

**UN Office on Drugs
and Crime
(UNODC)
Background Guide**

**Cleveland Council on
WORLD AFFAIRS**



United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Background Guide

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The UN Office on Drugs and Crime was established in 1997 to combat organized crime, corruption, terrorism, and drug use.¹ The UNODC was created as a special agency within the United Nations by merging the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Center for International Crime Prevention.² As a result, the UNODC focuses on addressing a range of issues from concerns of security to health.³ With a focus on preventing the spread of crime and drugs, the UNODC works with various nations to create adaptive global solutions to the issues at hand. As countries continue to battle such issues, the UNODC recognizes the importance of a transnational approach to successfully address such concerns.⁴ By promoting collaborative solutions and frameworks, the UNODC hopes to advance security and justice worldwide.

The UNODC works to establish peace by promoting health, security, and justice programs, recognizing that sustainable peacekeeping serves as a deterrent for terrorism, corruption, etc. By organizing global programs and field offices, the UNODC provides sustainable long-term solutions as well as immediate, on the ground help to affected regions.⁵ The UNODC's utilization of regional offices allows it to tailor frameworks and policies to regional needs, requirements, and priorities. The UNODC relies on existing frameworks and treaties such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention against Corruption to guide its work.

The UNODC is made up of two primary governing bodies: the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and the Commission on Crime Prevention and International Justice

¹ United Nations, "About the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/index.html>

² United Nations, "About the United."

³ United Nations, "About the United."

⁴ United Nations, "About the United."

⁵ United Nations, "About the United."

(CCPCJ).⁶ The CND serves as the central policy-making body on drug-related matters.⁷ The CND meets yearly to develop policies for drug control.⁸ The CCPCJ meets annually to discuss ways to combat national and transnational crime as well as methods to improve the fairness of criminal justice systems globally.⁹ The CCPCJ and CND also discuss budgetary and administrative matters as the governing body of the UNODC. As governing bodies, any resolutions and decisions made by the CND and CCPCJ serve as guidelines for the UNODC.¹⁰

This committee will be composed of the United Nations member states, following the goals outlined above to address the following issues.

I. Advancing the Strategic Vision for Latin America and the Caribbean

Statement of the Issue:

Over the last two decades, the UNODC successfully implemented global programs across Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). However, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the progress the LAC had made.¹¹ Significant economic damage caused LAC to see a 12-year low point in GDP and an increase in corruption and governmental instability. As a result, the sustainable development of the LAC has significantly declined. With this significant increase in inequality present throughout the LAC it becomes imperative for the UNODC to take immediate action, combating these rising threats.

Without international cooperation and action, it is impossible to make progress in these areas. As the UNODC emphasizes, issues like drug use extend beyond borders and are

⁶ United Nations, “Commissions,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/index.html>

⁷ United Nations, “United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/index.html>

⁸ United Nations, “United Nations Commission.”

⁹ United Nations, “Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CCPCJ/index.html>

¹⁰ United Nations, “Commissions.”

¹¹ United Nations, “UNODC Strategic Vision for Latin America and the Caribbean 2022-2025,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, https://www.unodc.org/res/strategy/STRATEGIC_VISION_LATIN_AMERICA_AND_THE_CARIBBEAN_2022_2025_ENE17_EDsigned.pdf

too large for nations to confront individually.¹² In fact, many issues such as corruption cannot be addressed at a national governmental level. Organized crime exists across national borders and as such, it is imperative to address these issues from a transnational perspective.

Moreover, a lack of funding significantly deteriorates progress in areas like the LAC. Majority of the nations that suffer from similar drug and crime issues do not have the ability to fund programs for sustainable progression alone. Once again, transnational cooperation to provide adequate funding for progression is required.

