging to monitor their actions as a result. The Golden Triangle region contains several areas where drug trafficking operations may operate undercover, as it is easier to take advantage of unstable and violent areas such as this one. Moreover, through the creation of a support system, cartels frequently have a network of allies and supporters, particularly surrounding communities and others who profit from their actions. Authorities will find it challenging to interfere with their operations as a result. Similarly, The Golden

<sup>15</sup> *Vietnam and the Mekong's synthetic drug epidemic.* (2019, May 2). The Diplomat – The Diplomat is a current-affairs magazine for the Asia-Pacific, with news and analysis on politics, security, business, technology and life across the region. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/vietnam-and-the-mekongs-synthetic-drug-epidemic/>

Triangle's drug gangs' ongoing success is evidence of their cunning and resourcefulness. It also draws attention to the necessity for more efficient law enforcement initiatives to combat the drug cartels and eliminate its supporting networks both locally and globally.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

### Thailand

One of the three nations that form up the Golden Triangle is Thailand, and it has historically engaged in drug manufacture and trafficking. In the past, Thailand's economy in some areas, especially in the north, depended heavily on the cultivation of opium. Thailand was one of the world's top producers of opium in the early 20th century, and the narcotic was consumed both medicinally and recreationally.

The Thai government started to crack down on opium manufacturing and trafficking in the middle of the 20th century. In addition to enforcing tough laws against drug manufacture and trafficking, the government pushed coffee farming and tourism as alternatives for individuals working in the opium trade. Nonetheless, drug trafficking continues to take place throughout Thailand, notably in the Golden Triangle region, despite these attempts. Drugs produced in nearby nations like Myanmar and Laos, including methamphetamine, are transported via the nation. Thai officials are still striving to stop the trafficking of illegal drugs, notably by tightening border controls and coordinating drug enforcement with its neighbors.

Thailand has also altered its emphasis in recent years from combating drug usage merely as a law enforcement issue to addressing it as a health problem for the public. To lessen the negative effects of drug use, the nation has introduced harm reduction strategies including programs for the exchange of needles and medication-assisted therapy for drug addiction.

### Myanmar

A significant participant in the Golden Triangle's drug production and trafficking industry is Myanmar, sometimes referred to as Burma. One of the major manufacturers of illegal narcotics in the world, the nation has a long history of opium growing. In fact, behind Afghanistan, Myanmar is presently the world's second-largest opium producer, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/sea/Southeast\\_Asia\\_Opium\\_Survey\\_2015\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/sea/Southeast_Asia_Opium_Survey_2015_web.pdf)



In Myanmar's northern and eastern areas, where the arid climate and lack of government regulation have made drug manufacturing possible, opium growing is especially common. After being processed into heroin, the opium is subsequently transported to neighboring nations in the area and beyond. The Burmese government has worked to cut opium production and stop drug trafficking in recent years. The government started a campaign in 1999 to entice farmers to convert from growing opium to other crops like brew and fruit trees.<sup>17</sup> Even though this effort has had some success, opium farming in Myanmar has not been totally eradicated.

In an effort to fight drug trafficking, the Burmese government has also put in place a number of law enforcement measures, such as tighter immigration enforcement, the seizure of firearms and drug laboratories, and the capture and criminal prosecution of criminal organizations. The continuous political unrest and armed violence in some regions of the nation, however, have impeded these efforts and made it challenging to effectively manage drug manufacturing and trafficking.

### **Laos (official name: Lao People's Democratic Republic)**

Despite being the smallest of the three nations, Laos has participated in the manufacture and trafficking of drugs.

In the past, Laos was a major producer of opium, but owing to a government-led elimination campaign and a switch to other crops, opium cultivation has decreased recently. Nonetheless, manufacturing of methamphetamine has significantly increased in the nation recently; according to some estimates, it is currently the region's biggest producer of the drug.<sup>18</sup>

Laos' ethnic minorities, mainly the Hmong and Khmu people, control the majority of the country's methamphetamine manufacturing. To evade discovery, the manufacture frequently takes place in compact, portable labs. After then, the methamphetamine is trafficked.

