



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction



Drugs and Terrorism: The Overlaps in Europe

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A photo released by the dissident republican paramilitary Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD) in 2010, ostensibly showing its members with an alleged drug dealer, hooded and bound, alongside seized drugs.

Executive Summary

About this Study

- Terrorist groups throughout the world have, at times, involved themselves in the drug trade, to either prohibit, passively tolerate, or profit from the business. The situation in Europe, however, is largely unknown and has been the subject of speculation and conjecture.
- This paper fills that gap by empirically examining crossovers between terrorism and the illicit drug trade in the European Union between 2012 and 2017, to see where overlaps do, and do not, exist. It is published in collaboration with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) in advance of its 2019 EU Drug Markets Report.
- It finds no widespread crossovers between terrorism and the European drug trade. Two themes are most pronounced, relating to jihadists across Europe, and paramilitaries in Northern Ireland.

Jihadists Dealing and Using Drugs

- A minority of European jihadists have backgrounds in low-level drug dealing. Wholesale importation very rarely occurs. A minority also have histories of using illicit drugs, with their consumption broadly in line with that of the general European population, meaning there is nothing exceptional about their personal drug use.
- While drug use can cease upon an individual's radicalisation, this is not a uniform response. Many jihadists in Europe continue to use or deal drugs while simultaneously engaging with extremist ideas or networks, showing how involvement in jihadism and involvement in drugs are not mutually exclusive. This is despite the groups they support, such as Islamic State, prohibiting drugs in their areas of control.
- Of the 75 perpetrators of jihadist attacks in Europe between 2012 and 2018, toxicology reports suggest that at least 5 individuals (7% of the total) consumed illicit drugs in the days or hours prior to their attack. This appears to be a continuation of pre-existing habits; it is unclear whether it was to "prepare" them for their attack. This demonstrates that extremists do not automatically break from familiar and possibly addictive patterns, and that radicalisation is no guarantee of an abrupt, absolute, and permanent change in lifestyle.
- A minority of jihadists have also funded their activities through small-scale drug dealing, which tends to be a continuation of their pre-radicalisation activities. Their fundraising is therefore not a change in behaviour but a change in purpose.

Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland

- The only area in Europe with sustained and long-term crossovers is Northern Ireland, where paramilitary groupings have sought to either prohibit or profit from the drug trade. Prohibition typically manifests in vigilante ‘punishment’ attacks on suspected drug dealers, which remain a persistent issue even two decades after the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.
- Where paramilitaries are involved in the supply of drugs, it is only one crime among many they carry out. It is not always clear whether this behaviour is sanctioned by a group’s leadership, though various paramilitary groupings not only traffic drugs themselves, but also extort or ‘tax’ drug dealers looking to operate in their areas of control.
- Their involvement in drugs has three primary consequences: (1) it creates often violent conflict with criminals; (2) it leads to internal disagreements over how criminality reconciles with a group’s political causes; and (3) it potentially alienates the very communities that paramilitaries claim to champion.

Other Groups

- There is some evidence that Hezbollah, and to a lesser extent, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) have, at least indirectly, profited from the drug trade in Europe. It is unclear whether this activity is centrally coordinated or condoned.
- It remains to be seen whether members of groups that have either dissolved or ceased their armed campaigns, such as ETA or FLNC, will ‘transform’ into drug traffickers in any substantial numbers. Historically these groups have prohibited and/or discouraged the use of drugs in their areas of control.

Introduction

Background

In the criminal world it is not uncommon for drug dealers to be victims of extortion. Ahmed B., a 25-year-old from France, was involved in one such case in 2016. Alongside his co-conspirators Estéban and Stéphane,¹ he planned to ‘recover money for a debt incurred during drug dealing’. On August 18, the trio abducted a man who they claimed owed €1,500 but had refused to pay. The victim was taken to his own home, assaulted, and held for several hours until his girlfriend paid the trio €500. Two days later the group unsuccessfully tried to extort another local dealer using the same tactic.² For these crimes, Ahmed B. was convicted in December 2017 and sentenced to one year in prison.

For all his involvement in this criminal milieu, it emerged that Ahmed B. was also an avowed jihadist. In June 2016, just two months before his kidnapping conspiracy, he had been arrested by Turkish authorities on the border with Syria after attempting to cross over into the conflict zone. After his arrest for the kidnapping and extortion case, police discovered photos on his Facebook profile glorifying the French jihadist Mohamed Merah and violent propaganda at his home.³ He had also been given a ‘Fiche S’ classification by French intelligence on the grounds that he was a threat to national security.

Ahmed B. is by no means the only terrorist to have interacted with the drug trade. Recent claims have even suggested that the two worlds are linked.⁴ France’s former Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve has stated that the drug trade leads to ‘illegal activities that seriously threaten public order; I’m particularly thinking of terrorist activities’.⁵ In Scotland, too, a detective inspector echoed this sentiment, saying that drugs may be ‘funding serious and organised crime, human trafficking, and terrorism’.⁶

These connections between terrorists and drugs have been noted elsewhere in the world.⁷ Since the 1980s, the involvement of insurgents and terrorist groups in the cultivation, manufacture, and trafficking of drugs was observed in Latin America,⁸ the Middle

1 Surnames unknown.

2 Rémi Buhagiar, ‘Le fiché S de Pibrac condamné pour sequestration’, *La Dépêche*, 29 December 2017.

3 Frédéric Abela, ‘Un Toulousain fiché S, arrêté près de la Syrie et rattrapé par son passé’, *La Dépêche*, 9 December 2017.

4 See, for example, Jean Cohadon, ‘Enquête sur les braqueurs du jihad’, *La Dépêche*, 26 June 2014; Usama Hasan, ‘Are Islamist terrorists pious conservatives or drug-taking hedonists?’, *The Guardian*, 24 November 2015; Andreas Kopietz, ‘Die Islamisten, der Terror und die Drogen’, *Berliner Zeitung*, 26 May 2017; Max Pemberton, ‘Is marijuana a factor in brutal jihadi killings?’, *The Daily Mail*, 26 May 2017.

5 ‘20+ arrests in Marseille drug crackdown’, *RFI*, 15 June 2015.

6 ‘Cops warn they are upping ante’, *Stirling Observer*, 27 May 2015.

7 For the purpose of this study, terrorism is understood as symbolic acts of politically motivated violence: Peter R. Neumann & M. L. R. Smith, *The Strategy of Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2008). Terrorism-related activity is therefore any action that supports or is in furtherance of politically motivated violence and can include recruitment, training, propagandising, financing, facilitating or engagement in terrorism itself.

8 Vanda Felbab-Brown, ‘The Coca Connection: Conflict and Drugs in Colombia and Peru’, *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol 24, No 2, 2005, pp. 104–128.

East,⁹ and Asia.¹⁰ This has typically been to raise funds, either by producing drugs and involvement in the supply chain, or by levying ‘taxes’ on producers or traffickers passing through territories under a group’s control.

The European picture, however, is largely unknown. The lack of evidence has often resulted in speculative and, at times, sensational reporting, with frequent suggestions of causal links between drugs and terrorism. Popular commentary on the topic includes claims that jihadists ‘take drugs such as heroin and cocaine so as to steel themselves’,¹¹ or that heavy and long-term cannabis use is a ‘common denominator’ among jihadists and explains radicalisation.¹²

Much discussion has concerned the role of amphetamine-type stimulants, often generically referred to as *captagon*.¹³ This has typically centred on their production in the Middle East;¹⁴ their use by belligerents in the Syrian Civil War;¹⁵ their potential trafficking through Europe;¹⁶ and even their possible use by terrorist attackers in Europe.¹⁷

This paper seeks to answer a number of questions. How do terrorist groups, cells, and individuals in Europe interact with the drug trade, if at all? Are they involved in drug trafficking? Are any terrorists former or active drug users, and, if so, how has this affected their radicalisation and the way they operate? In short, it seeks to understand the relationship between the drug trade and terrorism in Europe.

This study presents an evidence-based understanding of how, between 2012 and 2017, terrorists in Europe have interacted with drugs – either as consumer or dealers – and the dynamics and principles that guide those interactions.

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- 9 James A. Piazza, ‘The Illicit Drug Trade, Counternarcotics Strategies and Terrorism’, *Public Choice*, Vol 149, No 3-4, 2011, pp. 297–314.
- 10 Mariya Y. Omelicheva & Lawrence Markowitz, ‘Does Drug Trafficking Impact Terrorism? Afghan Opioids and Terrorist Violence in Central Asia’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2018, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2018.1434039.
- 11 ‘Inside Paris suicide bombers’ rented hotel “drug dens” found strewn with syringes, plastic tubes and pizza boxes’, *London Evening Standard*, 17 November 2015; “Syringes” in hotel room linked to Paris plot’, *Sky News*, 17 November 2015.
- 12 Peter Hitchens, ‘The real mind-blowing terror threat in our midst: cannabis’, *The Mail on Sunday*, 22 February 2015; Frederick Forsyth, ‘Jihadists are nothing but a bunch of drug-abusing losers’, *Daily Express*, 8 January 2016.
- 13 Captagon was the brand name of fenethylamine, a drug combining amphetamine and theophylline, which was introduced by the pharmaceutical company Degussa AG in 1961. Due to its addictiveness, fenethylamine was banned in 1981 by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) alongside other countries, and it has not been legally produced since 1986. Today, the term “captagon” is popularly applied to various amphetamine-type stimulants, irrespective of whether they contain fenethylamine. This paper refers to captagon in this general way, in line with its popular usage.
- 14 ‘War turns Syria into major amphetamines producer, consumer’, *Reuters*, 13 January 2014; Ahmed Al-Imam, Rita Santacroce, Andres Roman-Urrestarazu, Robert Chilcott, Giuseppe Bersani, Giovanni Martinotti & Ornella Corazza, ‘Captagon: use and trade in the Middle East’, *Human Psychopharmacology: Clinical and Experimental*, Vol 32, Issue 3, 2016, pp. 1–8; Max Kravitz & Will Nichols, ‘A Bitter Pill To Swallow: Connections Between Captagon, Syria, And The Gulf’, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol 69, No 2, 2016.
- 15 Ivan Watson, ‘“They would torture you”: ISIS prisoners reveal life inside terror group’, *CNN*, 28 October 2014; ‘Syria’s War Drug’, *BBC Arabic*, 8 September 2015; Colin P. Clarke, ‘ISIS Is So Desperate It’s Turning to the Drug Trade’, *Fortune*, 24 July 2017; Mirren Gidda, ‘Drugs in War: What is Captagon, the “Jihad Pill” Used by Islamic State Militants?’, *Newsweek Magazine*, 5 December 2017.
- 16 ‘“Jihad pills” found by Dutch and Italian police’, *BBC News*, 10 May 2017; ‘“Jihadist drug” Captagon seized for first time in France’, *AFP*, 30 May 2017; ‘A new drug of choice in the Gulf’, *The Economist*, 22 July 2017.
- 17 Guillaume Fond & Oliver Howes, ‘Pharmacoterrorism: the potential role of psychoactive drugs in the Paris and Tunisian attacks’, *Psychopharmacology*, Vol 233, Issue 6, 2016, pp. 933–935.

The results fall into two broad themes. Among jihadists¹⁸ in Europe, there is no evidence supporting the idea of formal or structural links with the drug trade. Instead, we see that many jihadists have a personal background in consuming or dealing drugs, which can play an ancillary, indirect role in their radicalisation process. Drug use can continue after their involvement with extremism, and when this does happen, it tends to mirror their pre-radicalisation drug-related activities. At times this has even continued until the execution of a terrorist attack: indeed, on at least five occasions since 2016 there is evidence that jihadists have taken drugs in the days or even hours before their attacks. In each of these cases, however, it is nearly impossible to say whether that consumption influenced their decision to act. What these cases nevertheless show is that involvement in jihadism and involvement in drugs are not mutually exclusive.

Among paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland, there exist dense and longstanding overlaps, where both republican and loyalist groups have sought to influence or control the drug trade, mimicking the territoriality of mafia groups. This has not only led to violent conflict with ‘regular’ criminals, but it has also caused internal tensions within paramilitary groups over the decision to engage in crime and drugs. Furthermore, involvement in drugs has risked alienating the very communities that paramilitaries claim to represent.

Aside from jihadists and republican and loyalist paramilitaries, there are few examples among other terrorist movements, groups, or individuals. There is a notable lack of results from the far-right, with only a handful of instances noted in open sources, yet this may be because the pool of far-right terrorists in Europe is relatively low.¹⁹ Other groups, such as the Basque-separatist group ETA (*Euskadi ta Askatasuna*, or Basque Homeland and Liberty) – which declared a ceasefire in 2010 that culminated in the group’s dissolution in May 2018 – rarely feature.

Of note here is the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, or PKK), a paramilitary group based in the Middle East – primarily in south-eastern Turkey, northern Syria, and northern Iraq – that has intermittently waged an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984. While the group’s involvement in organised crime has been noted,²⁰ there are limited examples of the PKK engaging in the drug trade in the European Union since 2012. This may be because the most relevant information remains in closed sources or simply because the PKK’s drug-related activities, which centre on the heroin trade in the Middle East, occur outside of Europe and hence beyond the scope of this study.

18 The terms jihadism and jihadists have been contentious ever since they entered common usage during the late 1990s. One of the most frequent complaints is that they unfairly associate the religious concept of ‘jihad’ with acts of terrorism and extreme violence. This study, therefore, distinguishes between ‘jihadism’, a modern revolutionary ideology, and ‘jihad’, an Islamic concept that means ‘struggle’ and can refer to all kinds of religiously inspired effort, be that spiritual, personal, political or military. Indeed, the only ones who argue that ‘jihad’ and ‘jihadism’ are identical are Islamophobes (who want to portray Islam as inherently violent) and the jihadists themselves. See Thomas Hegghammer, ‘Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism’ in Roel Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement* (London: Hurst, 2009), pp. 244–66; John Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 26–8; and Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (London: Hurst, 2016).

19 One recent far-right terrorist, Darren Osborne, who killed a Muslim man close to Finsbury Park mosque in 2017, was known to abuse alcohol, if not drugs.

20 Mitchel P. Roth & Murat Sever, ‘The Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) as Criminal Syndicate: Funding Terrorism through Organized Crime, A Case Study’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol 10, Issue 10, 2007, pp. 901–920.

Structure

The paper is structured as follows. It starts with an overview of the methods used in the study, before the second chapter analyses how jihadists have been involved in drugs: 1) prior to their radicalisation; 2) after their radicalisation; and 3) in the days and hours before carrying out a terrorist attack. The third chapter discusses the situation among paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland, where many republican and loyalist paramilitaries have been involved in the supply, control, or prohibition of illegal drugs. The final chapter covers other terrorist groups that are active in Europe.

Methodology

The empirical basis of this study is a dataset of individuals or events that have a connection to both terrorism – either as members of groups, supporters, facilitators, recruiters, propagandists or fighters – and the drug trade in Europe – either as producers, traffickers, or users. While this does not capture all such individuals or events, the dataset is based on a widespread search of open sources and serves as the foundation for the chapters that follow. This section outlines the methods used to collect and code the data, as well as the limitations of the study.

Data Collection

Inclusion in the dataset was contingent upon an individual or event having: 1) prior or present involvement in terrorism-related activity, regardless of ideology; 2) prior or present involvement in the consumption, trafficking, or prohibition of illicit narcotics; 3) a demonstrable connection to the European Union, either as a place of residence or as the site of an event; 4) involvement in terrorism-related or drug-related activity at any point in the six-year period between 1 January 2012 and 31 December 2017.

Data collection took place between April and October 2018 and was carried out by a multilingual team of researchers: Rajan Basra, Johanna Fürst, Mariaelena Agostini, and Gokçe Oztürk, gathering English, French, German, Italian, and Turkish-language sources. This allowed data to be collected relevant to the EU member states most affected by the recent wave of terrorism, either in terms of the number of attacks or the number of ‘foreign fighters’ who mobilised to Syria and Iraq.

Data was gathered from open sources, such as newspaper articles, court documents, and government or law enforcement reports. In addition to a review of the existing academic literature on the topic, a ProQuest Factiva keyword search was conducted in English, French, German, Italian, and Turkish. The English-language keyword search included sources from across all 28 EU member states, while the French, German, Italian and Turkish-language searches were restricted to sources from their respective countries. This generated approximately 38,000 individual search results.

Each individual search result was then assessed to see if it met the criteria for inclusion. Once ‘false positives’ were excluded from the dataset, supplementary search queries on other platforms were performed. These were necessary due to the limitations of the ProQuest Factiva archive, which excludes smaller publications such as the *Andersontown News* or *Derry Journal* in Northern Ireland. As these niche titles often contain details not mentioned in other reporting, further person-specific or event-specific search queries were conducted on additional platforms. Despite this extensive search, it is likely that the data collection process did not capture all available and relevant sources.