The UNODC focuses its approach for progress on four sectors: addressing the world drug problem, countering corruption and economic crime, combating transnational organized crime, and enhancing crime prevention and criminal justice.¹³ While the UNODC focuses on addressing economic crime and corruption as well as crime prevention and criminal justice from a regional level, it also focuses on addressing drug use and organized crime from an international perspective.¹⁴ This reinforces the importance of addressing all the issues the UNODC faces at both the national, regional, and ground-on levels, implementing sustainable long-term solutions as well as immediate groundwork action.

History:

The early 20th century saw the start of drug cartels. As the prohibition era began in the United States, a demand for alcohol led to the emergence of a lucrative market. This market held its base in the Caribbean and Mexico from where alcohol began to get smuggled into the United States. Slowly smuggling networks started to get established, networks that would later be adapted for drug trafficking. These alcohol smuggling businesses started to result in high profits. After the Cold War, Latin America started to see a rise in political instability and chaos. During this time, the profits raised from alcohol smuggling businesses started to fund insurgent groups like the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

¹² United Nations, "UNODC Strategic."

¹³ United Nations, "About the United."

¹⁴ United Nations, "About the United."

As the late 20th century progressed, LAC started to see the domination of drug cartels like the Colombian Medellin and Cali.¹⁵ These cartels primarily exported drugs to the United States and Europe.¹⁶ Soon after Mexican drug cartels such as the Tijuana cartel started to expand, controlling many of the major drug trafficking networks.¹⁷ The Andean country regions increased production of cocaine, further fueling these drug trafficking networks.¹⁸ As these drug cartels gained more power, they started to corrupt institutions and the government, increasing societal violence.¹⁹

As history has shown, economic and political crises have exacerbated drug and crime issues exponentially. For example, Venezuela is in the midst of a severe economic and political crisis. As the crisis continues, Venezuela is experiencing increased rates of smuggling, trafficking, and violent crime.²⁰ With no functioning government and law enforcement to regulate crime, increased socio-economic destruction, and a lack of international cooperation and funding, the conflict in Venezuela is getting worse with hopes of reconstruction slowly fading away.²¹

In order to provide support to the Latin American and Caribbean regions, the UNODC was established in 1997. Since then, the UNODC has made progress in the LAC region. To tackle corruption the UNODC implemented the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) that focuses on conducting research on the linkage between corruption and youth, provides assistance for socio-economic development focusing on access to education and economic opportunities, and works to understand and combat the connection between corruption and transnational organized crime.²² While the UNCAC had been successful and was making notable progress in LAC, the COVID-19

¹⁵ Richard J. Samuels, "Drug Cartel," Britannica, May 22nd, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/drug-cartel>

¹⁶ Samuels, "Drug."

¹⁷ Samuels, "Drug."

¹⁸ Paul Gootenberg and Isaac Campos, "Toward a New Drug History of Latin America: A Research Frontier at the Center of Debates," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 2015, <https://read.dukeupress.edu/hahr/article/95/1/1/36317/Toward-a-New-Drug-History-of-Latin-America-A>

¹⁹ Gootenberg and Campos, "Toward a New."

²⁰ Ioan Grillo, "It was Once the Richest Country in Latin America. Now it's Falling Apart," *Time*, <https://time.com/venezuela-brink/>

²¹ Grillo, "It was Once."

²² United Nations, "UNODC Strategic."

pandemic set back a significant amount of work that had been done. Lockdowns and COVID regulations caused economic destruction and political instability that restarted the growth of drug and crime organizations.²³ For the past few years, these issues have been growing, demanding immediate action from the UNODC.

Analysis:

With the recent increase in drug and crime activities, this committee must brainstorm frameworks to combat these issues immediately by focusing on three areas: addressing the recent rise in organized crime, tackling corruption and providing justice for citizens, and decreasing the funding provided for drug-related crime groups.