As transit sites and markets for the narcotics, other nations in the region including China and Vietnam are also impacted by the Golden Triangle drug distribution.

### **UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) offers practical help to States, to draft laws and create comprehensive national anti-trafficking strategies and assist

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<sup>17</sup> (2001, July). United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/alt-development\\_common-problems.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/alt-development_common-problems.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Methamphetamine-type stimulant use in Lao PDR: Qualitative findings from users aged 15–25 years in Vientiane capital and Vientiane province. (n.d.). *PubMed Central (PMC)*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5880082/>

with resources to implement them. UNODC plays a significant role in supporting Member States in their efforts to combat illicit drugs, international crime, and terrorism. With a presence in all regions of the world through its network of field offices, UNODC works closely with national authorities to provide technical assistance, promote best practices and develop effective policies and strategies. Through its work, UNODC contributes to global efforts to promote peace, security, and sustainable development.<sup>19</sup>

### **CND (UN's Commission on Narcotic Drugs)**

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) is a subsidiary body of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that was established in 1946. The CND's primary role is to assist ECOSOC in supervising the implementation of international drug control treaties, such as the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1954. In general, the CND plays a critical role in the global drug control regime, ensuring the implementation of international drug control treaties and guiding the work of UNODC.<sup>20</sup>

### **The UN Resident Coordinator, i.e., the highest-ranking representative of the UN development system at the country level.**

As the highest-ranking representative of the UN development system at the country level, the Resident Coordinator plays a critical role in leading the United Nations country teams and ensuring system-wide accountability for the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. The Resident Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the UN support to countries in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined in the 2030 Agenda.<sup>21</sup>

### **UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific**

The UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific is a crucial entity in the region that works with Member States and regional organizations to tackle various issues related to rule of law, non-traditional security threats, law enforcement, criminal justice, and drug-related supply and health issues. The office is based in Bangkok and comprises a team of over 200 professionals. The UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific plays a vital role in promoting the rule of law,

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<sup>19</sup> Kudzai.chinoda. About us. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime  
<https://www.unodc.org/southernafrica/en/sa/about.html>

<sup>20</sup> The Commission on narcotic drugs. United Nations: Office on Drugs and Crime.  
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/index.html>

<sup>21</sup> The UN resident coordinator system guide. (n.d.). Jobs in United Nations, NGO, European Union.  
<https://www.impactpool.org/articles/resident-coordinator-guide?publish=2022-11-06>

combating crime and drug trafficking, and promoting public health in the region.<sup>22</sup>

### **INTERPOL - International Criminal Police Organization**

Interpol is an inter-governmental organization.<sup>23</sup> It has 195 member countries, and assists national, regional, and international law enforcement bodies to counter the illicit production, trafficking, and abuse of drugs. Global operations against drug trafficking and assistance to ongoing investigations. Criminal analysis of intelligence on drug trafficking routes, modus operandi and the criminal networks involved. Comprehensive training for police worldwide to better tackle drug trafficking.

### **The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**

The INCB is an independent and quasi-judicial monitoring body for the implementation of the United Nations international drug control conventions. The INCB was established in 1968 as part of the international drug control system established by the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961. The INCB plays an important role in promoting compliance with the international drug control conventions and ensuring that the global drug control system is effective and efficient. INCB's work is essential for maintaining a global drug control system that protects public health and safety, while respecting human rights and the rule of law.<sup>24</sup>

### **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional intergovernmental organization consisting of ten Member States located in Southeast Asia<sup>25</sup>. The founding members of ASEAN are Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, who signed the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) on August 8, 1967, in Bangkok, Thailand. Since then, five other countries have joined ASEAN, i.e. Brunei Darussalam, Viet Nam, Lao PDR and Myanmar, and Cambodia in 1999. In July 1998, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers signed the Joint Declaration for a Drug-Free ASEAN by 2020 to eradicate the production, processing, trafficking and use of illicit drugs in Southeast Asia by the year 2020.<sup>26</sup> In 2015, the ASEAN region did not achieve its goal of becoming a drug-free zone. However, ASEAN has continued to prioritize the fight against illicit drugs and has adopted various measures to strengthen regional cooperation on drug control. ASEAN has also established the ASEAN Narcotics Cooperation Centre (ASEAN-NARCO), as a platform for

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<sup>22</sup> Meet the staff. United Nations: UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

<https://www.unodc.org/roseap/en/who-we-are/index.html>

<sup>23</sup> Our role in fighting drug trafficking. (n.d.). INTERPOL | The International Criminal Police Organization.