Filtering difficulties arose in determining whether an individual or event had connections to drugs *and* terrorism. Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, for example, regularly carry out so-called ‘punishment’ attacks, which often – but not always – target an individual believed to be consuming or dealing drugs. Yet reports on these attacks typically lack the details necessary to confirm whether they were drug-related. To mitigate this, an event or individual was excluded from the dataset if such doubt or confusion existed.

Similarly, many events initially appeared to contain overlaps between drugs and terrorism, only for further investigation to rule them out. This was the case with Mohamed R., who on 23 March 2017 drove wildly through the Meir shopping district in Antwerp, Belgium, forcing pedestrians to jump out of the way. He had a history of petty crime and drug use, and was said to be under the influence of either drugs or alcohol when police arrested him behind the wheel. A disassembled riot gun, ornamental dagger, some knives, and a military camouflage vest were found in his car. As the incident occurred just one day after the Westminster vehicle-ramming and knife attack in London, there was speculation the incident was a failed copycat attack; the press even gave him the nickname ‘Meirterrorist’. Yet a terrorist motivation was never determined and the terrorism-related charges against him were dropped in April 2017.²¹

Additional issues arose from verification, especially when an event was the subject of only one newspaper report. For example, in July 2017, a 43-year-old man was arrested in Angers, France, after he was found in possession of a firearm and a few grams of heroin. An initial report stated that two Islamic State flags were also found in his apartment, though that report was later updated to exclude any mention of these flags.²² In such cases where there was insufficient or inadequate information, the event or individual was excluded from the dataset.

After applying the inclusion criteria, 300 individuals or events were found relevant to the study and included in the dataset.²³ Of these, at least 147 individuals were related to jihadist activities, with the remainder being events mostly concerning paramilitaries in Northern Ireland.

Coding and Limitations

Once the search results had been filtered for inclusion, the data was then coded according to a set of eleven basic variables: name; location; date; terrorist role; terrorist group affiliation; drug role [dealing, consuming, or unspecified ‘possession’ of drugs]; drug type; drug amount; frequency of drug-related activity; age of first involvement in drugs [as dealer or consumer]; and whether an offence occurred pre-radicalisation or post-radicalisation. These categories are broad enough to mitigate the limitations of the data, while also providing an overview of drug-terror interactions.

21 At the time of writing, Mohamed R.’s case is still being processed through the Dutch courts. He is facing charges on weapons possession, drug use, and traffic violations. Patrick Lefelon, “Meirterrorist” enkel vervolgd voor wapenbezit’, *HLN*, 22 November 2018.

22 Story published at 19:35 and then updated at 21:03; ‘Angers. Un homme de 43 ans suspecté de trafic de stupéfiants’, *Ouest France*, 13 July 2017.

23 This figure represents a ‘bottom level’ number of individuals or events, as sources would often state that *multiple members of a group* had engaged in both terrorism-related and drug-related activity, without specifying how many members. In such cases, to err on the side of caution, only a single entry was included in the dataset.

The dataset is skewed towards countries that have a low threshold for intervening against suspected jihadists. Italian authorities, for example, routinely expel foreign nationals from the country for having Islamic State propaganda on their mobile phones, while in France it is illegal to 'apologise for terrorism', which can often take the form of one-off social media posts. These low thresholds mean it is probable that a disproportionate number of such cases feature in the sample. Similarly, as searches of Spanish sources were not conducted, it is likely that individuals/events in Spain are underrepresented.

There are several limitations to the data, often related to the paucity of facts surrounding an individual or any given event. News reports would routinely state, for example, that an individual was arrested for drugs offences, without specifying what those offences were (i.e. dealing or consuming) or the type and quantity of drugs involved. It is very rare for reporting to specify whether drugs were found in pre-wrapped mini parcels (which suggests they were ready to be sold to consumers) or in solid blocks (which suggests they were for distribution to other dealers). As a result, it was not always possible to note how a specific incident or an individual's offending fits in to the wider drug market.

Nonetheless, such detail is not always needed to decide the importance of drugs relative to a terrorist's actions. A case in point is Mohamed Merah, who carried out a series of jihadist-inspired shootings in the south of France in 2012. While the precise details of his drug-taking and dealing are obscured, his own brother has talked about the family situation and Merah's upbringing, a court report on Merah's psychological status is in the public domain, and his associates stood trial in relation to the attacks. These other sources, therefore, give a rich enough picture of Merah's radicalisation process to reasonably determine the relative (non) importance of drugs and his radicalisation process.

It was rarely possible to confirm the diagnosis of mental health disorders. For example, during the 2016 trial in Germany of Samir A. over his attempt to join Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria, it was disclosed that he has dissociative personality disorder (DPD) brought on by cannabis dependence.²⁴ While it is possible that other individuals in the sample have similar diagnoses, the limitations of the available data mean it is not possible to draw conclusions over possible correlations.

Finally, given that this study is based on open sources, it represents a bottom level of involvement in drugs. Analysis of closed sources, such as police investigative material, would likely yield more thorough and complete results. This was the case with a 2011 study of the closed Dutch police files, which revealed jihadists in the country had been involved – albeit rarely – in the production and trafficking of drugs, which overlapped with organised crime groups.²⁵

²⁴ Joseph Röhmel, 'Zweieinhalb Jahre Haft für mutmaßlichen Dschihadisten', *BR*, 19 May 2016.

²⁵ C. J. de Poot, Anne Sonnenschein, Melvin Soudijn, Joop Bijen & Mirte Verkuylen, *Jihadi Terrorism in the Netherlands: A description based on closed criminal investigations*, Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum (WODC), 2011, p. 110.

Table 1: Simplified Version of Jihadist-related Dataset

#	Name	Relevant EU countries	Jihadist-related role(s)	Drug-related role(s)
1	3-man cell in prison	France	Recruiter	Dealing
2	3-man cell in Brescia	Italy	Recruiter	Possession
3	A. A.	Italy	Supporter	Dealing
4	Abdelali Tahir	Italy	Supporter; Would-be attacker	Dealing
5	Abdelbaki Es Satty	Spain	Recruiter; Would-be attacker	Dealing
6	Abdelghafour Er Rabbah	Italy	Supporter	Dealing
7	Abdelillah Himich	France	Foreign fighter	Dealing
8	Abdellah Rahmani	Netherlands	Foreign fighter	Consuming
9	Abderozzak Benarabe	Denmark	Foreign fighter	Dealing; Consuming
10	Abderrahman Bouanane	Finland	Attacker	Consuming
11	Abdul Miah	UK	Would-be attacker	Possession
12	Ahmad Alhaw	Germany	Attacker	Consuming
13	Ahmed B.	France	Would-be foreign fighter	Extorting
14	Ahmed Hanachi	France	Attacker	Consuming
15	Ahmed Hassam Rakha	Italy	Supporter	Dealing
16	Ahmed Samsam	Denmark	Foreign fighter	Possession
17	Aine Davis	UK	Foreign fighter	Dealing
18	Ali Almanasfi	UK	Foreign fighter	Possession
19	Amedy Coulibaly	France	Attacker	Dealing
20	Amine Ghayour	Italy	Supporter; Would-be attacker	Dealing
21	Anis Amri	Germany	Attacker	Dealing; Consuming
22	Anis Bahri	France; Netherlands	Supporter	Possession
23	Anjem Choudary	UK	Recruiter	Consuming
24	Aria Ladjevardi	Germany	Foreign fighter	Consuming
25	Ayoub B.	Belgium	Supporter	Dealing; Consuming
26	Ayoub Bazarouj	Germany	Foreign fighter	Consuming
27	Ayoub El-Khazzani	Belgium; France; Netherlands; Spain	Attacker	Dealing; Consuming
28	Belabbas Bounaga	France	Foreign fighter	Dealing
29	Ben Brahim Tarak	Italy	Supporter	Dealing

#	Name	Relevant EU countries	Jihadist-related role(s)	Drug-related role(s)
30	Bertrand Nzohabonayo	France	Attacker	Dealing
31	Bilal Hadfi	France	Attacker	Consuming
32	Bilel Chiahoui	Italy	Supporter; Would-be attacker	Dealing; Consuming
33	Brahim Abdeslam	Belgium; France	Attacker	Dealing
34	Brusthom Ziamani	UK	Would-be attacker	Possession
35	Cherif Kouachi	France	Attacker; Would-be foreign fighter	Dealing; Consuming
36	Denis Cuspert	Germany	Foreign fighter	Dealing; Consuming
37	Diana Ramona Medan	Italy; Romania	Supporter; Would-be attacker	Dealing
38	Eamon Bradley	UK	Foreign fighter	Consuming
39	Ebrahim B.	Germany	Foreign fighter	Consuming
40	Emrah Erdogan	Germany	Foreign fighter	Dealing; Consuming
41	Fatih K.	Germany	Foreign fighter	Consuming
42	Florian L.	France	Would-be attacker	Consuming
43	Fouad Belkacem	Belgium	Recruiter	Dealing
44	Gavin Rae	UK	Would-be foreign fighter	Consuming
45	Gelel Attar	France	Supporter	Dealing
46	Ghassan Abdessalem	Italy	Foreign fighter	Dealing
47	Harry M.	Germany	Propagandist	Consuming
48	Harry Sarfo	Germany	Foreign fighter	Possession
49	Harun P.	Germany	Foreign fighter	Consuming
50	Hasna Ait Boulahcen	France	Facilitator	Consuming
51	Hussein Faisal Ali	Finland	Foreign fighter	Consuming
52	Ismaël Omar Mostefaiï	France	Attacker	Dealing
53	Ismael Watson	UK	Would-be foreign fighter	Consuming
54	Ismail Issa	Germany	Foreign fighter	Consuming
55	Jacopo Ben Salem	Italy	Supporter	Possession
56	Jaffar Deghayres	UK	Foreign fighter	Consuming
57	Jamel Bouteraa	France	Supporter	Possession
58	Jawad Bendaoud	France	Facilitator	Dealing
59	Jean-Daniel	France	Supporter	Consuming
60	Jean-Frédéric Salvi	France	Recruiter	Dealing
61	Jean-René V.	France	Supporter	Consuming

#	Name	Relevant EU countries	Jihadist-related role(s)	Drug-related role(s)
62	Jérémie-Louis Sidney	France	Attacker	Dealing
63	Kais Bibari	Italy	Supporter	Dealing
64	Kais B.	Germany	Fundraiser; Would-be foreign fighter	Possession
65	Karim Cheurfi	France	Attacker	Possession
66	Kevin Chassin	France	Foreign fighter	Dealing; Consuming
67	Khader Cikilli	France	Supporter	Dealing
68	Khalid Masood	UK	Attacker	Dealing; Consuming
69	Kharfi Alaedin	Italy	Supporter	Dealing
70	Khuram Butt	UK	Attacker	Consuming
71	Laaraj Noureddine	Italy	Supporter	Dealing
72	Mahiedine Merabet	France	Would-be attacker	Dealing
73	Malik Hammami	France	Facilitator	Dealing
74	Marco René Gabriel	Germany	Attacker	Possession
75	Mesa Hodzic	Denmark	Supporter	Dealing
76	Michael Adebolajo	UK	Attacker	Dealing
77	Michael Adebowale	UK	Attacker	Dealing; Consuming
78	Moez Ben Abdelkader Fezzani	Italy	Foreign fighter; Recruiter	Dealing
79	Moez Saleh	Denmark	Facilitator	Dealing
80	Mohamed El Anssi	Italy	Foreign fighter	Possession
81	Mohamed Kamel Eddine Khemiri	Italy	Propagandist; Recruiter	Dealing
82	Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel	France	Attacker	Consuming
83	Mohamed Merah	France	Attacker	Dealing
84	Mohammed Emwazi	UK	Foreign fighter	Consuming
85	Mohammed Rehman	UK	Would-be attacker	Consuming
86	Mohammed Sajid Khan	UK	Would-be attacker	Possession
87	Monsef El Mkhayer	Italy	Foreign fighter	Dealing; Consuming
88	Mounir Chouka	Germany	Foreign fighter; Propagandist	Dealing
89	Mourad Massali	Netherlands	Foreign fighter	Dealing
90	Moussa Coulibaly	France	Attacker	Dealing; Consuming
91	Murat K.	Germany	Attacker	Consuming
92	Mustafa K.	Germany	Foreign fighter	Dealing

#	Name	Relevant EU countries	Jihadist-related role(s)	Drug-related role(s)
93	Nadir Naffati	Italy	Supporter	Dealing
94	Nils D.	Germany	Foreign fighter	Dealing
95	Nicolas B.	France	Foreign fighter	Dealing; Consuming
96	Nizar Trabelsi	Belgium; France	Foreign fighter; Would-be attacker	Consuming
97	Norman S.	Germany	Supporter	Possession
98	Nourdeen Abdullah	UK	Propagandist	Dealing
99	Noussair Louati	Italy	Would-be foreign fighter	Dealing; Consuming
100	Omar El-Hussein	Denmark	Attacker	Consuming
101	Osama Krayem	Sweden	Foreign fighter	Dealing; Consuming
102	Oualid Jebali	France	Foreign fighter	Consuming
103	Ousmane Nimaga	France	Would-be attacker	Dealing
104	Oussama Zariouh	Belgium	Attacker	Dealing
105	Rakhmat Akilov	Sweden	Attacker	Consuming
106	Reda Nidalha	Netherlands	Foreign fighter	Dealing
107	Redouane Sakher	Italy	Supporter	Dealing
108	Saad Nasser Alshatry	France	Ideologue	Encouragement
109	Sabre Essid	France	Supporter	Dealing
110	Salah Abdeslam	Belgium; France	Attacker	Dealing; Consuming
111	Salim Benghalem	France	Foreign fighter	Dealing
112	Sally Jones	UK	Recruiter	Consuming
113	Salman Abedi	UK	Attacker	Consuming
114	Samir A.	Germany	Would-be foreign fighter	Consuming
115	Sebastian B.	Germany	Foreign fighter	Dealing
116	Selim Kasdi	France	Supporter	Consuming
117	Soufian El Fassi	Netherlands	Foreign fighter	Dealing
118	Sulaiman S.	Germany	Foreign fighter	Consuming
119	Tahir Aziz	UK	Would-be attacker	Dealing
120	Tarek Belgacem	France; Germany	Attacker	Possession
121	Thomas Sauret	France	Would-be foreign fighter; Would-be attacker	Consuming
122	Thomas U. (Hamza al-Majaari)	Germany	Foreign fighter	Consuming
123	Trevor Mulindwa	UK	Would-be foreign fighter	Dealing

#	Name	Relevant EU countries	Jihadist-related role(s)	Drug-related role(s)
124	Unnamed 19-year-old	France	Supporter	Possession
125	Unnamed 22-year-old	France	Supporter	Possession
126	Unnamed 24-year-old	France	Supporter	Dealing
127	Unnamed 24-year-old (2)	Germany	Would-be foreign fighter	Consuming
128	Unnamed 26-year-old	France	Facilitator	Dealing
129	Unnamed 27-year-old	France	Supporter	Possession
130	Unnamed 27-year-old	France	Supporter	Possession
131	Unnamed 28-year-old	France	Supporter	Consuming
132	Unnamed 31-year-old	Italy	Supporter	Possession
133	Unnamed 31-year-old	Italy	Supporter	Possession
134	Unnamed 43-year-old	France	Supporter	Dealing
135	Unnamed Franco-Tunisian	France	Would-be foreign fighter	Possession
136	Unnamed man ("LG")	UK	Propagandist; Recruiter	Consuming
137	Unnamed prisoner in Beausoleil, Montauban	France	Supporter	Possession
138	Unnamed teenager	Italy	Foreign fighter	Possession
139	Unnamed Tunisian	Italy	Supporter	Dealing
140	Unnamed Tunisian (2)	Italy	Supporter	Dealing
141	Unnamed Tunisian (3)	Italy	Supporter	Dealing
142	Unnamed Tunisian (4)	Italy	Supporter	Possession
143	Unnamed Turk	Germany	Would-be foreign fighter	Consuming
144	Walid D.	Germany	Foreign fighter	Dealing
145	Weirdal Sitta	France	Supporter	Dealing
146	Yohan (surname unknown)	France	Would-be attacker	Consuming
147	Ziyed Ben Belgacem	France	Attacker	Dealing; Consuming

Jihadists

With [Salah Abdeslam's] brother Brahim, they were heavy drinkers, heavy smokers, but not radicalised ... Salah, it was useless to try to find him before 3 pm. He went out, he slept. He was always a little high. He lived the high life. His thing was drinking the night away, women...