Organized crime in LAC has increased exponentially over the past few years transforming into a transnational issue. As organized crimes continue, states face extreme threats to their national sovereignty, governmental authority, economic stability, and internal safety. Organized crime groups operate across country boundaries, exploiting weaknesses in various jurisdiction's law enforcement groups.²⁴ By using technology and corruption networks, they avoid the radar of law enforcement and governments.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, LAC has faced severe socio-economic destruction causing an increase in recruitment for criminal groups. Moreover, the COVID-19 lockdown coupled with economic vulnerabilities has also setback much of the progress that had been made in LAC, exacerbating the issue of organized crime. The presence of corruption in a nation increases the ability for organized crime to exist.²⁵ As crime groups typically use techniques of intimidation and bribing of law enforcement officers as well as government officials, the presence of corruption serves as a catalyst for the existence of organized crime groups.²⁶ By increasing the power and capabilities of law enforcement officers, strengthening judicial systems, and promoting transnational cooperation, organized crime

²³ United Nations, "UNODC Strategic."

²⁴ United Nations, "Homicide and Organized Crime in Latin America and the Caribbean," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023, https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/2023/GSH_2023_LAC_web.pdf

²⁵ United Nations, "UNODC Strategic."

²⁶ Wilson Martínez, Roberta Solis, and Yara Esquivel Soto, "Rooting Out Incentives to Crime and Corruption in Latin America and the Caribbean," The World Bank, July 28th, 2022, <https://star.worldbank.org/blog/rooting-out-incentives-crime-and-corruption-latin-america-and-caribbean>

groups will struggle to exist.²⁷ Moreover, much progress can also be seen through the investment of resources in increasing education and economic opportunities. The increase of access to education and job opportunities decreases the need for individuals to join organized crime groups. With no economic incentive, the number of individuals investing time in organized crime will decrease. Moreover, by increasing access to education, states reduce the access young individuals have to organized crime groups. By empowering local communities and increasing economic opportunities, states reduce the appeal that organized crime groups have on the vulnerable population of society. However, there must also be a focus on improving underlying factors that promote organized crime, such as corruption.

Corruption has remained a lasting issue in LAC. Due to the presence of corruption, the existing governments have lost legitimacy, terminating any efforts to promote socio-economic development, accountability, and the rule of law. Democratic institutions are ceasing to exist in LAC, with threats to the safety of the public.²⁸ As corruption increases, so does the amount of organized crime groups and crime and violence rates.²⁹ Successful solutions to tackle increasing corruption include increased governmental and institutional transparency and strengthened judicial power or the rule of law.³⁰ National and independent oversight bodies can increase internal transparency within nations, potentially reducing and preventing corruption. Moreover, the committee can build off of already existing national anti-corruption frameworks that have proven to be effective such as the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). By strengthening government institutions and reducing corruption, organized crime and violence will also start to see a correlated decrease.

Finally, the committee must provide frameworks to battle existing drug problems. All the issues touched upon in the guide are interconnected. Increased corruption leads to increased organized crime groups, increased organized crime leads to increased drug rates

²⁷ Martínez, Solis, and Soto, "Rooting Out Incentives."

²⁸ Daniel Zovatto, "The State of Democracy in Latin America," Brookings, September 15th, 2014, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-state-of-democracy-in-latin-america/>

²⁹ United Nations, "UNODC Strategic."

³⁰ United Nations, "UNODC Strategic," 16.

and extortion, etc. Thus, profit made by drug cartels tend to fund crime groups.³¹ These profits are then used by crime groups to corrupt public officials and government leaders contributing to this cycle of crime, violence, and corruption.³² By increasing the power of law enforcement, drug cartels will slowly decrease. In addition, by increasing regulations to control drug demand in consumer nations, countries will start to see a decrease in drug cartels. As demand decreases, so does the profit for these cartels, weakening them financially. Moreover, regulating the spread of these drugs over borders also will control the demand of drugs from consumer nations. The Mérida Initiative is an effective framework that has worked to strengthen the power of law enforcement and control drug cartels.³³ By building upon these frameworks and brainstorming ways to control business over borders, money laundering, etc., LAC can see a significant decrease in drug problems.