<https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Drug-trafficking/Our-role-in-fighting-drug-trafficking>

<sup>24</sup> Agt. INCB. <https://www.incb.org/>

<sup>25</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). (n.d.). U.S. Chamber of Commerce | U.S. Chamber of Commerce. <https://www.uschamber.com/program/international-affairs/asia-program/southeast-asia-program/association-of-southeast-asian-nations-asean>

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

[https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/archive/documents/Publications/ASEAN\\_2015](https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/archive/documents/Publications/ASEAN_2015)

information sharing, capacity building, and technical assistance on drug control among ASEAN Member States.<sup>27</sup>

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
16th and 17th centuries	Opium production in Burma, China, Laos, and Thailand, which form part of the Golden Triangle. The geographical location provides ideal conditions for opium cultivation.
Vietnam War (1955 – 1975)	Heroin production due to the increased demand for heroin by United States troops during the Vietnam War. Transformation of the opium economy of the Golden Triangle into a large and profitable heroin economy. Drug trafficking now influences every aspect of politics in the region.
1964	Crop eradication efforts conducted since 1964 have had no significant impact <sup>28</sup> .
1988	United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances
2003	The Lao Government adopts the National Poverty Eradication Programme (GoL 2003)
1979	Thailand adopts the Narcotics Act, B.E. 2522 (1979), imposing the Death Penalty for Drug Trafficking Offenses <sup>29</sup> .
1990-1999	Consumption and trafficking of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS) increases in the Golden Triangle and becomes the preferred drug
2013	The Mekong Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Drug Control is signed by six (6) countries in East and Southeast Asia, namely Cambodia, China, Laos PDR, Myanmar, Thailand,

<sup>27</sup>BNN - Pejabat Pengelola Informasi Dan Dokumentasi.

<https://ppid.bnn.go.id/konten/unggah/2020/10/The-Mid-Term-Review-ASEAN-Work-Plan-on-Securing-Communities-Against-Illicit-Drugs-2016-2025.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Heroin trafficking in the Golden Triangle. Office of Justice Programs. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/heroin-trafficking-golden-triangle>

<sup>29</sup> The use of the death penalty for drug trafficking in the United States, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand: A comparative legal analysis. (2013, June 5). MDPI. <https://www.mdpi.com/2075-471X/2/2/115>

	and Viet Nam as the seventh partner of the UNODC.
2016	The 10 <sup>th</sup> Revision of the Sub-regional Action Plan (SAP) is released and constitutes the engine that drives the MOU process to address illicit drug production, trafficking, and abuse.

### RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

There are three (3) main international drug control conventions:

#### Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1954 as amended by the 1972 Protocol<sup>30</sup>

On 30<sup>th</sup> March 1954, the United Nations Conference adopted the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, which entered into force 13 December 1954 and was amended in 1972 by relevant Protocol. The United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs met at United Nations Headquarters from 24 January to 25 March 1954, at which 73 States were represented. The Convention entered into force on 8 August 1955, in accordance with article 18 of the Protocol of 25 March 1972.

The 1954 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs aimed to establish a comprehensive system of control over the production, distribution, and consumption of narcotic drugs. Under the Convention, states parties are required to establish strict controls on the cultivation, production, distribution, and use of narcotic drugs. They must also establish a system of licenses for those engaged in any of these activities and ensure that their domestic laws and regulations conform to the Convention's requirements.