Youssef, neighbourhood friend of the November 2015 Paris attackers Salah and Brahim Abdeslam.²⁶

Europe has recently seen the partial merging of criminal and jihadist social networks, environments, and milieus, with many jihadists and foreign fighters having criminal pasts.²⁷ The drug trade also features here. In Germany, two-thirds of the country's 778 foreign fighters who travelled to Syria and Iraq were known to the police prior to their departure. Of those, 10% were previously involved in drug offences.²⁸ In Italy, 19% of the country's 125 foreign fighters were known drug users prior to their departure.²⁹ A similar pattern is seen in France, where over 40% of individuals convicted for jihadist-related terrorism offences between 2004 and 2017 had criminal records, with drug trafficking being one of the most common offences.³⁰ And community workers have observed similar overlaps in Molenbeek, a Brussels neighbourhood that has been home to jihadist networks.³¹

This connection is also borne out by data from the Italian Interior Ministry, which has been deporting foreign nationals since 2014 due to national security reasons, whether for suspicions of planning terrorist attacks, recruitment for jihadist groups, or more general offences such as sympathising or supporting jihadist groups. Deportees were often also involved in 'regular' criminality, including drug offences. Of the 109 individuals deported between August 2014 and June 2018, the majority (57 people, 52% of the total) were already known to the police for non-extremist crime (see Appendix).³² A quarter were involved in drug offences (26 people, 24% of the total). Some 20 people (19% of the total) were previous or active drug dealers, with a further 6 individuals involved in unspecified drug offences (i.e. dealing or possession). While the Italian ministry data do not specify the type or quantity of drugs, or when the offences took place (i.e. before or after their involvement with extremism), it is clear that a not inconsiderable minority were involved in drugs.

26 Alexandre Fache, 'Salah Abdeslam, petit dealer devenu ennemi public n°1', *L'Humanité*, 23 November 2015.

27 Rajan Basra & Peter R. Neumann, 'Criminal Past, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime-Terror Nexus', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol 10, No 6, 2016, pp. 25–40.

28 Bundeskriminalamt (BKA), Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV), and Hessisches Informations- und Kompetenzzentrum gegen Extremismus (HKE), 'Analyse der Radikalisierungshintergründe und -verläufe der Personen, die aus islamistischer Motivation aus Deutschland in Richtung Syrien oder Irak ausgereist sind', 2016, p. 18.

29 This is based on official Interior Ministry data relating to 125 foreign fighters. 24 (19.2% of the total) had prior drug use. Francesco Marone & Lorenzo Vidino, *Destinazione Jihad: i Foreign Fighters d'Italia*, Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale (ISPI), 2018, p. 62.

30 Marc Hecker, *137 Shades of Terrorism: French Jihadists Before the Courts*, Institut Français des Relations Internationales (IFRI), Focus stratégique, No 79, 2018, p. 21.

31 'Le nombre de jeunes séduits par un discours radical augmenterait à Molenbeek', *Le Soir*, 6 March 2017.

32 As the Italian Ministry of Interior does not publish details on everyone it deports, the total number of deportations for terrorism is likely to be much higher. Data taken from the Italian Ministry of Interior website, from 05/08/2014 to 30/06/2018. The annual breakdowns of deportations are: 2014 (1 person); 2015 (11); 2016 (27); 2017 (31); and 2018 (29). One individual deported in 2018, Atef Mathlouthi, had also previously been deported in 2015.

In such cases the question remains: how do jihadists interact with the drug trade? The process of radicalisation – that is, the personal circumstances, experiences, narratives, networks, and other factors that explain an individual's involvement in extremism and their mobilisation into violence³³ – is a complex one that defies simple explanations. This is especially the case when drugs are involved, given their potential to alter mood, behaviour, and lifestyle.

In our dataset, jihadists have interacted with the drug trade in several ways. First, they often have a history of consuming and/or dealing drugs, which can have an ancillary, indirect role on their radicalisation process. Second, this involvement with drugs can continue long after their initial engagement with extremism. And finally, in a handful of cases jihadists have even consumed drugs directly before carrying out terrorist attacks, thereby contradicting the stereotypes of their universal piety and religious observance. In short, involvement in drugs and involvement in jihadism are not mutually exclusive.

Consuming and Dealing Drugs Prior to Radicalising

Of the jihadists within our dataset, we consistently see involvement with drugs prior to their radicalisation process – insofar as the 'start' of that process can be demarcated – as either users or dealers, or both.

For two thirds of the sample, drug consumption was historical behaviour, often occurring months or even years prior to their radicalisation, while for the remainder it directly preceded or overlapped with it. This ranges from occasional recreational use to routine compulsive drug-seeking behaviour, dependence, and addiction. The sample involves a variety of drugs, with the most common being cannabis herb and cannabis resin (hashish). Cocaine, heroin, and ecstasy use occurred less often. Drug taking was rarely isolated behaviour; it often coincided with alcohol use, and – albeit to a lesser extent – the misuse of prescription drugs, as well as other personal difficulties involving relationships, employment, and money.

Jihadists' pre-radicalisation drug use seems to generally align with the wider European picture, where more than a quarter of 15 to 64-year olds have tried illicit drugs in their lifetimes.³⁴ Our sample features predominantly young adults; over the past year in the EU, 14.1% of young adults have used cannabis, 1.9% have used cocaine, 1.8% have used ecstasy/MDMA and 1% have consumed amphetamines.³⁵

The drug dealers within our sample typically handled small quantities, which suggests roles as low-level street dealers selling directly to consumers. Examples of large quantities are exceptional. In 2015 Mesa Hodzic, a member of the jihadist group Millatu Ibrahim in Denmark, was found to be in possession of 48kg of cannabis, 2.7kg of 'skunk' (powerful strains of cannabis), and more than 1,800 joints; while the

33 For a discussion on definitions, see Peter R. Neumann, 'The Trouble with Radicalization', *International Affairs*, Vol 89, No 4, 2013, pp. 873–893.

34 EMCDDA, *European Drug Report 2018*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018, p. 41.

35 EMCDDA, *Statistical Bulletin 2018 – prevalence of drug use*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018, available at <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/data/stats2018/gps>.

leader of a cell behind two attacks in Spain in August 2017, Abdelbaki Es Satty, had been caught in 2010 (prior to his radicalisation) attempting to smuggle 121kg of cannabis resin from Morocco into the EU via the port of Algeciras, Spain.³⁶ Other than these, however, there is only sporadic evidence of dealer-to-dealer distribution or of wholesale drug importation.

Engagement with extremist ideas and networks can lead to abrupt changes in behaviour. This was seen in the case with Italian foreign fighter Monsef El Mkhayer, who smoked hashish, drank alcohol, and dealt drugs prior to his radicalisation. Following a three-month stay in San Vittore prison in 2014, El Mkhayer adopted extremist ideas and rapidly changed his lifestyle to one of abstention.³⁷ Such an abrupt change is a recurrent but not a uniform feature of the dataset and often coincides with disassociation from friends and family. In such cases, religious engagement appears to offer structure and discipline, with a clear system of acceptable and forbidden behaviour, which can appeal to individuals looking for direction in their lives,³⁸ or to those who experience shame over their drug use.³⁹

Islamic State (IS) has itself implicitly acknowledged this connection with drugs. In the group's 'Failing Your State 2' video released in December 2017, a narrator explains how Islamic State's supporters often come from communities where 'deviant behaviour' is commonplace. The narration outlines three categories of people: those that choose 'life's pleasures over worshipping God' (at which point the video features a short montage of cocaine being chopped and snorted); those who do the basic religious practices; and finally, those whose only priority in life is to always obey God.⁴⁰

The video implies that Islamic State supporters may have engaged in such behaviour before redeeming themselves by joining the 'righteous' cause, or that they joined the group as a conscious rejection of such a hedonistic lifestyle.⁴¹ This was the case with a group of would-be foreign fighters from the UK who travelled to the Turkish–Syrian border in February 2015 to join Islamic State. Staying in a safe house in Gaziantep before their planned travel to IS territory, the friends stated 'there would be no drink, drugs or temptations' in the so-called Caliphate, thereby offering a pure and utopian society to its followers.⁴²

However, within the sample, there are no clear cases where involvement in drugs alone played a *direct* and *decisive* role in an individual's radicalisation. Instead, consuming or dealing drugs formed *part* of the overall personal circumstances, experiences, narratives, and other factors that influenced the trajectory towards extremism. Certainly, involvement in drugs appears manifestly less influential than socialisation among extremists, the jihadist worldview and ideology, and/or perceived personal and political grievances.

36 'Danish IS "sympathiser" arrested over drug raid shoot-out', *AFP*, 1 September 2016; 'El delitto "no grave" del imam de Ripoll: 120 kilos de droga', *El Mundo*, 24 August 2017.

37 Paolo Biondani, 'Morto in guerra nel Califfato il baby jihadista cresciuto a Milano', *L'Espresso*, 10 June 2016.

38 This echoes the findings from a study of twelve criminal investigations for jihadist terrorism in the Netherlands between 2001 and 2005; C. J. de Poot et al, 2011, pp. 137–139.

39 Radicalisation Awareness Networking (RAN) EXIT and Health and Social Care (HSC) joint meeting, Vienna, 7 November 2018, held under the Chatham House rule.

40 Cocaine use shown at 02:12 into the video. Beyond this, however, there is no mention of drug usage in any of the group's media, which generally focuses on its recruits' *post*-radicalisation behaviour. Khayr Wilaya, 'Failing Your State 2', *Khayr Wilaya*, 29 December 2017.

41 For more on this 'redemption narrative', see Basra & Neumann, 2016, pp. 28–29.

42 *R v Kahar* (Mohammed Abdul) & Ors (2016), [2016] EWCA Crim 568, Case No: 2015/05516/A1, 2015/01799/C5, 2015/05639/C1, 2016/00589/A1, 2015/05192/A3, 2015/05300/B4, paragraph 120.

If anything, the indirect role of drugs can be observed in those cases of prison radicalisation, whereby drugs were the reason an individual was in prison, which in turn was the place that facilitated their radicalisation. In such cases the key point is not necessarily the criminal offence *behind* their conviction – be that for drugs or not – but the circumstances *within* prison that led them to engage with extremist ideas and networks.

A clear example of this was the radicalisation of Mahiedine Merabet, who was sentenced for drug offences in October 2013 after being arrested in Lille.⁴³ Police discovered €1,500 in small denominations on his person, and in his room found 1,563g of cannabis, €5,595 in cash, and weighing scales. Merabet claimed he was dealing drugs to pay off his debts: 'I'm under threat, I have to pay off debts because I was robbed, and the thieves took away a lot of cannabis and money. They stole 500g and €8,900 from me'.⁴⁴ It was his twelfth conviction. While in Sequedin prison in 2015, Merabet met Clement Baur, a convert to Islam who had been involved with radical networks since 2007 and who himself was convicted for using fraudulent documents. The pair formed a friendship after sharing the same cell for two months, and Merabet was radicalised, in part mentored by Baur. Their commitment to jihadism continued after their release, culminating in a plan to carry out an attack in France that was disrupted in March 2017, a week before the French presidential election. In a Marseille apartment used by the pair, police discovered an Uzi submachine gun, 3kg of the explosive triacetone triperoxide (TATP), a homemade grenade, a GoPro camera, and an Islamic State flag.⁴⁵

Simultaneous Involvement in Drugs and Extremism

Other jihadists in our sample continued their involvement with drugs long after their radicalisation. In almost every case this mirrored their pre-radicalisation activity; representing a relapse of earlier drug taking or a re-offence of previous drug-dealing.⁴⁶ This suggests that extremists often do not break from familiar, habitual, and possibly addictive behaviour, and that radicalisation is no guarantee of an absolute, abrupt, and permanent change in lifestyle.

One prominent example of this is the British couple Mohammed Rehman and Sana Ahmed Khan, who in 2015 were planning a bomb attack to coincide with the ten-year anniversary of the 7 July 2005 London bombings. Throughout their attack planning, Rehman was a routine user of cannabis and cocaine, with gloomy personal circumstances: he had few academic qualifications, was unemployed, and was not living with his then-wife Khan due to disputes with his in-laws.⁴⁷ He was enabled by Khan, who paid him more than £12,000 over 17 months, which went towards maintaining his lifestyle – including, presumably, his drug habit – and manufacturing the homemade explosives.⁴⁸

43 'L'un des deux Nordistes arrêtés à Marseille avait été condamné à Lille en 2013', *La Voix du Nord*, 21 October 2013.

44 *ibid.*

45 'De Marseille aux Champs-Élysées, une menace terroriste au double visage', *Le Journal du Dimanche*, 24 April 2017.

46 This echoes analysis of the more general criminal-turned-jihadist population: Basra & Neumann, 2016, pp. 35–36.

47 'Couple with bomb factory in their shed guilty of terror plot', *The Times*, 30 December 2015.

48 *ibid.*

Curiously, Khan appealed against the length of her sentence by claiming her own drug use precluded her from being a jihadist. Her lawyer stated that ‘she was taking drugs at the time of offending – which is strictly prohibited within the Muslim religion and suggests very strongly that she was not a committed radical Islamist’.⁴⁹ The judge was not convinced, instead declaring that her choosing ‘to adopt certain tenets of radical Islam without adopting others [does not] indicate any diminution of her commitment to furthering the aims of radical Islam’.⁵⁰

Indeed, within the dataset there are numerous examples of behaviour that contradicts stereotypes of a pious Islamic radical. Emblematic of this is Mohammed Lahouaiej Bouhlel, who killed 86 people in July 2016 by driving a truck into crowds celebrating Bastille Day in Nice. Bouhlel ‘drank alcohol, ate pork, and used drugs’, according to Paris prosecutor François Molins.⁵¹ His pre-attack behaviour and lifestyle prompted debates over the extent of his ideological commitment to jihadism,⁵² including the interplay between his radicalisation and apparent mental health conditions.⁵³

Involvement with drugs post-radicalisation is seen across the entire range of actors within the jihadist context, from supporters and recruiters to foreign fighters and attackers. One of the UK’s most prolific radicalisers, for example, is addicted to heroin.⁵⁴ Since June 2016 the extremist – referred to only as ‘LG’ in court documents – has been subject to a Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measure (TPIM) notice, which sets restrictions and requirements on where he stays overnight and with whom he can associate. In an appeal against his TPIM, ‘LG’ stated that his relocation away from his family ‘had caused him to be depressed and to revert to an addiction to heroin’.⁵⁵ A medical note confirmed that ‘LG’ was using a heroin substitute,⁵⁶ and that his dependence on the drug was ‘being appropriately managed’.⁵⁷ He also wished for the public court judgment to exclude any mention of his drug addiction,⁵⁸ which suggests this was a source of shame and embarrassment.

Post-radicalisation drug use would likely have consequences for any deradicalisation or disengagement efforts, where it is broadly understood that the use of drugs can prove a complicating factor.⁵⁹

49 R v Kahar & Ors, 2016, paragraph 174.

50 Nevertheless, the appeal judge did quash the minimum term of 25 years, substituting it with a minimum term of 23 years.

51 Guillaume Atchouel, ‘L’analyse de son ordinateur révèle que Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel nourrissait « un intérêt certain pour la mouvance jihadiste radicale », a indiqué hier François Molins, le procureur de la République de Paris. L’examen de son PC a aussi confirmé qu’il avait minutieusement préparé l’attentat’, *La Dépêche*, 19 July 2016.

52 ‘ECLAIRAGE-Le tueur de Nice, entre psychopathe et “born again”’, *Reuters*, 19 July 2016.

53 Adam Nossiter, Alissa J. Rubin & Lilla Blaise, ‘For attacker in Nice, signs of ‘psychosis’ at age of 16; Residents of hometown in Tunisia remember him as prone to violence’, *International New York Times*, 25 July 2016. For more on mental health and terrorism, see Emily Corner and Paul Gill, ‘A False Dichotomy? Mental Illness and Lone-Actor Terrorism’, *Law and Human Behavior*, Vol 39, No 1, 2015, pp. 23–34, and Emily Corner, Paul Gill & Oliver Mason, ‘Mental Health Disorders and the Terrorist: A Research Note Probing Selection Effects and Disorder Prevalence’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol 39, No 6, 2016, pp. 560–568.

54 The recruiter, ‘LG’, cannot be named for legal reasons. Secretary of State for the Home Department (SSH) v LG and others, [2017] EWHC 1529 (Admin), paragraph 28.

55 *ibid.* ‘LG’ also requested that the public judgment be redacted to remove reference to his heroin addiction.

56 *ibid.*, paragraph 131.

57 *ibid.*, paragraph 134d. Incidentally, in October 2017 a jihadist was jailed for 16 months for breaching his TPIM order, after he had twice met someone, without Home Office approval, with the aim of buying Class A drugs. The court heard how the man, who was living apart from his wife and children, had a renewed craving for drugs as a way of dealing with his isolation. It is unknown if this man is ‘LG’. ‘Man jailed for breaching terrorism prevention order’, *Press Association National Newswire*, 11 October 2017.

