

Threats and Challenges in Drug Trafficking as a Maritime Crime: An Analysis of the Western Indian Ocean Region

GWS Kusalya

Faculty of Defence and Strategic Studies, General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University
samindi.kusalya@gmail.com

Drug Trafficking can be identified as one of the major maritime crimes in the maritime space. Drug trafficking occurs around two major regions, namely, the 'Golden Crescent' and 'Golden Triangle'. Countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, India, and Sri Lanka are of paramount importance in the Western Indian Ocean Region as producers and consumers of illicit drugs. The 'Golden Crescent' covers Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. Afghanistan and Pakistan can be identified as the main source countries for drugs in the Western Indian Ocean Region. On the other hand, countries like India and Sri Lanka become either consumers or targeted countries within the region. Sri Lanka is affected by drug trafficking, because it is in a strategic location, which is immediately north of the sea lanes. The illicit drug trade has imposed numerous threats and challenges to the international community. Therefore, collaborative action is necessary either bilaterally or multilaterally. Even though there are many regional as well as international mechanisms that are in place to mitigate the issue on drug trafficking, trafficking of drugs still continues. Violence related to drug trafficking can be highlighted as one of the pivotal threats. Another crucial security threat is the arms trafficking that mingles along with drug trafficking which is already an issue in Sri Lanka. These threats and challenges are limited not only to states but also to the individuals as it challenges health and causes addiction. Therefore, this research mainly identifies the major threats and challenges that affect the peace and harmony of the states and its individuals while identifying measures that have been taken to mitigate drug trafficking. The research was conducted as a qualitative research, utilizing secondary data sources like, books, articles, and journals. The research analysed data from over the past three years to examine the challenges posed to countries in the Western Indian Ocean Region.

Keywords: *drug trafficking, laws, maritime security, western Indian ocean region*