In addition to the requirements regarding controls, the Convention also requires states parties to provide data to the International Narcotics Control Board regarding the production, consumption, and international movement of narcotic drugs. This information is used to assess compliance with the Convention and to inform the Board's work in promoting international cooperation to prevent drug abuse and trafficking.

The 1972 Protocol to the 1954 Single Convention further strengthened the international control system by providing additional measures to prevent the diversion of narcotic drugs for illicit purposes. It expanded the role of the International Narcotics Control Board in this regard and required states parties to establish criminal penalties for drug-related offenses.

<sup>30</sup>The Golden Triangle and Burma. (2010, December 15). De Gruyter. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.7591/9780801458439-003/pdf>

### **Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971<sup>31</sup>**

On 21<sup>st</sup> February 1971 the United Nations Conference adopted the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, which aimed for strengthening the control of psychoactive drugs such as amphetamine-type stimulants, barbiturates, benzodiazepines and psychedelics. Further, said Convention was developed to address the growing concern over the use and abuse of psychoactive drugs that were not covered by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs.

The United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Protocol on Psychotropic Substances met in Vienna from 11 January to 21 February 1971, at which 71 States were represented.

In particular, the Convention established a system of controls on the manufacture, distribution, and use of these drugs, with the goal of limiting their use to medical and scientific purposes. It also included provisions for international cooperation and information-sharing among member states, to facilitate the control of cross-border trafficking and other illicit activities related to these drugs.

The Convention has been implemented through a variety of national laws and regulations, including the Canadian Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the UK Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, and the U.S. Psychotropic Substances Act.

### **United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988<sup>32</sup>**

On 20<sup>th</sup> December 1988 the United Nations Conference adopted the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, with main objective to control and regulate the production, distribution, trade, and use of psychotropic substances.

The United Nations Conference for the Adoption of Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 met in Vienna from 11 January to 21 February 1971, at which 71 States were represented.

The Convention entered into force on November 11, 1990. The Convention was developed in response to the increasing use and abuse of psychoactive drugs such as amphetamines, barbiturates, and psychedelics during the 1960s and early 1970s.

The Convention established a framework for the international control of precursors, as well as other measures against drug trafficking. The Convention recognizes that the illicit manufacture of drugs depends on the availability of precursor chemicals, and therefore aims to prevent the diversion of these chemicals to illicit channels.

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<sup>31</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention\\_1971\\_en.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention_1971_en.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/Int\\_Drug\\_Control\\_Conventions/Commentaries-OfficialRecords/1988Convention/1988\\_OFFICIAL\\_RECORDS\\_Volume\\_I\\_en.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/Int_Drug_Control_Conventions/Commentaries-OfficialRecords/1988Convention/1988_OFFICIAL_RECORDS_Volume_I_en.pdf)

Overall, the 1988 Convention is an important tool in the global fight against drug trafficking and related crimes and has been ratified by many countries around the world.

### **International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy<sup>33</sup>**

The International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy were developed in 2019 by a coalition of UN Member States, WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP and leading human rights and drug policy experts. In 2019, with the support of the Global Partnership on Drug Policies and Development, implemented by GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development; the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs; and the United Nations Development Program.

These Guidelines<sup>34</sup> provide a framework for governments to develop and implement drug policies that respect and protect human rights, emphasizing the need for governments to balance their obligations under the international drug control conventions with their human rights obligations. They provide guidance on how to ensure that drug policies are designed and implemented in a way that upholds fundamental human rights, such as the right to health, the right to a fair trial, and the right to be free from discrimination.

Further, the guidelines recognize that countries have different legal frameworks, cultural values, and social conditions, and that they have the right to develop and implement drug policies that are appropriate for their unique circumstances.

However, the guidelines emphasize that all drug policies must respect and protect human rights, and that countries should strive to maximize human rights protections within the framework of international drug control conventions.

## **PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE**

The Golden Triangle provides ideal conditions for opium cultivation, which began already during the 16th and 17th centuries. After Second World War the demand for heroin increased dramatically, transforming the opium economy of the Golden Triangle into a large and profitable heroin economy. Drug trafficking now influences every aspect of politics in the region. Crop eradication efforts, supported by the United States conducted since 1964 have had no significant impact<sup>35</sup>.