58 *ibid.*, paragraph 28.

59 Radicalisation Awareness Networking (RAN) EXIT and Health and Social Care (HSC) joint meeting, Vienna, 7 November 2018, held under the Chatham House rule.

Yet there have been no studies looking at this relationship and the exact contours of this area are unexplored.

Why does involvement with drugs continue after radicalisation? There are several tentative explanations. First, jihadists may justify it on theological grounds, by arguing that the use of cannabis has precedence in hadiths and that it is not expressly prohibited in the Quran as an intoxicant. This is the line of reasoning adopted by Islamic State ideologue and propagandist John Georgelas (other known as Yahya Abu Hassan), as shown by Graeme Wood's investigative work.⁶⁰ However, our dataset shows no signs that jihadists in Europe have explicitly justified their drug use on such grounds. If anything, Islamic State has published photos of the group *incinerating* drugs.⁶¹

Second, it may simply be a matter of habit and addiction. Taking drugs was a routine activity for many in our sample and overcoming drug dependence is often a difficult challenge with substantial physical and psychological symptoms.⁶² It is entirely foreseeable, therefore, that this would continue post-radicalisation. Furthermore, individuals may have seen their involvement in jihadism as absolving them of their drug-related 'sins', thus paradoxically giving them a licence to continue their drug use.

Third, those involved in drug dealing may see the crime itself to be a form of jihad.⁶³ While jihadists in Europe have mostly used legal means to finance their plots⁶⁴ – such as salaries, welfare benefits, sale of property, and loans – the use of criminal fundraising has also been a recurring feature among foreign fighters, plotters, and the wider jihadist scene.⁶⁵ Robberies, theft, fraud, and – to a lesser extent – drug dealing, have been used as means of financing jihadist activity and also waging 'war' against Western societies.⁶⁶

Large-scale transactions are rarely seen, with most post-radicalisation drug-dealing being small in scale and ambition. For example, in February 2015, Noussair Louati was arrested for dealing heroin in Ravenna, Italy: he had 3g in his possession. Louati himself was a drug user, with a history of domestic violence, and was homeless at the time of his arrest. He was planning to use the proceeds to fund his travel to Syria, yet he had only saved €40.⁶⁷ There is not always such a clear connection, however, between someone's post-radicalisation drug dealing and their jihadist activities (see *Case Study 1: Nourdeen Abdullah*).

60 Graeme Wood, *The Way of the Strangers: Encounters with the Islamic State* (Great Britain: Allen Lane, 2017), pp. 150–151.

61 For instance, see 'Incinerating a shipment of hashish drugs in Nangarhar', *Khurasan Province Media Office*, 5 December 2018.

62 Radicalisation Awareness Networking (RAN) EXIT and Health and Social Care (HSC) joint meeting, Vienna, 7 November 2018, held under the Chatham House rule.

63 Rajan Basra, Peter R. Neumann & Claudia Brunner, (2016), *Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime-Terror Nexus*, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR); Rajan Basra & Peter R. Neumann, 'Crime as Jihad: Developments in the Crime-Terror Nexus in Europe', *CTC Sentinel*, Vol 10, Issue 9, 2017, pp. 1–6.

64 For the financing situation from 1994 to 2013, see Emilie Oftedal, *The Financing of Jihadist Terrorist Cells in Europe*, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), 2015, pp. 3, 26; for the financing situation from 2014 to 2016, see Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen & Emilie Oftedal, 'Jihadist Terrorism in Europe: The IS-Effect', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol 10, No 6, 216, p. 15.

65 Magnus Normark & Magnus Ranstorp, *Understanding Terrorist Finance: Modus Operandi and National CTF Regimes*, Swedish Defence University, 2015, pp. 15–18; Magnus Ranstorp, 'Microfinancing the Caliphate: How the Islamic State is Unlocking the Assets of European Recruits', *CTC Sentinel*, Vol 9, Issue 5, 2016, pp. 11–16.

66 Basra, Neumann & Brunner, 2016; Basra & Neumann, 2017.

67 'Isis: fermato Ravenna spacciava per pagarsi il viaggio', *ANSA*, 22 April 2015.

Case Study 1: Nourdeen Abdullah

On Wednesday 26 July 2017, officers from the Metropolitan Police searched the car of 36-year-old Nourdeen Abdullah in London. Inside they discovered a single 27.4g lump of crack cocaine, double wrapped in plastic. If this was divided into 0.1g wraps and sold at the street price of £10 per wrap, this could have amounted to £2,740. Yet police had ostensibly come to arrest Abdullah for publishing terrorist material online: for months he had been posting Islamic State content as well as homemade propaganda videos on his Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube profiles. He was thus arrested and charged with what, at first sight, may appear to be two paradoxical offences: possession of Class A drugs with intent to supply and the dissemination of terrorist publications.⁶⁸

This was not Abdullah's first offence. In 2006 he was convicted for a Class A conspiracy, involving heroin, for which he was sentenced to six-and-a-half years, of which he served four in prison. This followed, in his own words, an early life characterised by a 'broken home', which he left as a teenager.⁶⁹ He became estranged from his parents and involved in crime, 'living what some rap and talk about', being '100% bout this street life'.⁷⁰

It was inside prison that he 'became a man in a cage filled with rage'.⁷¹ He was drawn to extremism after being 'able to study with *mujahids*' (militant jihadists) and realising that he was living in '*jahiliyyah*' (ignorance).⁷² His words suggest that ideas and face-to-face socialisation were both important in his radicalisation process, more so than the circumstances of his conviction.

While it is not uncommon for inmates to adopt extremism only to disengage upon release, Abdullah's extremism persisted outside prison. A year after his release he created a YouTube channel under the name 'Abu Siddiq Al-Ghaarib' and began posting his homemade propaganda videos.⁷³ These featured lectures from the Jamaican extremist Abdullah el-Faisal, as well as three 'question and answer' videos with pre-existing audio clips of Anwar al-Awlaki, the influential al-Qaeda ideologue, propagandist, and recruiter. The channel was not widely viewed, and no video had more than 2,000 views in the seven years his channel was online.

68 All information presented here was gathered during the attendance of Nourdeen Abdullah's court hearings (11 August and 7 September 2017 at the Old Bailey Central Criminal Court, and 26 April and 8 June 2018 at Woolwich Crown Court), as well as from analysis of Abdullah's online social media footprint, which has been archived by the author. His case has not been covered in the media.

69 Nourdeen Abdullah, Facebook post, 22 October 2016.

70 Nourdeen Abdullah, Facebook post, 12 August 2016.

71 Nourdeen Abdullah, Facebook post, date unknown.

72 Nourdeen Abdullah, Facebook post, 12 August 2016.

73 His YouTube profile has since been removed. An archive has been preserved by the author.

Following this, Abdullah's involvement in jihadist propaganda, at least online, paused. In 2013 he began a streetwear clothing company, officially registering it in June 2014. And while he had been estranged from his parents for many years, he had also married and started a new family. It was only in the summer of 2015 that he began posting jihadist content again, which would continue until his arrest in July 2017. In those two years, his radicalism was flagged to the authorities and he was referred to Prevent (a counter-extremism program in the UK) in October 2016, but it is unknown if he decided to engage with the voluntary service. He also routinely messaged a friend called 'Abu Hajar', who had travelled to Syria in December 2016. The pair remained in contact until February 2017; it is unknown if Abdullah himself thought of travelling.

Crucial details about his drug dealing remain unclear. We do not know if his involvement in crack cocaine was a one-off re-offence or whether he had discreetly been dealing drugs for months if not years before. In a handwritten letter, delivered in court to the judge on the day of his sentencing, Abdullah maintained it was the former. We also do not know his exact role, whether he was distributing ounces of crack cocaine to street-level dealers, or if he himself was dividing ounces into individual wraps to sell to customers personally.

This adds to the opacity of the connection – if any existed at all – between his drug dealing and his support for Islamic State. Was he using the proceeds from the drugs to finance jihadist activities in any way, whether to send money to jihadists abroad or fund his own extremism-related future plans? This is unclear, and nothing of the sort was suggested during his court proceedings. In any case, Nourdeen Abdullah pleaded guilty to four counts of disseminating terrorist publications and one count of possession with intent to supply Class A drugs. He was sentenced to five years and three months.

Taking Drugs Before an Attack

Just as drug use can continue after an individual's radicalisation, it can continue – or even intensify – up to the point of carrying out an attack. On at least five occasions since 2016 there is evidence that jihadists have taken drugs in the days or even hours before their attacks.⁷⁴ This was the case with the December 2016 Berlin Christmas market attack; the March 2017 Orly Airport attack (see *Case Study 2: Ziyad Ben Belgacem*); the July 2017 Hamburg supermarket attack; the October 2017 Marseille stabbing; and the

⁷⁴ For this section the 2012-2017 scope of the study was expanded to include 2018.

March 2018 Carcassonne and Trèbes attacks. These 5 individuals represent 7% of the total 75 perpetrators of jihadist attacks between 2012 and 2018.⁷⁵ Each merit closer examination.

In every instance, drug use appears to have been a continuation of habitual usage and it alone does not appear to be an explanation for why they carried out their attacks. While the use of captagon has been subject to much speculation, no case involved the drug.⁷⁶ Furthermore, it is unclear – and very difficult to prove – whether their drug use was designed to disguise their true intentions from the authorities (akin to the concept of *taqiyya*, or prudence/dissimulation, in Islam).

Anis Amri – December 2016, Berlin

The most high-profile example is that of Anis Amri, who on 19 December 2016 shot a truck driver in Berlin and used the truck to drive into a Christmas market at Breitscheidplatz in the city, before making an escape. In total he killed twelve people. Amri was involved in criminality in his native Tunisia,⁷⁷ which continued after his 2011 move to Italy, where he reportedly radicalised during a four-year prison stay in Sicily.⁷⁸ Arriving in Germany in July 2015 as an asylum seeker, he used multiple identities and was reported to the authorities for his extremism as early as October 2015, with his online searches in December that year showing an interest in attack planning.⁷⁹ He associated with extremists in Germany as well as jihadists abroad, and despite failing in his asylum bid, he was never deported from the country.⁸⁰

Placed under surveillance, police observed Amri not only dealing drugs but also taking cocaine and ecstasy. He was a small-scale dealer trading around Schlesischen Tor and Kleine Tiergarten park

75 Those attacks are: March 2012, Belgium Shia mosque arson (1 perpetrator); March 2012, Toulouse and Montauban shootings (1); September 2012, Sarcelles kosher grocery store grenade attack (1); December 2012, Bonn Hauptbahnhof (1); May 2013, La Défense stabbing (1); May 2013, Lee Rigby murder (2); May 2014, Brussels Jewish museum shooting (1); December 2014, Joué-lès-Tours police station (1); December 2014, Dijon vehicle ramming (1); January 2015, Charlie Hebdo shooting (2); January 2015, Paris shootings and Kosher supermarket siege (1); February 2015, Copenhagen shooting (1); February 2015, Nice stabbing (1); June 2015, Saint-Quentin-Fallavier factory (1); August 2015, Thalys train shooting (1); November 2015, Paris attacks (9); January 2016, Valence vehicle ramming (1); January 2016, Paris police station (1); January 2016, Marseille machete attack (1); February 2016, Hanover shopping centre (1); February 2016, Hanover stabbing (1); March 2016, Brussels bombings (5); April 2016, Essen gurdwara bombing (2); June 2016, Magnanville stabbings (1); July 2016, Nice vehicle ramming (1); July 2016, Würzburg train stabbing (1); July 2016, Ansbach bombing (1); July 2016, Normandy church stabbing (2); August 2016, Charleroi police stabbing (1); November and December 2016, Ludwigshafen bomb attempts (1); **December 2016, Berlin vehicle ramming (1)**; February 2017, Louvre stabbing (1); **March 2017, Orly airport (1)**; March 2017, Westminster attack (1); April 2017, Champs-Élysées shooting (1); April 2017, Stockholm vehicle ramming (1); June 2017, Brussels Central Station bomb attempt (1); June 2017, Notre Dame stabbing (1); June 2017, Champs-Élysées vehicle ramming (1); June 2017, London Bridge attacks (3); **July 2017, Hamburg stabbings (1)**; August 2017, Brussels Grand Place stabbing (1); August 2017, Turku stabbing (1); August 2017, Levallois-Perret vehicle ramming (1); August 2017, Barcelona attacks (6); September 2017, Parsons Green bombing (1); **October 2017, Marseille stabbings (1)**; **March 2018, Carcassonne and Trèbes attack (1)**; May 2018, Liège stabbing (1); May 2018, Paris stabbing (1); August 2018, Amsterdam Centraal station stabbing (1); August 2018, Barcelona police station stabbing (1); December 2018, Strasbourg shooting (1). This finding is broadly in line with analysis of 119 lone-actor terrorists active in the United States and Europe since 1990, where it was found 4.2% used drugs or alcohol in the commissioning of their attack; Paul Gill, John Horgan & Paige Deckert, 'Bombing Alone: Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorists', *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, Vol 59, No 2, 2014, p. 430.

76 Laurent Laniel, *Captagon: Déconstruction d'un Mythe*, Observatoire français des drogues et des toxicomanies and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), 2017, p. 29.

77 Kate Connolly & Chris Stephen, 'Berlin attack suspect Anis Amri had been on watchlist since January', *The Guardian*, 21 December 2016.

78 Anthony Faiola, Naveena Kottoor & Stefano Pitrelli, 'Suspect in Berlin market attack was radicalized in an Italian jail', *The Washington Post*, 22 December 2016; Chase Winter, 'Anis Amri: a well-trodden trail of jihad', *DW*, 23 December 2016.

79 Frederik Bombosch, Andreas Kopietz, Andreas Förster & Kai Schlieter, 'Er kam, um zu töten', *Berliner Zeitung*, 15 December 2017.

80 Georg Mascolo, 'Die letzten Tage im Leben des Anis Amri', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 1 June 2017; Georg Heil, 'The Berlin Attack and the 'Abu Wala' Islamic State Recruitment Network', *CTC Sentinel*, Vol 10, Issue 2, 2017, pp. 1–11.

in Berlin.⁸¹ In addition to the lack of intelligence suggesting he was planning an attack, his drug use factored into German police deciding that he was no longer a priority threat.⁸² In short, police considered Amri to have permanently crossed over into the criminal milieu; he was simply a drug dealer.⁸³ Surveillance was thus halted in September 2016, three months before his attack.⁸⁴

Four days after the vehicle-ramming, Amri was shot and killed by police in Milan. He had pledged allegiance to Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and his attack was claimed by the group. Amri's post-mortem showed habitual drug use, with traces of cocaine and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC, a cannabinoid) in his system.⁸⁵ While Italian prosecutors said it was not likely that he had consumed drugs on the day he was killed, they could not rule out the possibility that he had taken drugs on the day of the attack.⁸⁶

Ahmad Alhaw – July 2017, Hamburg

On 28 July 2017, Ahmad Alhaw carried out a knife attack in a Hamburg supermarket: after entering the store, he picked up a 20cm knife from the shelves and proceeded to attack people around him indiscriminately, killing a 50-year-old man. Alhaw, a Saudi-born Palestinian, had been living in Germany since his arrival in the spring of 2015 after rejected asylum applications in Spain, Sweden, and Norway. His application in Germany was also denied and, while there were no plans to deport him, it appeared before his attack as though he would return to the Gaza Strip voluntarily.⁸⁷

During his time in Germany, periods of abstinence and social withdrawal would punctuate his alcohol and cannabis use, with signs of emotional disturbance and psychiatric instability. Despite concerns over Alhaw's mental health, specialist psychiatric services never met him. He was twice reported to the police for signs of radicalisation: once in April 2016, after he had asked for advice on travelling to Syria, and again in November that year. Following his knife attack, he told police that he wanted to die as a 'martyr'; a blood test showed he had traces of cannabis in his system.⁸⁸ In March 2018 he was sentenced to life in prison. His attack was not claimed by Islamic State.

Ahmed Hanachi – October 2017, Marseille

On 1 October 2017, 29-year-old Ahmed Hanachi stabbed two women to death with a kitchen knife outside Saint-Charles Station in Marseille. He then ran knife-in-hand to a group of soldiers, shouted '*Allahu Akbar*' ('God is greatest'), before they shot him dead.⁸⁹ He had previously been arrested seven times in France,

81 Ronen Steinke, 'Anis Amri, der Mann mit dem Koks', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 18 May 2017.

82 Georg Heil, 2017, p. 3.

83 Ronen Steinke, 'Anis Amri, der Mann mit dem Koks', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 18 May 2017; 'Berlin lorry attack: 'Gross mistakes' made by police', *BBC News*, 12 October 2017.