As mentioned above, all these issues related to drugs and crime are extremely interconnected. As such, dealing and making progress on one issue will slowly start to show progress within the other issues as well. Ground-on work has proven to be extremely effective in the past.³⁴ This includes increasing opportunities for education and jobs. By bringing more and more people out of poverty, states reduce the risk of individuals falling victim to crime groups as a result of financial instability. The reduction of inequality will also reduce crime group involvement. As such, this committee must also keep the local population, or individual citizens in focus when dealing with this issue. Socio-economic development at the local level can also improve the situation in LAC exponentially.

Conclusion:

Latin America and the Caribbean has witnessed extreme rates of violence, drug cartels, and corruption in the last few years.³⁵ While the multitude of issues touched upon are extremely interconnected, delegates must be cognizant to not oversimplify the issues.

³¹ United Nations, "Homicide and Organized."

³² United Nations, "Homicide and Organized"

³³ U.S. Department of State Staff, "Merida Initiative," U.S. Department of State, 2009-2017, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/inl/merida/>

³⁴ United Nations, "UNODC Strategic."

³⁵ United Nations, "UNODC Strategic."

While delegates can explore solutions such as access to education and jobs, it is also important for delegates to brainstorm solutions to solve the root causes of these issues, such as corruption and governmental instability. In addition, it is also extremely important to recognize each state's national sovereignty when dealing with such topics that regard internal governmental instability.

As emphasized before, a transnational approach is extremely important when dealing with drug and crime issues. Organized crime and drug cartels do not exist within boundaries. The demand from one consumer nation increases production of drugs within another nation. Collaborative funding is also extremely important to address these issues in an efficient manner. However, the committee must be wary of the continued fear of dependence on developed nations when exploring funding options.

The situation in LAC is ever-evolving. As mentioned before, COVID-19 changed the situation as a whole, increasing the severity of the crimes LAC was experiencing. As such, while delegates must rely on historical information when dealing with these topics, it is also important to rely on current updates in the LAC region. The issue of drugs and crime in LAC is an extremely complex and interconnected topic and the UNODC is tasked with developing innovative, effective, and efficient solutions to tackle the current increase of organized crime, corruption, and drug problems in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Questions to Consider:

1. Considering the factor of national sovereignty, how can we effectively combat corruption in Latin America and the Caribbean without infringing on an individual country's rights?
2. How do we hold banks and financial institutions accountable in relation to transparency and possibility of illicit financial transactions?
3. What measures can be taken to promote cooperation between international and local organizations, authorities, and institutions?

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<https://read.dukeupress.edu/hahr/article/95/1/1/36317/Toward-a-New-Drug-History-of-Latin-America-A>.
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<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/index.html>.
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<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/index.html>.

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- Zovatto, Daniel. "The State of Democracy in Latin America." Brookings, September 15, 2014. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-state-of-democracy-in-latin-america/>.

II. Preventing the Financing of Terrorism

The United Nations General Assembly established the Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB) in 2002 under the UNODC.³⁶ With the goal of enforcing counter-terrorism laws, the Terrorism Prevention Branch aims to support and enhance the role of criminal justice officials to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate terrorism cases.³⁷ The UNODC TPB works closely with recipient countries to develop tailor-made solutions to counter terrorism.³⁸ This includes working in close contact with a country's national authorities, law enforcement as well as international organizations to develop effective solutions to counter the ongoing threat of terrorism.

Statement of the Issue:

The issue of the financing of terrorism remains one of transnational concern. The act of financing of terrorism involves the illegal movement of funds internationally to fund terrorist activities worldwide.³⁹ These transfers can be made through money laundering, donations, and even through businesses.⁴⁰ Governments and international organizations struggle to detect and prevent the transfer of these funds. As the threat of terrorist groups grows, countries have taken measures to try and stop the financing of terrorism. Such measures include implementing regulatory frameworks like the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) as well as the Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter-Terrorism Financing (CTF) frameworks.⁴¹ These frameworks encourage transparency and accountability among financial institutions like banks.⁴²

However, as technology continues to evolve rapidly, countries struggle to keep up with the different methods used to finance terrorism. For example, many terrorist groups

³⁶ United Nations, "Terrorism Prevention Branch," United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/terrorism/index.html>.