Since then, the governments of the countries of the Golden Triangle adopted the following measures and others in an attempt to solve the issue:

### **Alternative Livelihood Programs and Initiatives for the eradication of opium poppy cultivation**

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<sup>33</sup>International guidelines on human rights & drug policy. (2020, December 2). Global Commission on HIV and the Law. <https://hivlawcommission.org/international-guidelines-on-human-rights-drug-policy/>

<sup>34</sup> International guidelines on human rights and drug policy. (n.d.). ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/international-guidelines-human-rights-and-drug-policy>

<sup>35</sup> Heroin trafficking in the Golden Triangle. (n.d.). Office of Justice Programs. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/heroin-trafficking-golden-triangle>

These were started by the governments of the US and Thailand in the 1950s and 1960s. As the farmers who planted poppies were frequently indigent and had no other sources of support, these projects were mostly ineffective.

The Thai government conducted alternative livelihood programs in the 1970s and 1980s to persuade farmers to cultivate coffee or fruit trees instead of opium poppies. These initiatives had some success, but they fell short of ending poppy cultivation entirely. The National Poverty Eradication Program, also known as NPEP, made considerable progress toward lowering poverty and fostering economic growth in the Golden Triangle. The programs for alternative livelihoods assisted some farmers in diversifying their operations and reducing their dependency on the production of opium poppies. Drug addiction and related health issues in the area were also reduced thanks to the substance therapy programs.

### **Law enforcement**

The Thai government stepped up its attempts to combat drug trafficking in the area through law enforcement measures in the 1990s and 2000s.

This includes the creation of drug courts as well as the deployment of force by the military to destroy drug production facilities and smuggling networks. Nevertheless, corruption and a lack of collaboration from the surrounding nations hindered these attempts.

### **International Coordination**

In order to handle the substance abuse in the Golden Triangle, there has been a rise in international coordination in recent years. This has included cooperative efforts between law enforcement organizations from other nations as well as programs to support regional economic growth. With assistance from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the governments of Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos together established the Sub-regional Action Plan (SAP) in 2008. (UNODC). The SAP sought to use a coordinated and all-encompassing strategy to combat the issue of drug manufacturing and trafficking in the Golden Triangle.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

### **Alternative developments**

First, finding alternative developments is vital, concentrating on the centers of production, mainly in Shan State in Myanmar. This includes the development in the construction of infrastructure, and local or community development. Here too can neighboring countries or donor countries be encouraged to strengthen their assistance in these areas. In this case the UN may offer initiatives that encourage farmers in the area who now depend on opium growing with technical aid and financial support. This might include funding for ecotourism, agroforestry, and sustainable agricultural initiatives.



### **Giving access and assistance**

Providing greater access to the UN into areas of illicit drug production and trafficking and production will ensure the assistance of farmers that grow opium poppy. Continuing to support the assistance for the immediate needs of former or current growers facing the loss of their primary income could be part of the solution of drug cultivation.

### **Human resources and treatments**

Giving support for building human resources capacity and scaling up HIV prevention and treatment services is vital. Prioritizing the region of the Golden Triangle, including the people who use drugs in Thailand, Laos, and especially in Myanmar, focusing on the ones who inject drugs. The UN may assist the extension of drug treatment as well as rehabilitation services in the area, including the creation of drug treatment facilities and training programs for healthcare professionals.

### **Prevention in Schools**

Another possible solution would be the implementation of effective school programs. This includes the development of social interaction, assertiveness, and resistance. Not only would informative material, including the short- and long-term effects of drugs, be provided in a developmentally appropriate way, but youths will resist the urge to use drugs.

### **Cooperation**

The cooperation of the countries in the Golden Triangle and its neighbors' countries is another possible solution. These can work together at a bilateral and multilateral level on counternarcotics strategies. Included are international organizations that are or could be engaged in counter-narcotics in Myanmar, Laos, or Thailand.

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