84 Bomboesch et al., 'Er kam, um zu töten', *Berliner Zeitung*, 15 December 2017.

85 'Berlin terrorist Amri regularly used cocaine – autopsy', *ANSA*, 3 March 2017; Georg Mascolo, 'Die letzten Tage im Leben des Anis Amri', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 1 June 2017.

86 *ibid.*

87 Laura Backes, Jürgen Dahlkamp, Hubert Gude, Martin Knobbe, Roman Lehberger, Andrew Moussa & Wolf Wiedmann-Schmidt, 'Attack Underscores Need To Address Refugees' Mental Health', *Spiegel*, 10 August 2017.

88 *ibid.*

89 Mathilde Ceilles, 'Attentat à Marseille: L'identité du suspect reste à confirmer', *20minutes*, 2 October 2017.

providing different identities on each occasion.⁹⁰ His radicalisation trajectory is unknown, though his brother, Anis, is known to have fought in Syria for Islamic State.⁹¹ French authorities were initially unsure about any terrorist motivation, though they eventually reported the case to Europol as a jihadist attack. Islamic State, for its part, claimed the attack.

Hanachi had lived in Italy between March 2010 and May 2017, where he married an Italian woman – the couple later divorced – and fathered a daughter. He had been arrested twice in the country, once for a drug case and once for a robbery, though it is unknown exactly what the drug offence involved.⁹² Both his ex-wife and his father recounted Hanachi's alcohol and drug addiction,⁹³ and friends in Tunisia said that during his adolescence Hanachi was known for taking 'all drugs', including the opioid Subutex (buprenorphine).⁹⁴ Two days before the attack, Hanachi had been arrested in Lyon for shoplifting, and after questioning said he was homeless, divorced, unemployed, and a 'consumer of hard drugs'. He was released the following day. According to a toxicology report, Hanachi was under the influence of cannabis during the attack.⁹⁵

Redouane Lakdim – March 2018, Carcassonne and Trèbes

In March 2018,⁹⁶ Redouane Lakdim carried out a series of attacks in the towns of Carcassonne and Trèbes in southern France. Lakdim, a 25-year-old French-Moroccan, first hijacked a car in Carcassonne by shooting the two occupants and then drove to a nearby police compound where he fired at a group of officers and attempted to run them over. He continued to a supermarket in nearby Trèbes, where he held people hostage and demanded the release of Islamic State terrorist Salah Abdeslam from French custody. The three-hour standoff that followed ended with police storming the supermarket and shooting Lakdim dead. In total, he killed four people and injured over a dozen more. He had a history of small-time drug dealing, with two one-month prison stays in 2015 and 2016 for drug offences.⁹⁷ A toxicology report revealed that Lakdim had consumed cannabis the day of the attack.⁹⁸

90 'Attentat à Marseille: Le suspect avait été interpellé "à sept reprises, sous sept identités"', *20minutes*, 2 October 2017.

91 Ariel F. Dumont, 'Attaque de Marseille: le profil inquiétant du frère du tueur, Anis Hanachi', *Marianne*, 9 October 2017.

92 'Les parcours des tueurs de Marseille et de Berlin passent par l'Italie', *AFP*, 4 October 2017.

93 Francesco Battistini, 'L'ex moglie del killer di Marsiglia: L'ISIS? Ahmed pensava a alcol e droga', *Corriere della Sera*, 7 October 2017.

94 'Tunisie: des amis évoquent l'addiction du tueur de Marseille', *AFP*, 4 October 2017.

95 'Attentat de Marseille: fin des cinq gardes à vue', *Le Progrès*, 7 October 2017.

96 While from 2018, and therefore outside the 2012–17 scope of this study, this case is nevertheless included in this section.

97 'Radouane Lakdim: quel est le profil de l'assaillant des attentats de Trèbes et Carcassonne?', *L'internaute.com*, 25 March 2018.

98 'INFO M6 – 'assaut! assaut!', les derniers mots d'Arnaud Beltrame', *M6*, 29 March 2018.

Case Study 2: Ziyad Ben Belgacem

On 18 March 2017, Ziyad Ben Belgacem was involved in a series of events that culminated in him putting a gun to the head of a soldier in Orly Airport and saying: 'I am here to die for Allah, and in any case, there will be deaths'. He was shot dead by two other soldiers at the scene.

The episode started at 06:55 when the 39-year-old Tunisian's car was stopped by a police patrol in Garges-lès-Gonesse, northeast of Paris. Belgacem was not only driving above the speed limit, but his headlights were off. Upon inspecting the car, police saw a bullet hole in the bodywork. While the police officers were inspecting his papers, he fired at them with a 9mm Flobert shotgun and fled.⁹⁹ At the time Belgacem was on probation relating to a breaking-and-entering crime from March 2016, and the prospect of a likely return to prison may have factored in his violent response.

After that incident he called his father, at 07:16, asking for forgiveness and saying: 'I have done some bullshit ... Goodbye, dad'.¹⁰⁰ He then returned to a bar that he had visited the night before (on 17 March) in Vitry-sur-Seine in the south of Paris. There, he made threats, discharged his weapon four times without injuring anyone, and left.¹⁰¹ Belgacem then drove for approximately 5km before he abandoned his car, hijacked a passing Citroën C4 and drove to Orly Airport, arriving at the car park at 08:06. At 08:22, Belgacem put the gun to the soldier's head, and threatened two other soldiers at the scene. Following a brief tussle for control of a soldier's weapon, Belgacem was shot dead.

Like many other attackers in Europe, Ziyad Ben Belgacem had a history of crime, with nine entries on his criminal record and multiple prison stays.¹⁰² In 2001 a Val-de-Marne assize court sentenced him to five years in prison for armed robbery. And he was also involved in drug dealing: in 2009, Créteil criminal court sentenced him to three years for a drugs offence, and after re-offending the same court gave him a five-year sentence in 2011. It was during this last stay in prison that he was flagged as potentially radicalised, though he was never deemed a sufficient threat to be classified as a 'Fiche S'. A search of his house in 2015, following the November Paris attacks, reportedly revealed no signs of his connection to the jihadist milieu.¹⁰³

Following his attack it emerged that Belgacem was a frequent cocaine user. Police found a machete, foreign currency, and a few grams of the drug in his home. His father confirmed that Belgacem frequently drank and took cannabis, which he saw as being the reason behind his son's actions: 'My son was never a terrorist. He never prayed and used to drink. Here is the result of the effects of alcohol and cannabis'.¹⁰⁴ A post-mortem showed he had a blood alcohol level of 0.93mg/ml (above the French driving limit of 0.5mg/ml) and the presence of cannabis and cocaine in his system.¹⁰⁵

99 Timothée Vilars, 'Orly: la "fuite en avant destructrice" de l'ex-braqueur Ziyed Ben Belgacem', *L'Obs*, 18 March 2017.

100 Elise Vincent, 'Attaque d'Orly: le profil inédit de Ziyed Ben Belgacem', *Le Monde*, 20 March 2017.

101 *ibid.*

102 'Attaque d'Orly: l'assaillant était sous l'emprise de l'alcool et de stupéfiants', *Le Figaro*, 20 March 2017.

103 Elise Vincent, 'Attaque d'Orly: le profil inédit de Ziyed Ben Belgacem', *Le Monde*, 20 March 2017.

104 'Après l'attaque d'Orly, l'enquête se concentre sur le profil de l'assaillant', AFP, 19 March 2017.

105 Ariel F. Dumont, 'Attaque de Marseille: le profil inquiétant du frère du tueur, Anis Hanachi', *Marianne*, 9 October 2017.

In each instance of a perpetrator taking drugs, we neither know the exact quantity of drugs within the attackers' bodies nor the precise effects this had on their decision-making and behaviour. While drug use has been linked to violence and aggression – either directly (by consuming stimulants) or indirectly (through drug-induced psychosis or during withdrawal) – every person reacts differently, with effects dependent on a host of personal, psychological, medical, and situational factors.¹⁰⁶ In each case here, drug use seems to be a continuation of routine behaviour that was simply part of the attackers' lifestyles, and *alone* it appears to offer an insufficient explanation as to why they carried out their attacks. Other factors appear more important, such as ideological commitment, socialisation with extremists, perceived grievances, the situational opportunity, or other personal factors. It is possible that drug use contributed on some level, such as lowering inhibitions, though this is almost impossible to know.¹⁰⁷

Family members, for their part, often see such drug and substance abuse as an explanation for their relatives' acts of violence. The wife of suicide bomber Brahim Abdeslam, for example, stated: 'I have no explanation ... It's possible it was the cannabis, anything is possible', even though she had separated from him two years before the attacks.¹⁰⁸ Such statements could be a result of being taken totally by surprise by their relative's radicalisation. Moreover, it may be comforting to see their relatives as victims of drug abuse rather than as individuals responsible for their own actions.

It is important to note that most jihadist attacks in Europe have *not* been carried out by a perpetrator who had recently taken drugs, and there does not appear to be an explicit, pronounced, and automatic link between drug use and perpetrating a terrorist attack. These examples – though few in number – do nevertheless demonstrate that the stereotype of jihadists as uniformly pious and religiously observant is outdated and inaccurate.

Other Instances

A further three instances (one of which took place outside of Europe) are widely seen as examples of terrorists acting under the influence of drugs and so also merit attention. The first is the 26 June 2015 firearms attack in a holiday resort in Sousse, Tunisia, which killed 38 people. A post-mortem was carried out on the body of the perpetrator, Seifeddine Rezgui, revealing he had consumed a drug that causes 'exhaustion, aggression and extreme anger that leads to murders being committed. Another effect of these drugs is that they enhance physical and mental performance'.¹⁰⁹ The exact drug, however, was not specified.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Radicalisation Awareness Networking (RAN) EXIT and Health and Social Care (HSC) joint meeting, Vienna, 7 November 2018, held under the Chatham House rule.

¹⁰⁷ For how drugs have been used in warfare throughout history, see Łukasz Kamiński, *Shooting Up: A History of Drugs in Warfare* (London: Hurst, 2017).

¹⁰⁸ Robin Perrie, Jake Ryan & Jonathan Reilly, 'Married to monster', *The Sun*, 18 November 2015.

¹⁰⁹ HM Coroner, *Evidence in Day 15 of The Tunisia Inquests*, 'Akremi Report Summary', 8 February 2017, p. 34, as cited in Laurent Laniel, 2017, p. 27.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

The second instance is the series of attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015 carried out by an Islamic State network, which killed 130 people. The aftermath of the attacks featured speculation that syringes and needles – possibly to inject a drug – were seen in a room used by the perpetrators before their attacks.¹¹¹ Yet this turned out to be equipment used by the police investigation team and, moreover, the post-mortems of the attackers' bodies showed no signs of either drugs or alcohol.¹¹²

The third instance relates to 20-year-old Ismail Tomasso Ben Youssef Hosni, a homeless man who stabbed a police officer and two soldiers in Milan Centrale train station in May 2017. The officials had asked to see his identity papers; though no one was killed, the police officer lost a litre of blood.¹¹³ It is unclear to what extent jihadism motivated the stabbing, if at all. Hosni had posted Islamic State *nasheeds* (hymns or chants) on Facebook – once with the caption: 'The most beautiful nasheed of the Islamic State, the most beautiful I have listened to in my life'¹¹⁴ – and it appears as though he was, at least at one point, a sympathiser of the group.¹¹⁵ However, Italian prosecutors did not pursue terrorism-related charges and Hosni was instead convicted in March 2018 for attempted murder.¹¹⁶

Hosni claimed the attack was not motivated by jihadism and that his memory, in any case, was blank: 'I remember I was at the station, but I do not remember anything about the attack, when I woke up I had blood on my hands. That day I had taken cocaine'.¹¹⁷ This was confirmed in a toxicology test,¹¹⁸ and a psychiatrist's report said that the drug use would have affected his 'already fragile mental balance'.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, Hosni, who had a conviction for drug dealing, was also found in possession of cocaine, which he was selling from a nearby shop.¹²⁰

One driver behind this phenomenon of jihadists using and dealing drugs is the merging of criminal and terrorist milieus, which has blurred the boundaries between the two. This has been acknowledged, in its own bizarre way, in a recent court case in Belgium. On 15 January 2015 police raided an apartment in Verviers, Belgium, used by an IS cell in advanced stages of planning an attack. Two jihadists, Khalid Ben Larbi and Sofiane Amghar, were shot dead in the raid, and police discovered four assault rifles, four handguns, ammunition, and explosives. Another man, Marouane El Bali, was arrested at the scene and later charged with membership of an Islamic State cell.¹²¹ His defence was that he was at the apartment for a drug deal and was therefore

111 Aziz Zemouri, 'Attentats – Exclusif : dans la chambre d'hôtel de Salah Abdeslam', *Le Point*, 17 November 2015. There were also reports that Salah Abdeslam looked as though he was on drugs during the attacks: Arnaud Guiguitant & Jacques Duplessy, 'Attentats de Paris: Qui est vraiment Salah Abdeslam?', *Paris Match*, 3 February 2017.

112 Laniel, 2017, p. 27.

113 Andrea Galli & Cesare Giuzzi, 'Hosni, l'aggressore della Centrale: «Mi dispiace, ma ero arrabbiato» I post su Isis e l'accusa di terrorismo', *Corriere della Sera*, 19 May 2017.

114 'Aggressione a Milano: chi è Ismail Hosni', *Corriere della Sera*, 19 May 2017.

115 Andrea Galli & Cesare Giuzzi, 'Hosni, l'aggressore della Centrale: «Mi dispiace, ma ero arrabbiato» I post su Isis e l'accusa di terrorismo', *Corriere della Sera*, 19 May 2017; Lorenzo Vidino & Francesco Marone, *The Jihadist Threat in Italy: A Primer*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI), 13 November 2017.

116 'Milano, militari e agente accoltellati in Stazione Centrale: condanna a 7 per Hosni. «Vizio parziale di mente»', *Corriere della Sera*, 2 March 2018.

117 Cesare Giuzzi & Sara Regina, 'Aggressione in Centrale, Hosni: «Non ricordo nulla, avevo preso cocaina»', *Corriere della Sera*, 21 May 2017.

118 *ibid.*

119 'Milano, militari e agente accoltellati in Stazione Centrale: condanna a 7 per Hosni. «Vizio parziale di mente»', *Corriere della Sera*, 2 March 2018.

120 Cesare Giuzzi & Sara Regina, 'Aggressione in Centrale, Hosni: «Non ricordo nulla, avevo preso cocaina»', *Corriere della Sera*, 21 May 2017.

121 'Marouane El Bali condamné à 12 ans de prison pour terrorisme', *La Libre*, 31 March 2017.

in the ‘wrong place at the wrong time’.¹²² Such a defence implicitly acknowledges the overlaps between the criminal and extremist milieus. He was convicted in 2017 for his role in the cell.

Overall, however, there is scant evidence to suggest that the drug trade has an *inherent* connection to jihadism in Europe. Even when jihadists have become involved with drugs – either through consuming or dealing – there is little to suggest their activity is exceptional. Instead, it forms *part* of an individual’s overall personal circumstances, experiences, narratives, networks, and other factors that, collectively, can help explain their involvement in extremism and their mobilisation into violence.

¹²² Bruno Waterfield, ‘Belgium terror network planned to kill police officers’, *The Telegraph*, 16 January 2015.

Paramilitaries

It's no longer acceptable for the UDA/UFF to continue to pollute our communities with drugs and be involved in extortion, intimidating, and wrecking the lives of so many families ... These gangsters' days are up and it is time for them to fade into obscurity. We cannot let the prevailing situation go on any longer.

Statement by loyalist ex-prisoners to the leaders of the West Belfast UDA, February 2016.¹²³

Beyond the jihadist context, there exist dense and longstanding crossovers between the drug trade and paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland, where a crime–terror nexus has manifested for decades.¹²⁴ Since the conclusion of the Northern Ireland Peace Agreement (Good Friday Agreement) in 1998 and the official end of many paramilitary campaigns, several groups have intensified their involvement in criminal activities while paying lip service to their political programmes.¹²⁵ Some of these groups exist as ‘hybrid’ criminal-terrorist groups, while others have transformed into organised crime groups altogether.¹²⁶

A kaleidoscope of groups is involved in criminality. These include so-called ‘dissidents’ – groups that are unwilling to accept the terms of the peace agreement – such as the:

- *Continuity IRA* (CIRA)
- *Irish National Liberation Army* (INLA) (disbanded in 2013).
- ‘New’ *IRA* (NIRA) (formed in 2012 when the Real IRA and RAAD merged; otherwise simply known as ‘The IRA’)
- Óglaigh na hÉireann (ONH) (declared a ceasefire in 2018)
- *Real IRA* (RIRA) (merged into the ‘New’ IRA in 2012)
- *Republican Action Against Drugs* (RAAD) (merged into the ‘New’ IRA in 2012)

123 A. Morris, “‘The gangster days are up’ West Belfast UDA leaders need to be stood down for good of loyalism, say ex-prisoners”, *The Irish News*, 19 February 2016.