³⁷ United Nations, "Terrorism Prevention."

³⁸ United Nations, "Terrorism Prevention."

³⁹ United Nations, "Countering the Financing of Terrorism," United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/terrorism/expertise/combating-terrorist-financing.html>

⁴⁰ United Nations, "Countering."

⁴¹ Financial Action Task Force (FATF), "International Standards on Combating Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism & Proliferation," Financial Action Task Force, 2020, <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/publications/fatfrecommendations/documents/fatf-recommendations.html>.

⁴² (FATF), "International Standards."

are using methods of crypto-currency to acquire funds.⁴³ Terrorist groups used these methods in an attempt to avoid detection when moving funds across borders. This poses challenges to nations who are still understanding methods of crypto-currency and digital financing. Moreover, financial institutions like banks play a huge role in detecting the financing of terrorism. Banks are the first organizations that can detect suspicious transactions and take preventative measures by reporting these transactions to authorities.⁴⁴ Thus, it is extremely important for banks to be in compliance with the regulatory frameworks in order to be able to detect suspicious activity.

In addition, international cooperation is essential to combating the financing of terrorism. As most terrorist groups acquire funds across country borders, it is crucial for nations to work at a transnational level to combat this issue. When countries follow international frameworks and guidelines in conjunction, detecting and preventing the transfer of funds across borders becomes much easier. As such, it is important for the UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch to work in conjunction to develop effective and efficient frameworks to combat the financing of terrorism while keeping in mind the multifaceted and evolving nature of this issue.

History:

The financing of terrorism began to emerge in the early 1970s. In the midst of the Cold War and many revolutions, countries started to see groups across the world gain access to funds in various ways. Terrorism is defined as the “unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.”⁴⁵ Such terrorism organizations can be state-sponsored and funded. A prime example of this would be Iran. In Iran, following the 1979 overthrow of the Shah, militant groups like Hezbollah started to receive direct funding from the new government itself.⁴⁶ The government provided state

⁴³ Valeriia Dyntu, “Cryptocurrency as an Instrument of Terrorism Financing,” *Baltic Journal of Economic Studies*, vol.7 (2021), <https://ideas.repec.org/a/bal/journal/2256-07422021758.html>

⁴⁴ International Monetary Fund (IMF), “Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism,” International Monetary Fund, <https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/Financial-Integrity/amlcft>

⁴⁵ Oxford English Dictionary. “Terrorism,” 2011, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/terrorism_n?tl=true

⁴⁶ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports on Terrorism 2021: Iran,” U.S. Department of State, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2021/iran/>

sponsorship to Hezbollah in the form of financial support, weapons, etc.⁴⁷ This model of state sponsorship would soon inspire many other countries in that region.

The Cold War presented a different form of financing of terrorism. During the Cold War, the United States and Soviet Union supported proxy groups, many of which engaged in acts of terrorism.⁴⁸ During this time, ideological battles manifested in the funding of various terrorist organizations through state-sponsored initiatives and secret channels.⁴⁹

During the early 1990s, al-Qaeda started to rise in power under Osama bin Laden. Al-Qaeda received the majority of its funds through charity donations and wealthy individuals in the Middle East.⁵⁰ Al-Qaeda's funds were acquired across continents through legal and illegal financial channels.⁵¹ Around this time, various other terrorist groups started to utilize hawala networks and front companies to gain funding.⁵² Hawala networks essentially transferred money without actually moving it, through money brokers.⁵³ On the other hand, front companies are companies that hide their true purpose from the public to avoid the eye of law enforcement.⁵⁴ These companies tend to engage in a lot of money laundering and other fraudulent activities. For example, in 2003, the United States found out that around 39 businesses were acting as front companies for the Cali Cartel, a Colombian drug cartel that at the time dominated the world's cocaine market.⁵⁵ In this case, the Cali Cartel's front companies tended to be pharmacies selling legal drugs.⁵⁶ These funds were transferred across country borders, posing a significant challenge for law

⁴⁷ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports."