124 For more on the overlaps between crime and paramilitaries, see Andrew Silke, (1998), ‘In defense of the realm: Financing loyalist terrorism in Northern Ireland – part one: Extortion and blackmail’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol 21, No 4, pp. 331–361; Andrew Silke, (2000), ‘Drink, Drugs, and Rock’n’Roll: Financing Loyalist Terrorism in Northern Ireland – Part Two’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol 23, No 2, pp. 107–127; John Horgan & Taylor, M. (1999), ‘Playing the “Green Card” – Financing the Provisional IRA: Part 1’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol 11, No 2, pp. 1–38; John Horgan & Taylor, M. (2003), ‘Playing the “Green Card” – Financing the Provisional IRA: Part 2’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol 15, No 2, pp. 1–60.

125 This process of “transformation” between terrorist and criminal motivations was first hypothesised in Chris Dishman, ‘Terrorism, Crime, and Transformation’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol 24, No 1, 2001, pp. 43–58, and further developed in Tamara Makarenko, ‘The crime-terror continuum: tracing the interplay between transnational organised crime and terrorism’, *Global Crime*, Vol 6, No 1, 2004, pp. 129–45.

126 Tamara Makarenko, *Europe’s Crime-Terror Nexus: Links between terrorist and organised crime groups in the European Union*, European Parliament Directorate General for Internal Policies (Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs), October 2012, pp. 36–37.

Loyalist paramilitaries include the:

- *Loyalist Volunteer Force* (LVF)
- *South East Antrim Ulster Defence Association* (SEA UDA) (distinct from the UDA, from which it split in 2006)
- *Ulster Defence Association* (UDA)
- *Ulster Volunteer Force* (UVF)

Involvement in crime – which is not limited to drug dealing – by republican and loyalist groups has three consequences. First, it creates conflict with criminals, whom paramilitaries seek to either intimidate or eradicate (through so-called ‘punishment’ attacks) or to accommodate (through extortion or the imposition of ‘taxes’). Second, it leads to tension within groups, where internal feuds can be fostered by the decision to engage in criminal activity and the arguments over whether this reconciles with a group’s political ambitions. The autonomy many paramilitary leaders have over their operations can compound these internal divisions. Third, it potentially alienates the very communities that paramilitaries claim to champion.

Drugs as One Crime of Many

Gauging paramilitary involvement with drugs is difficult for several reasons. The trade itself is inherently opaque, where limited information is in the public domain. In addition, the clandestine actors involved are often unwilling to divulge information or even unaware of the entirety of a criminal conspiracy. Moreover, even when those involved have spoken publicly, they are typically met with accusations and claims made by rival groups, factions, or individuals. When former UDA member Chuck Thompson, for example, spoke of the UDA’s involvement in robberies and drug dealing, the group in turn accused Thompson of selling cocaine and ecstasy.¹²⁷

Despite such pronouncements, it is known that paramilitaries are ‘heavily engaged’ in organised crime,¹²⁸ as outlined by the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), a multi-agency partnership that includes the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). OCTF’s annual reports outline the range of crimes in which paramilitaries are involved. Dissident republicans engage in fuel laundering, smuggling, armed robbery, extortion, money laundering, drugs supply, burglary, insurance fraud, counterfeit currency, and intimidation.¹²⁹ Loyalist groups, meanwhile, are also involved in extortion, money lending, robbery, contraband, drugs, burglary, thefts, and money laundering.¹³⁰

Paramilitaries see the drug trade, therefore, as one criminal opportunity among many, which routinely overlaps with their other illicit activities, especially extortion. Euphemistically labelled as ‘taxation’, extortion targets legitimate businesses as well as criminals.¹³¹ Threats of violence are central, as a victim explained: ‘I sold up my business

¹²⁷ Ciaran Barnes, ‘Inside the UDA: Thompson slates slain UDA man Gray over drugs’, *Sunday Life*, 29 July 2012.
¹²⁸ OCTF, *2012 Annual Report & Threat Assessment*, Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), 2012, p. 23; OCTF, *2013 Annual Report & Threat Assessment*, Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), 2013, p. 27; OCTF, *2014 Annual Report & Threat Assessment*, Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), 2014, p. 23.
¹²⁹ OCTF, *2013 Annual Report & Threat Assessment*, Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), 2013, p. 27.
¹³⁰ *ibid.*
¹³¹ *ibid.*; OCTF, *2016 Annual Report & Threat Assessment*, Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), 2016, pp. 12, 25; OCTF, *2017 Annual Report & Threat Assessment*, Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), 2017, p. 29.

because I was fed up having to deal with them. They were constantly hassling for protection money and wanting favours. You can't go to the police about it ... You either fall into line with what they want or get out'.¹³² In this way the crime is likely to be underreported due to the unwillingness of victims to speak to the police, for fear of paramilitary reprisals.¹³³

Groups take advantage of areas they control – mimicking the territoriality of mafia groups – by charging drug dealers a 'premium' to operate on their turf.¹³⁴ It is unknown whether this varies according to the drug that is dealt or whether certain drugs are totally forbidden. Labelled 'bad on bad' extortion, it is carried out by loyalist and republican paramilitaries alike,¹³⁵ and can involve, variously, thousands of pounds or relatively small sums of money: the UVF, for example, is reported to charge drug dealers £30 per week to operate in its areas of control in East Belfast.¹³⁶ In this way the paramilitaries can shift the risk of importation and distribution to drug traffickers, while still profiting from the drug trade.

Extortion will often be carried out in the name of a paramilitary group, though it is not always clear if senior members have sanctioned the act.¹³⁷ In 2016, PSNI Assistant Constable Will Kerr stated that involvement, at least among dissident republicans – occurred more on an individual level than as a group-sanctioned practice: 'Organisationally, [republicans] are not involved to the same extent but individually, some of them undoubtedly are. It's probably not to the same extent as loyalist paramilitary groups are involved in organised crime: extortion, violence, robbery, drug dealing in the North. But undoubtedly some individual members are'.¹³⁸

This therefore makes attribution difficult. For example, a group of five blackmailers known as the 'Lemonade Brigade' were convicted in 2013 for attempting to extort £10,000 from an alleged drug dealer.¹³⁹ The group told their victim that they were from the UDA, though it is unknown what actual connections the quintet had to the loyalist paramilitary. In this way criminals may seek to exploit the feared reputation of paramilitaries for their own ends.

In turn, criminals can also straddle the divide between groups, working with both loyalists and republicans.¹⁴⁰ This was seen during the 2014 trial of Declan Gallagher, charged with 17 drugs-related counts related to the importation of cocaine into Northern Ireland, which revealed that Gallagher worked with both republican and loyalist paramilitary groups, with no group aware of his other customers.¹⁴¹ The factors behind a criminal's decision to work with terrorist groups, however, are largely unknown and the topic is under-researched.

132 Deborah McAleese, 'Caught in the grip of the racketeers', *Belfast Telegraph*, 4 February 2015.

133 OCTF, *2017–18 Annual Report & Threat Assessment*, Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), 2018, p. 49.

134 OCTF, 2013, p. 37.

135 OCTF, 2016, p. 25.

136 Deborah McAleese, 'Caught in the grip of the racketeers', *Belfast Telegraph*, 4 February 2015.

137 OCTF, 2013, p. 36.

138 Conor Lally, 'Involvement of the Provisional IRA in organised crime "overstated", says PSNI; Joint taskforce having success against criminals on both sides of Border', *The Irish Times*, 13 September 2016.

139 Mick Brown, 'Five guilty of "drug dealer" extortion', *Belfast Telegraph*, 4 May 2013; Alan Erwin, 'Blackmail plot man has jail term cut', *Belfast Telegraph*, 4 June 2014.

140 See, for example, the case of Hugh McGeough, a leading criminal reported to have worked with both the Continuity IRA and loyalists in Belfast: 'Double hit over drug money row', *Sunday Life*, 7 June 2015.

141 Alan Erwin, 'Drug gang accused "linked to loyalists and republicans"', *Belfast Telegraph*, 13 December 2014.

‘Punishment’ Attacks and Conflict with Criminals

When Irish paramilitaries involve themselves in the drug trade, conflict with ‘regular’ criminals often results. Involving clandestine actors used to operating outside of the law, this can be volatile, deadly, and prone to retaliatory and escalatory cycles of violence (see *Case Study 3: Alan Ryan*).

Conflict frequently manifests in so-called ‘punishment’ attacks. These are vigilante assaults carried out by paramilitaries on individuals within their areas of control, for the purported reason of punishing ‘anti-social’ behaviour such as consuming or dealing drugs.¹⁴² With victims typically warned beforehand – at times paramilitaries have published lists of names – they face a stark choice: being assaulted at a time and place arranged in advance or receiving an unannounced and potentially more dangerous attack.¹⁴³ The severity varies from forcing an individual to leave town, to beatings, non-fatal shootings in the limbs, and even murder.

Such attacks were commonplace during the Troubles, and their persistence over twenty years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 demonstrates just how embedded paramilitaries are in Northern Ireland. Between 2012 and 2017, there were 564 such attacks in Northern Ireland, with most shootings attributed to Republican groups (see *Table 2: Number of Vigilante Attacks in Northern Ireland, 2012–2017*).¹⁴⁴ An unknown number of victims were also threatened but not subjected to assault. Drug dealers and users are not the only victims, as individuals unconnected to the trade have been targeted, alongside those for whom paramilitary members harbour grudges.¹⁴⁵ Even those with a history of personal involvement in paramilitaries, such as former IRA members, and those with family ties to the republican movement have been targeted.¹⁴⁶

The prospect of vigilantism has led to suspected drug dealers being denied bail explicitly for their own safety, in response to paramilitary attacks on those the authorities charged – and therefore publicly named – with drug offences. For example, ten days after the arrest of Kevin Davison for cannabis dealing in April 2012, masked men entered his mother’s home in Belfast demanding to know where he was. In response the judge decided that releasing him on bail would expose him to ‘inhuman or degrading treatment’.¹⁴⁷ This protection was then further extended to judges granting anonymity to those accused:¹⁴⁸ 22 individuals were granted anonymity in Northern Irish courts in 2012, albeit not all were for drug offences.¹⁴⁹

142 For more on this theme, see John Lindsay, *No Dope Here? Anti-Drugs Vigilantism in Northern Ireland* (Londonderry: Yes Publications, 2012); Colin Knox, ‘The ‘deserving’ victims of political violence: ‘Punishment’ attacks in Northern Ireland’, *Criminal Justice*, Vol 1, Issue 2, 2011, pp. 181–199.

143 The 2017 film ‘A Mother Brings Her Son to Be Shot’ examines this issue, and centres on a Derry/Londonderry family who had fallen victim to a vigilante attack.

144 PSNI, ‘Police Recorded Security Situation Statistics Northern Ireland’, 2019, available at: <https://www.psnireland.police.uk/inside-psni/statistics/security-situation-statistics/>

145 BBC Spotlight, ‘Spotlight on vigilante republican group RAAD’, *BBC News*, 21 June 2012.

146 *ibid.*

147 ‘Paramilitaries “want to shoot alleged dealer”’, *The Irish News*, 19 April 2012.

148 See, for example, Henry McDonald, ‘Vigilante threats keep drug suspects secret: Derry judge cites human rights law for media ban Fear IRA enforcers would target alleged dealers’, *The Guardian*, 16 August 2012; ‘Open Justice? – All-time high in anonymity orders sparks concern over secret trials’, *The Irish News*, 8 October 2012.

149 Adrian Rutherford, ‘Alarming rise in rulings stopping you from finding out the names of alleged drug dealers and sex crime suspects’, *Belfast Telegraph*, 26 July 2013.

Table 2: Number of Vigilante Attacks in Northern Ireland, 2012–2017¹⁵⁰

Year	Shootings by Loyalists	Shootings by Republicans	Assaults by Loyalists	Assaults by Republicans	Total Casualties
2012	1	29	27	13	70
2013	7	19	34	4	64
2014	3	28	37	12	80
2015	6	20	49	13	88
2016	1	19	53	12	85
2017	3	25	57	16	101

The most prominent group in recent years was Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD). Formed in 2008 by ex-Provisional IRA members, it was a reincarnation of Direct Action Against Drugs (DAAD), the anti-drugs vigilante group that served as a front for the Provisional IRA in the 1990s. Most of RAAD’s actions were in Derry/Londonderry, with the group also operating in Strabane and across the Irish border in County Donegal.¹⁵¹ The group also gained notoriety for publishing a photo of its members – wearing military fatigues, balaclavas, and holding various weapons – with an alleged drug dealer who was hooded and bound, alongside drugs that it had purportedly seized.¹⁵²

Despite RAAD’s 2012 merger with the Real IRA to form the ‘New’ IRA, stand-alone vigilante groups still exist. In September 2017, an unnamed group issued a threat to local drug dealers in the Omagh area, stating that:

*We are an organisation taking action against all drug dealers. At this point we are not willing to disclose the organisation we are acting on behalf of, but we are taking it upon ourselves to put an end to the drug dealing with our community. The drugs that are in circulation are destroying young peoples [sic] lives and are the ruination of our community. In order to stop this we are willing to go to extreme lengths such as integrations [sic], knee capping and executions if necessary.*¹⁵³

Accompanying the text was a photo of three men in military fatigues and balaclavas, with a shotgun, pistol, and ammunition on a table. The message appeared to have been in response

¹⁵⁰ Republican or Loyalist attribution is as perceived by PSNI. Note that this table does not include attacks that resulted in death. For more on classification, see Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), ‘User Guide to Security Situation Statistics Northern Ireland’, *PSNI Statistics Branch*, January 2015; Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), ‘Police Recorded Security Situation Statistics Northern Ireland – Casualties as a result of Paramilitary Style Attacks in Northern Ireland’, *PSNI*, 17 May 2018, available at: <https://www.psnipolice.uk/inside-psni/statistics/security-situation-statistics/>

¹⁵¹ George Jackson, ‘Prominent RAAD man’ in court’, *Belfast Telegraph*, 28 July 2012; Henry McDonald, ‘Vigilante threats keep drug suspects secret: Derry judge cites human rights law for media ban Fear IRA enforcers would target alleged dealers’, *The Guardian*, 16 August 2012.

¹⁵² ‘Strabane man in court over RAAD photograph’, *Strabane Chronicle*, 9 May 2013.

¹⁵³ Ryan McAleer, ‘Group issues death threat to six local “drug dealers”’, *Ulster Herald*, 1 September 2017.

to a fatal overdose – involving a mixture of alcohol, diazepam, and ecstasy – that had occurred in Omagh less than a fortnight earlier.¹⁵⁴

Paramilitaries have been careful to present their actions as calibrated, with themselves as guardians of the community. When they have publicised lists of drug dealers, they have framed them as resulting from long ‘investigations’, aimed at benefiting local families. A benign role is often presented, as seen with ONH’s public distribution of a list of 54 alleged drug dealers in 2013 with the following message: ‘Those who come forward and admit [their involvement in drugs] will receive a sympathetic ear and the help they need to break free from their suppliers’.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, when they have spoken publicly, vigilante groups frequently emphasise that their actions are demanded by their community, that the violence is not indiscriminate, and that their victims are forewarned.

Yet there is more to these attacks than simple vigilantism. They occur in a post-Good Friday Agreement context, whereby sectarian groups have agreed to disavow violence and there is limited popular support for armed struggle.¹⁵⁶ For those left in the wake of the political process and unable to transition – or accept the change – from wartime to peacetime, ‘punishment’ attacks are not only a means of staying relevant, feared, and in control of communities; they also serve to undermine the Good Friday Agreement and the Northern Ireland Assembly. It is for that reason that paramilitaries have, in their public pronouncements on vigilante attacks, often used the opportunity to also threaten police, army, and political targets.

There have been accusations, meanwhile, that vigilante groups are themselves involved in the drug trade and simply target those drug dealers that refuse to be extorted. PSNI Assistant Chief Constable Stephen Martin has stated that: ‘Frequently we see actions being taken against people who they would allege, often wrongly, would be involved in crime. Yet those very organisations are gaining money from the same crimes they allege their victims are involved in’.¹⁵⁷

Internal Divisions over Drugs and Crime

Involvement in drugs has also led to conflict *within* groups, with members disagreeing over its compatibility with their ideological and political aims. Loyalist groups are particularly affected here. In a joint October 2015 statement, the UVF, UDA, and Red Hand Commando threatened exclusion for loyalists involved in crime: ‘If there are those who attempt to use current or past associations with our organisations to further criminality they will be disowned and should be aware that they will not be permitted to use the cover of loyalism’.¹⁵⁸ Yet their pledge to ‘eschew all violence and criminality’ – in addition to establishing a Loyalist Communities Council to

154 ‘Boyfriend of Emma Doogan who died from overdose “bought her more drugs” court told’, *The Irish News*, 25 August 2017. After the data collection for this study, a new group emerged in April 2018. Calling itself the Irish Republican Movement (IRM), they stated they will target drug dealers and criminals operating in nationalist communities. The group included a photo of five men in military fatigues and balaclavas, with two assault rifles, a bomb, handguns and a revolver; Allison Morris, ‘Breakaway dissident group issues “execution” threat’, *The Irish News*, 12 April 2018.

155 Francesca Ryan, ‘ONH urge those on drugs list to own up’, *Andersontown News*, 5 September 2013.

156 Malachi O’Doherty, ‘Terrorists’ “war” on hoods is a sham fight’, *Belfast Telegraph*, 13 March 2015.

157 ‘We’ll crack down on UDA’, *Sunday Life*, 29 March 2015.

158 ‘Four arrested in crackdown on drug dealing linked to Loyalists’, *Press Association Newswire*, 14 October 2015.

oversee disputes – was not uniformly adopted, as the North Belfast UDA was not involved in the statement.¹⁵⁹ Such tensions even led to loyalist ex-prisoners calling for the leadership of the West Belfast UDA to be replaced in February 2016, due to the group's descent into criminality.¹⁶⁰ What results is factions that are not only uncooperative, but also potentially in conflict with each other, thus undermining a movement's broader strategy and aims.

That conflict can be just as violent as when paramilitaries clash with criminals (see *Case Study 3: Alan Ryan*). One such example concerns Georgie Gilmore, who over the course of 2016 and 2017 became involved in increased tensions with the South East Antrim UDA brigade in Carrickfergus. The dispute centred on drug dealing and was exacerbated by personality clashes: Gilmore, a former UDA commander who found allies among veteran loyalists, objected to the group's involvement with drugs, while the group had made death threats against him.¹⁶¹ He taunted the group in a March 2017 Facebook post: 'The days of the UDA putting people out of [Carrickfergus] are over'.¹⁶² The following day Gilmore was fatally shot in the neck at point blank range.

Internal conflict is possible because paramilitaries are not monolithic, unitary groups. The UDA, which emerged as a federation of local defence committees in the early 1970s, was once the largest paramilitary group in Northern Ireland.¹⁶³ However, its size and loose organisation meant that the group's leadership have always found it difficult to implement coherent political and military strategies. Although political representatives of the UDA participated in the Belfast peace negotiations, parts of the group have rejected the peace agreement, formed their own organisations, and/or become full-time criminal groups. Today, factions of the UDA are heavily involved in drug dealing and other crimes.

Evidently, there will be divisions between a group's leadership and its foot soldiers. This is especially the case concerning engagement with the peace process and organisational reform. While the PSNI have assessed that the leadership of groups such as the UDA and UVF 'want to move the groups forward' to a legitimate political status, many of their foot soldiers continue to engage in crime.¹⁶⁴ This hierarchical break was echoed in 2014 by then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Theresa Villiers.¹⁶⁵ Yet even the leaders of groups can be involved in crime, including drug trafficking: James Hamilton, who was the leader of the UDA in Scotland during the Troubles, was convicted for his part in a heroin-trafficking ring in 1999, for example.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Allison Morris, "'The gangster days are up' West Belfast UDA leaders need to be stood down for good of loyalism, say ex-prisoners', *The Irish News*, 19 February 2016.

¹⁶¹ Jim McDowell, 'Shot in the neck for standing up to drug-dealing UDA thugs of Carrick', *Belfast Telegraph*, 14 March 2017.

¹⁶² Allan Preston, 'Loyalist Georgie Gilmore critically injured in gun attack after taunting paramilitaries with Facebook post', *Belfast Telegraph*, 14 March 2017.

¹⁶³ For background on the group, see Steve Bruce, *The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁶⁴ Conor Lally, 'Involvement of the Provisional IRA in organised crime "overstated", says PSNI; Joint taskforce having success against criminals on both sides of Border', *The Irish Times*, 13 September 2016.

¹⁶⁵ Newton Emerson, 'Baggott has failed to stop loyalists turning back the clock', *The Sunday Times*, 2 February 2014.

¹⁶⁶ Norman Silvester, 'Former Scottish UDA terror chief says he is dying and regrets his part in The Troubles', *Daily Record*, 25 September 2016.

Divisions rarely appear between the armed wing of paramilitaries and their associated political groups. Involvement with drugs and crime can be politically disastrous, yet public-facing representatives have solved this dilemma by simply distancing themselves from such activities. The response of Jackie McDonald from the Ulster Political Research Group, which is linked to the UDA, is prototypical: 'There is no such thing as a loyalist drug dealer. They can be a loyalist, or they can be a drug dealer, but they can't be both'.¹⁶⁷ A similar approach is to assign blame on individual members rather than on the collective, as seen with the comments of Billy Hutchinson, the leader of the UVF-linked Progressive Unionist Party: 'The UVF do not sell drugs, but there may be members of any paramilitary organisation, including republicans, that do'.¹⁶⁸

Beyond causing division *within* a group, criminality can also strain the broader political movement. This is apparent among mainstream Republicanism, which has characterised dissidents as more criminal than ideological in motivation. Faced with Action Against Drugs (AAD) issuing threats to drug dealers, for example, Sinn Féin councillor JJ Magee accused the dissidents of merely being criminals: 'It is known locally that many of those making threats and hiding behind anti-drug messages are heavily involved in extorting money from the same drug dealers they claim to oppose'.¹⁶⁹ Martin McGuinness, Stormont's former Deputy First Minister and a former leader of the Provisional IRA, has gone to great lengths to criticise dissidents in this respect and his response is indicative of the mainstream republican attitude on the issue:

*What you have to understand is that if you support these people, you are effectively supporting people who are swimming in a sea of criminality and drugs, dressing it up on occasions in a flag of political convenience and you shouldn't be under any illusions about that ... People need to get real. They need to recognise the danger that a tiny number of people can represent to human beings and they need to recognise that the world has changed, that over the course of the last 15 years we have built something, all of us together, which we can be very proud of. And we are not going to let it go, to anybody, certainly not to a ragbag of people who have inspired themselves and others for their own purposes, to fill their own coffers, to engage in criminality and to extort money from drug pushers and drug barons – effectively becoming themselves part of the drug problem on the island of Ireland.*¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ 'Peter Robinson calls for police action over drug-linked deaths', *BBC News*, 1 July 2013.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Evan Short, 'Latest criminal gang issues threat to dealers', *North Belfast News*, 4 June 2014.

¹⁷⁰ 'Leaders unite in condemnation', *Belfast Telegraph*, 2 November 2013.

Case Study 3: Alan Ryan

Alan Ryan, a leading figure for the Real IRA in Dublin, was shot dead in broad daylight on 3 September 2012 in the city. His funeral featured a paramilitary showing, with a volley of shots fired over his casket. In the aftermath of his killing, the 'New' IRA, formed by a merger of the Real IRA and Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD), issued a statement that the murderers 'will be hunted down and dealt with in an appropriate manner'.¹⁷¹

The 32-year-old had been a member of the Real IRA since his teenage years, eventually becoming a leading figure in the dissident group. His role was primarily in fundraising: after his release in 2005 from a seven-year stay in prison on two consecutive firearms-related convictions, he began to use criminal means to raise money for the group. Ryan ran a gang based in the Donaghmede area of Dublin heavily involved in crime; it established itself in the pub and club door security business and was known to extort other criminal gangs – typically demanding a 20% 'tax' – for their drug trafficking and robbery proceeds.¹⁷² Yet the Gardaí estimated that less than 10% of his 'fundraising' actually went to the dissident group, with the remainder instead pocketed by his gang.¹⁷³ This reflects the broader situation, where it is not always clear how much of criminal fundraising is used to fund terrorism and how much is simply for personal gain.¹⁷⁴

To date his murder remains unsolved, though several crime groups were suspected due to their apparent frustrations with his extortion attempts.¹⁷⁵ There was a history of conflict: Ryan was reported to have previously clashed with criminal gangs, such as Eamon Dunne's notorious crime group based in Finglas in the north of Dublin, and had even escaped an attempt on his life in August 2009 when the Gardaí intercepted a hitman.¹⁷⁶ In the months leading up to his murder it was reported that Dublin drug bosses placed a hit on Ryan, though the contract went unfulfilled.¹⁷⁷

What followed was a combination of Real IRA infighting, as well as skirmishes with Dublin's criminal underworld. In November 2012, a Real IRA associate of Ryan, Nathan Kinsella, was shot in the leg in a 'punishment' attack over suspicions of having stolen or withheld extortion money from his Real IRA bosses. He had been found in possession of a note detailing financial transactions made by Ryan's gang involving sums of €20,000, €60,000, and €120,000, in addition to the text: 'I understand that I went against army orders by not going to

171 Connla Young, 'Paramilitaries vow to kill drug dealers', *The Irish News*, 15 September 2012.

172 'IRA killer shot dead', *The Irish Examiner*, 4 September 2012.

173 'Real IRA terrorist shot dead in hail of bullets', *Irish Independent*, 4 September 2012.

174 OCTF, 2013, p. 37.

175 'Crime boss top suspect in assassination of Alan Ryan', *The Irish Examiner*, 6 September 2012.

176 *ibid.*; Jim Cusack, 'How time ran out for killer with a double life', *The Sunday Independent*, 9 September 2012.

177 Connla Young, 'Gardaí on high alert following murder of IRA man', *The Irish News*, 5 September 2012.

my OC [Commanding Officer]'.¹⁷⁸ Kinsella was later imprisoned for IRA membership, and in a sign of the infighting, was housed in a separate wing from other dissidents in Portlaoise prison.¹⁷⁹

More violence followed, demonstrating the potential for conflict to escalate rapidly. In December, Dublin crime boss Eamonn Kelly was killed by Real IRA member Sean Connolly,¹⁸⁰ and in January 2013, another Ryan associate, Declan Smith, was subjected to a 'punishment' shooting in Saggart, south Dublin (Smith was later murdered in March 2014). The following month Real IRA leader Kevin Braney murdered another member of the group, Peter Butterly, in Gormanston, County Meath.¹⁸¹

Ryan's murder brought renewed attention to dissidents' roles in the drug trade. The 32 County Sovereignty Movement, a republican movement of which Ryan was a member, therefore publicly distanced Ryan from drugs, stating he was shot 'on the streets where he grew up, streets where he had worked tirelessly to tackle the scourge of drugs which he had always opposed with every fibre of his being'.¹⁸² These claims were rejected by Alan Shatter, the Republic of Ireland's Justice Minister.¹⁸³

The episode and its fallout demonstrate how paramilitaries can exist as 'hybrid' groups, merging their ideological affiliations and criminal endeavours, making it difficult to gauge their motivation and political commitment.¹⁸⁴

Damaging Community Relations

Paramilitaries involving themselves in the drug trade, whether to prohibit or profit from it, run the additional risk of damaging community relations. This is especially the case with vigilantism, as paramilitaries are essentially attacking their own communities. Attacks can cause long-lasting physical and mental damage, with victims suffering from depression, avoidance behaviour, emotional numbing, and increased anxiety, all consistent with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Ironically, victims have even taken to substance dependence to assuage their anxieties over a repeat attack.¹⁸⁵ Their families – who are often involved in the decision to acquiesce to paramilitary demands – are also affected, with the parents of those shot having spoken of their feelings of guilt.¹⁸⁶ Donna Smith, the mother of RAAD murder victim Andrew Allen, explained the effects of vigilantism in Derry/Londonderry:

178 Brian Kavanagh, 'Dad-of-six arrested following Alan Ryan's funeral jailed for IRA membership', *Irish Independent*, 10 April 2014.

179 Ken Foy, 'Ryan pal Kinsella under murder threat in prison', *Herald*, 4 April 2014.

180 'Man jailed for life for Real IRA murder of Eamon Kelly', *Irish Times*, 1 May 2015.

181 Tom Brady, 'Armagh leader of "New IRA" order Co Meath murder in row over cash', *Belfast Telegraph*, 8 March 2013; Allison Morris, "'New IRA" Dublin leader jailed for life for murder of Peter Butterly', *The Irish News*, 9 February 2019.

182 Connla Young, 'Gardaí on high alert following murder of IRA man', *The Irish News*, 5 September 2012.

183 Valerie Robinson, 'Dissident with IRA man when he was shot won't help Gardaí', *The Irish News*, 12 September 2012.

184 For more on this theme, see Dishman, 2001 and Makarenko, 2004.

185 'Stacey Dooley Investigates: Shot by My Neighbour', *BBC*, 10 September 2018.

186 'Prime Time – Shooting by Appointment', *RTÉ News*, 23 May 2012.

I actually know of young boys who are sleeping with hammers and baseball bats at the side of their beds because they are so terrified. I know a mother that has a big piece of wood barricaded against her door because her son is under a death threat as she is afraid at night that they will come in.¹⁸⁷

Furthermore, recruitment may be jeopardised by activities seen to be unwarranted or disproportionate, especially as vigilantism targets the very demographic and community that paramilitaries recruit from. The chairman of a community group within a republican neighbourhood emphasised this in 2012, saying: 'People in the area have described those behind this [vigilante] attack as having the IQ of goldfish, and I agree ... The type of people they are targeting are young people in working class areas, council estates, who have nothing, and local people are left wondering, who is next'.¹⁸⁸

A public backlash occurred following RAAD's murder of Andrew Allen in County Donegal, Ireland, in February 2012. RAAD insisted Allen was murdered because of his involvement in drugs, yet in response there were several public rallies condemning the group and the threats they had made.¹⁸⁹ Its April 2012 death threat against Raymond Cole, who had already been shot and wounded by the group two years prior, led to local families in Derry/Londonderry rallying and demanding the threat be lifted.¹⁹⁰ In response to such pressure, RAAD did, at times, withdraw threats made against specific individuals, while on other occasions it simply reasserted the need to remove drugs from republican neighbourhoods.

Despite such issues, it is likely that vigilante groups have a base of support within local communities, though there are no reliable proxy indicators of this. For example, while a community's reluctance to provide police with information on vigilantes can be interpreted as tacit approval, it is likely more indicative of fears of reprisal attacks as well as a general culture of silence.¹⁹¹ For their part, paramilitaries emphasise how they are acting in response to local demands, providing a service that the police are unable to.¹⁹²

Loyalist paramilitaries, meanwhile, have received intense criticism for their role in the drug trade.¹⁹³ Criticism was especially fervent in 2013, after eight people died from overdoses of drugs reportedly supplied via loyalist channels. Indeed, the deaths highlighted the open secret of paramilitaries dealing drugs, with the Northern Ireland First Minister Peter Robinson stating that '[p]olice] need to pursue [the perpetrators], because it is well-known who is dealing drugs in east Belfast'.¹⁹⁴ UDA drug dealing in the Lower

187 Henry McDonald, 'Exclusive: Fear and Republican vigilantes stalk new city of culture: Vigilante violence on rise in Derry', *The Guardian*, 14 May 2012.

188 Brendan McDaid, 'Anti-drugs vigilantes shoot man in front of his family', *Belfast Telegraph*, 5 April 2012.

189 Lindsay, 2012, pp. 308–312.

190 Seamus McKinney, 'Dissidents urged to lift death threat', *The Irish News*, 25 April 2012.

191 'Spotlight on our shadowy gunmen', *Belfast Telegraph*, 16 May 2012.

192 See, for example, 'Stacey Dooley Investigates: Shot by My Neighbour', *BBC*, 10 September 2018.

193 See, for example, 'Editorial - Release info on drug dealers', *The Irish News*, 2 July 2013; 'Eight deaths... it's time we knew truth', *Belfast Telegraph*, 2 July 2013; 'Why are terror gangs still able to run drug empires?', *Belfast Telegraph*, 3 July 2013; 'Who will stand up to these loyalist thugs?', *The Irish News*, 2 April 2014.

194 Gerry Moriarty, 'PSNI to investigate possible drug deaths; Police inquiry into whether eight deaths in Belfast are linked to contaminated drugs', *The Irish News*, 2 July 2013; David McKittrick, 'The loyalist paramilitary and the drug deaths', *i*, 5 July 2013.