⁴⁸ Jean-François Thony, "Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing: An Overview," International Monetary Fund, 2002, <https://www.imf.org/external/np/leg/sem/2002/cdmfl/eng/thony.pdf>

⁴⁹ Thony, "Money Laundering."

⁵⁰ Jeanne Giraldo and Harold Trinkunas, "Terrorism Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective," *Stanford UP*, 2007, 86-88, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2151348100000240>

⁵¹ Giraldo and Trinkunas, "Terrorism Financing."

⁵² Giraldo and Trinkunas, "Terrorism Financing."

⁵³ Mohammed El-Qorchi, "Hawala," *Finance and Development*, 4(2002), <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2002/12/elqorchi.htm>

⁵⁴ Paul Dixon, "What is a Front Company? A Tool Money Launderer's Exploit," Sanction.io, February 15th, 2024, <https://www.sanctions.io/blog/what-is-a-front-company-money-laundering-sanctions-evasion>

⁵⁵ Dixon, "What is a Front."

⁵⁶ Dixon, "What is a Front."

enforcement of the time to successfully track and catch these groups. Other terrorist groups like the Taliban acquired their funding through drug trafficking.⁵⁷

The rest of the 2000s presented challenges in the form of evolving technology. After 9/11, governments started to express an urge to strengthen regulations to control the financing of terrorism. This included encouraging reporting, emphasizing the importance of transparency, and highlighting the need for transnational regulations.⁵⁸ However, in the last few years, governments face a new challenge. As cryptocurrency and advanced online financing platforms make a presence, governments are finding it difficult to precisely track the origins of these funding sources. Cryptocurrency methods allow for extreme anonymity and make cross-border transactions easier.⁵⁹ This has significantly complicated the ability to track these transactions. Thus, with the growing fear of the influence of cryptocurrency on terrorist activity, it is imperative for the UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch to take immediate action to combat the financing of terrorism,

Analysis:

Terrorism financing occurs through various avenues. As the influence of technology and social media grow, terrorist groups make use of various platforms. As mentioned previously, new and fairly unfamiliar technology methods such as cryptocurrency are making a large appearance when it comes to terrorism financing. Terrorist groups exploit the gaps of knowledge that countries have in regards to evolving technology, gaining hold of anonymous funds through methods such as cryptocurrency. As a result, cryptocurrency is extremely useful for terrorist organizations as it is conducive to making large anonymous transactions across country borders.⁶⁰ Thus, it becomes imperative for countries to approach this angle of terrorism financing from a transnational perspective. This includes encouraging the use of already existing frameworks that emphasize transparency within, and collaboration between, states. Moreover, it is important for states to collaborate when

⁵⁷ Sanction Scanner Staff, "The Most Recent Example of Terrorist Financing: How does the Taliban Make Money?," Sanction Scanner, <https://www.sanctionsscanner.com/blog/how-does-the-taliban-make-money-497>

⁵⁸ (FATF), "International Standards."

⁵⁹ Dyntu, "Cryptocurrency as an Instrument."

⁶⁰ Dyntu, "Cryptocurrency as an Instrument."

researching these new technologies. The more countries share information and collaborate on research methods, the easier and faster it is to acquire and familiarize themselves with new methods of technology such as crypto. As terrorist groups primarily use crypto to transfer money over borders, collaboration between nations enhances the ability to detect the transfer of suspicious funds in an efficient manner.

Another modern method used by terrorist organizations to acquire funds is social media. Social media's growth over the past few years has allowed it to have immense influence over populations. This influence allows it to be extremely successful in terrorist recruiting and financial campaigns. Terrorist organizations use social media to spread extremist ideologies in an attempt to further global recruitment.⁶¹ By utilizing social media, terrorist organizations increase their global reach, appealing to sympathizers around the world. By spreading extremist ideologies, these terrorist groups increase their support, usually through financial donations and, in some cases, through public recruitment in terrorist activities.

While many states have attempted to tackle the use of social media in terrorism financing, there is still much more to be done. As touched upon earlier, it is important for nations to continue research on methods to detect illicit transactions. When it comes to social media, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) must not be ignored. AI tools have the ability to immediately detect and remove terrorist content on social media. Moreover, AI can also be used to detect suspicious financial transactions on social media. The collaboration between social media companies and law enforcement can also be an effective method to prosecute illegal activities on social media. However, it is important to keep in mind the different dynamics within countries regarding law enforcement.

It is also important to educate the public on safe ways to use social media. As more and more users rely on social media for news and general information, it becomes necessary to provide education for users on the functions of the platform itself. This education can include informing civil society about the threats of terrorism that exist on social media platforms as well as information on how to properly report these threats.

⁶¹ Sanction Scanner Staff, "The Influence of Social Media Platforms on Terrorist Financing," Sanction Scanner, <https://www.sanctionsscanner.com/blog/the-influence-of-social-media-platforms-on-terrorist-financing-667>

These educational programs can also be manifested through training programs within tech companies and social media organizations to provide workers with the tools required to detect and report terrorism threats.

The UNODC TPB must also focus on vulnerable areas that are primary victims of terrorism financing threats. Such areas include, but are not limited to, Northern Africa, the Sahel, and the Middle East. It is important for TPB to provide frameworks to support these regions in combating terrorism financing. The TPB must work closely with financial institutions and governments in these regions to provide technical and financial support to enhance their abilities in detecting and disrupting suspicious financial activity. This brings up the topic of international funding support. While it is important for nations to provide financial support to vulnerable regions, the TPB must be wary of fostering dependence between developing and developed nations. Funding must be provided in a sustainable manner.

Conclusion:

Deaths caused by terrorism have seen a five-year high in 2024, reaching an increase of 22% since 2017.⁶² As threats of terrorism continue to rise, the responsibility falls on the international community to take preventative and combative measures to decrease the financing of terrorism. The TPB serves as a vital organization in developing effective strategies to resist the spread of terrorism.

With the multifaceted nature of this issue, it is important for the TPB to consider all factors that play a role in the financing of terrorism. As technology continues to evolve and widen its reach, the TPB must factor in the importance of social media platforms and methods such as cryptocurrency when addressing terrorism financing. Moreover, effective prevention strategies also call for the close collaboration of the TPB with affected global regions. This collaboration calls for the TPB to consider the unique landscape and atmosphere of each individual region, factoring in the importance of tailor-made solutions to combat terrorism financing within each jurisdiction.

⁶² Vision of Humanity Staff, "2023 Global Terrorism Index," Vision of Humanity, 2023, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/#/>

While progress has been made on the issue of terrorism financing, gaps still remain. The TPB must work to take immediate, effective, and sustainable action to combat terrorism financing. Frameworks must focus on the role of social media in terrorism financing while also focusing on supporting sensitive and affected regions. The TPB is tasked with providing an efficacious approach to combatting the financing of terrorism that encourages global cooperation, technological innovation, and adaptive solutions for vulnerable regions. Through sustained efforts and international cooperation, the TPB can mitigate the threat of terrorism by successfully preventing and combating terrorism financing.

Questions to Consider:

1. How can we support vulnerable regions without fostering dependency and while promoting long-term, independent sustainable development?
2. How can the success of solutions and frameworks be measured in various regions, considering regional differences?
3. What measures can be taken to cooperate with businesses, such as social media companies, to prevent the spread of propaganda, recruitment, and crowd-funding initiatives by terrorist organizations?

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