Shankill area of Belfast has also led to criticism from within loyalist communities, thus increasing the pressure to challenge paramilitary crime.¹⁹⁵

The authorities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have acknowledged – and taken steps to address – the severity of the issue. The 2015 ‘*A Fresh Start*’ Stormont Agreement included commitments to ‘challenge all paramilitary activity and associated criminality’, and, recognising the cross-border nature of organised criminal activity, to also establish a Joint Agency Task Force, led by officers from the PSNI, An Garda Síochána, the Revenue Commissioners, and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).¹⁹⁶ Similarly, the Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF) was also established in October 2017, which includes PSNI, HMRC, and the UK’s National Crime Agency (NCA). Over the 2017/18 financial year, the PCTF seized an estimated £58,000 worth of drugs,¹⁹⁷ though it is unknown how much of this was directly related to paramilitary activity, or what the quantity or types of drugs were.

The Northern Ireland Executive has similarly acknowledged the convergence between paramilitaries and organised crime.¹⁹⁸ Its 2016 Executive Action Plan followed the Fresh Start Agreement and emphasised the need to support individuals who desire to move away from paramilitary activity – including criminality – as well as the need to tackle those that persist in crime.¹⁹⁹ The plan urged the PSNI to prioritise investment in its investigative capacity, as well as to work with other law enforcement agencies.²⁰⁰ The plan even went so far as to say that tackling organised crime should be an ‘integral part’ in the fight against Northern Ireland-related terrorism.²⁰¹

Overall, this demonstrates that the strong and consistent overlaps between paramilitary activities and the drug trade – and more broadly, other forms of crime – have been noted in Northern Ireland. Criminality is a central feature of how many paramilitary groups operate, thus blurring the distinctions between what is political motivated and what is for ‘purely’ criminal ends. This presents challenges that are unlikely to disappear in the coming years.

¹⁹⁵ See, for example, Tracey Coulter’s conflict with the group: Ciaran Barnes, ‘Anti-drugs campaigner targeted by thugs after daring to speak out’, *Sunday Life*, 4 August 2013.

¹⁹⁶ Northern Ireland Executive, *A Fresh Start – The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan*, 17 November 2015, p. 15.

¹⁹⁷ OCTF, 2018, p. 68.

¹⁹⁸ This body exercises executive authority on behalf of the Northern Ireland Assembly and is made up of the First Minister, Deputy First Minister, two Junior Ministers, and eight department ministers.

¹⁹⁹ Northern Ireland Executive, *Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime – Executive Action Plan*, 19 July 2016, p. 5.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 18.

Other Groups

Several other terrorist groups and movements in Europe have also been accused of involvement in drugs. Of particular note are two separatist groups, the Basque *Euskadi ta Askatasuna* (Basque Homeland and Liberty, ETA), and the Corsican *Front de Libération Nationale Corse* (National Liberation Front for Corsica, FLNC). With both groups abandoning violence – ETA declared a definitive cessation of armed activities in 2011 and the FLNC ended its armed campaign in 2016 – the potential exists for its members to ‘transform’ into organised criminal activities, in a process similar to that seen among paramilitaries in Northern Ireland.²⁰²

There are indications that this potential has already been realised. After 2.2 tonnes of cocaine were seized from a yacht close to the French West Indies island of Martinique in April 2015, it emerged that one of the suspected traffickers had been linked to ETA. A French customs officer stated that: ‘It’s a profile we come across from time to time, former terrorists who turn to smuggling’.²⁰³ It is possible that more individuals have made a similar transition.

Although rarely seen in our sample, it also affects far-right terrorists. In March 2012, the Italian Emanuele Macchi Di Cellere, formerly associated with the armed Italian neo-fascist movement in the 1970s and 1980s, was arrested in possession of 165kg of cocaine.²⁰⁴ The haul had been imported from the Dominican Republic and was to be sold in Italy. Rather than demonstrating systematic, long-term, or formal collaboration between terrorist *groups* and the drug trade, these cases show how *individuals* can shift between these two worlds.

There is also evidence that an organised crime group, with suspected links to Hezbollah, has used Europe to launder the proceeds of criminal enterprises, including drugs.²⁰⁵ The group would gather money raised from cocaine sales in Europe, which was then used to purchase luxury goods – such as watches and cars – which were in turn sold in Lebanon. Using a *hawala* (an informal money transfer system) network, the group would then transfer the proceeds to the Latin American cartels that trafficked the drugs to Europe in the first place.²⁰⁶ At their most prolific, the group were reported to have laundered €1 million per week.²⁰⁷ It was disrupted in 2015 and 2016 as part of the US Drug Enforcement Agency’s *Operation Cedar*, with arrests taking place in France, Germany, and Italy. While two individuals

²⁰² For more, see Dishman, 2001, and Makarenko, 2004.

²⁰³ BBC Monitoring, ‘French customs make huge cocaine haul in Caribbean’, *BBC Monitoring European*, 21 April 2015 [translation of a news report by *Radio France Internationale*, 19 April 2015].

²⁰⁴ ‘Former right-wing terrorist arrested in France’, *ANSA*, 11 September 2014.

²⁰⁵ Europol, *From Suspicion to Action: Converting financial intelligence into greater operational impact*, Europol Financial Intelligence Group, 2017, p. 16.

²⁰⁶ Volkmar Kabisch, Jan Lukas Strozyk, Benedikt Strunz, ‘Lebanon-linked gang accused of laundering millions of euros in Germany’, *DW*, 13 November 2018.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

(Mohamad Nouredine and Hamdi Zaher El Dine) involved in the money laundering were labelled as ‘Hezbollah-affiliated’ by the US Treasury,²⁰⁸ Hezbollah’s exact role – and the amount of revenue it potentially generated for the group – is unclear. Nouredine was found guilty of money laundering and criminal conspiracy by a Paris court in November 2018.

The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), meanwhile, is frequently accused of being involved in the drug trade in the Middle East, Turkey, and Europe. The group is active in a known trafficking corridor in southeastern Turkey and its strongholds sit along the strategic heroin-trafficking route that extends from Afghanistan, through Iran and Turkey, to Europe. The PKK has been reported to not only ‘tax’ this trade, but also to involve themselves directly in the logistics of smuggling the drug into Europe.²⁰⁹ The group has engaged in other forms of criminality, including extortion and human trafficking,²¹⁰ and given that it operates in Europe,²¹¹ it has been speculated that the group is also engaged in the drug trade in the EU.

Commentary in this area is often alarmist in tone. In 2017, a Turkish police report claimed the PKK controls 80% of the illicit drugs market in Europe, and that the group generates \$1.5 billion in annual revenue alone from heroin production in northern Iraq.²¹² That same year, then Prime Minister of Turkey Binali Yıldırım also stated that ‘the PKK deals in drugs: it peddles heroin and cocaine to the European youth, that’s how they make money’.²¹³ When a Danish court chose to fine a Kurdish television channel in 2012 – rather than close it down – for disseminating propaganda for the PKK, Turkey’s then EU Affairs Minister Egemen Bağış similarly stated that this will mean ‘more Danish youth will face the risk of being poisoned by illicit drugs sold by the terrorist organisation’.²¹⁴

There is some evidence suggestive of PKK involvement in the drug trade in Europe. An intelligence report by the UK’s Metropolitan Police, for example, highlighted how the Tottenham Boys, a Kurdish gang based in London, were ‘involved in protection rackets/extortion, where they target local Kurdish businesses and use extreme violence to raise money for the Kurdish terrorist organisation the PKK’. The report states the gang employed men from other gangs to sell Class A and B drugs on the street and that they have ‘committed a number of fatal and non-fatal shootings throughout north London’. In turn, these proceeds were laundered as part of an organised crime operation.²¹⁵

Similarly, in 2012 the US Treasury named three Moldova-based men – Zeyneddin Geleri, Cerkez Akbulut and Omer Boztepe – as key figures in the PKK’s alleged drug network, who produced and

208 ‘Treasury Sanctions Key Hizballah Money Laundering Network’, *US Depart of the Treasury*, 28 January 2016.

209 Roth & Sever, 2007, pp. 907–909.

210 *ibid.*, pp. 901–920.

211 Vera Eccarius-Kelly, ‘Surreptitious Lifelines: A Structural Analysis of the FARC and the PKK’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol 24, No 2, 2012, p. 238.

212 It is unclear how Turkish police arrived at these estimates, and it has not been possible to independently verify them. ‘PKK controls 80 percent of narcotics market in Europe, Turkish police says’, *Hürriyet*, 29 August 2017.

213 Kim Sengupta, ‘US still sees Kurdish group as “terrorist organisation”, says Turkish PM’, *The Independent*, 12 May 2017.

214 ‘Ankara says Danish ruling on Roj TV proves PKK ties, but incomplete’, *Today’s Zaman*, 11 January 2012.

215 John Simpson, ‘Gang funds Turkish terrorists’, *The Times*, 19 December 2015.

trafficked heroin and marijuana. Geleri was also accused of being a member of a Romania-based drug trafficking group as well as a 'high ranking member' of the PKK.²¹⁶ It is unknown whether this was sanctioned by the group's leadership.

Beyond these two instances, however, there are few available examples of PKK-related individuals involved in the trafficking and dealing of drugs in Europe. In 2013 a Kurdish drug dealer by the name of Hamit Uslu was arrested in France and accused of trafficking 1,000 ecstasy tablets between the Netherlands and Turkey. During an appeal hearing, his lawyer stated that he should not be extradited to Turkey 'as he has activities related to the PKK'.²¹⁷ The extent of those connections is unclear, however, and there is no evidence available in the public domain confirming the alleged drug trafficking was connected to the PKK. It is possible that more evidence exists in closed sources.

²¹⁶ 'US names three as keys in PKK drugs network', *AFP*, 1 February 2012.

²¹⁷ François Barrère, 'Un trafiquant kurde d'ecstasy refuse d'être extradé en Turquie', *Midi Libre*, 29 January 2014.

Conclusion

As this paper has shown, terrorism in Europe overlaps with the drug trade in two primary arenas: among jihadists throughout the continent, and paramilitaries in Northern Ireland. In the European jihadist context there appears to be no formal, structural or inherent links to the drug trade. Many jihadists do, however, have a background in either consuming or dealing drugs, which can play an ancillary, indirect role in their radicalisation process. This involvement can continue long after they begin engaging with extremist ideas and networks. Where this does occur, post-radicalisation behaviour generally mirrors pre-radicalisation usage.

In a handful of cases, there is evidence that jihadists have taken drugs in the days – or possibly hours – before carrying out a terrorist attack, although it is unknown exactly how drug taking influenced their decision to act. None of these cases involved Captagon, counterfeit captagon, or amphetamine-type substances. At the most basic level, these examples show how it is important to re-examine easy and outdated assumptions about how jihadist radicalisation automatically correlates with religious behaviour, as there is no dichotomy between commitment to jihadism and involvement in drugs. A minority of jihadists have also used drug dealing to fund their activities, although this tends to involve small-scale transactions.

Among paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland, meanwhile, dense and longstanding overlaps with the drug trade have been observed, where republican and loyalist groups have sought either to prohibit or profit from the drug trade. This has caused conflict between criminals and paramilitaries, internal tensions within paramilitary groups, and risks alienating the very communities these groups claim to represent.

Overall, however, there are no inherent, automatic or ubiquitous crossovers between terrorists and the drug trade. Crossovers do exist, but in specific places and circumstances, showing how the boundaries between criminality and extremism are often blurred. Drugs are but one aspect of that. This presents a challenge to many EU states that are unaccustomed to dealing with this combination. As a French intelligence official stated regarding the 2012 terrorist attacks by the criminal-turned-jihadist Mohamed Merah: ‘We were [used to] dealing with Islamists, not delinquents’.²¹⁸ Yet many EU member states still have a functional separation between their anti-drugs and counter-terrorism agencies, which can potentially lead to such crossovers being overlooked.²¹⁹ Adapting to this reality is central to understanding an important aspect of the terrorist threat in Europe.

²¹⁸ Stéphane Durang-Souffland, ‘Procès Merah: Fethah Malki, le petit malfrat qui nie être un complice du tueur’, *Le Figaro*, 24 October 2017.

²¹⁹ EMCDDA, *EU Drug Markets Report 2016*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2016, p. 24.

Appendix

Table 3: *Deportations from Italy for Terrorism-Related Reasons, January 2014–June 2018*²²⁰

#	Name (if given)	Deportation Date	Nationality	Location	Involvement in crime
1	Raoudi Albdelbar	05/08/2014	Moroccan	Venice province	
2	Khalid Smina	04/04/2015	Moroccan	Imola	
3	Jouini Ghazi	11/04/2015	Tunisian	Verona	
4	Mohamed Ghazi	11/04/2015	Tunisian	Verona	
5		16/07/2015	Moroccan	Savona province	
6		08/08/2015	Tunisian	Perugia	Drug dealing
7	Abdelali Bouirki	23/11/2015	Moroccan	Bologna	
8	Abdelkrim Kaimoussi	23/11/2015	Moroccan	Bologna	
9	Mourad El Hachlafi	23/11/2015	Moroccan	Bologna	
10	Said Razek	23/11/2015	Moroccan	Bologna	
11	Atef Mathlouthi	24/11/2015	Tunisian	Brianza province	Drug dealing; Theft
12	Ghayour Amine	26/11/2015	Moroccan	Milan	Drug dealing
13	Abdelali Tahir	21/12/2015	Moroccan	Bologna	Drug dealing
14	Bamaarouf Adil	29/12/2015	Moroccan	Monselice	
15	Ljimini Redjep	13/01/2016	Macedonian	Treviso province	

²²⁰ This table only contains the deportations listed on the Interior Ministry website. As not all deportations are listed on the website, this is not an exhaustive list. In 2015, there were a total of 66 deportations for national security reasons; in 2016, there were 66; in 2017, there were 92; the figures for 2018 have yet to be released. Atef Mathlouthi was deported twice, on 24/11/2015 and 06/03/2018.

#	Name (if given)	Deportation Date	Nationality	Location	Involvement in crime
16		04/03/2016	Albanian	Pozzo d'Adda	
17		04/03/2016	Tunisian	Padova	
18	Mourad Ben GOuta	05/03/2016	Tunisian	Padova	Drug offences
19	A. A.	02/04/2016	Moroccan	Oristano	Drug offences; Murder
20		08/04/2016	Moroccan	Potenza	
21	Khachia Brahim	20/05/2016	Moroccan	Varese province	
22	Loumiy Zhou	20/05/2016	Moroccan	Varese province	
23		25/05/2016	Moroccan	Pisa	Drug offences
24		02/08/2016	Pakistani	Milan province	
25		04/08/2016	Tunisian	Catania	
26		04/08/2016	Tunisian	Catania	
27	Bargaoui Marouene	07/08/2016	Tunisian	Padua	Drug dealing
28		10/08/2016	Albanian	Ferrara	
29		13/08/2016	Tunisian	Andria	
30	Bilel Chihaoui	19/08/2016	Tunisian	Turin	Drug dealing
31		20/08/2016	Tunisian	Turin	
32		03/09/2016	Tunisian	Ferrara	
33		03/09/2016	Moroccan	Novara	
34	Ram Lubhaya	06/09/2016	Indian	Scoglitti	Kidnapping
35		08/09/2016	Moroccan	Treviso province	

#	Name (if given)	Deportation Date	Nationality	Location	Involvement in crime
36	Abdelfettah Mezouari	15/09/2016	Moroccan	Savona	Drug dealing
37	One unnamed woman	23/09/2016	Moroccan	Perugia	
38	Five unnamed people	02/10/2016	Macedonian	Ronchi dei Legionari	
39	Redouane Sakher	11/10/2016	Algerian	Bergamo province	Drug dealing
40		23/12/2016	Tunisian		Common crimes
41		29/12/2016	Tunisian	Brescia province	
42		13/01/2017	Tunisian	Ancona	Common crimes; Theft; Violence
43		19/01/2017	Tunisian	Palermo	Common crimes
44		20/01/2017	Pakistani	Olbia	Migrant trafficking
45		25/02/2017	Tunisian	Perugia province	Drug dealing
46		28/02/2017	Moroccan	Catania	Common crimes; Violence
47		04/03/2017	Tunisian	Milan and Monza	Drug dealing; Drug offences
48		07/04/2017	Moroccan	Rome	Common crimes
49		29/04/2017	Egyptian	Brindisi	Common crimes
50		26/05/2017	Tunisian	Milan	Common crimes; Drug dealing
51		30/06/2017	Tunisian	Novara	Common crimes
52	Nadir Naffati	08/09/2017	Tunisian	Milan	Drug dealing
53		22/09/2017	Pakistan	Teramo	
54		24/09/2017	Albanian	Riccione	Violence
55		30/09/2017	Egyptian	Milan	

#	Name (if given)	Deportation Date	Nationality	Location	Involvement in crime
56		06/10/2017	Moroccan	Perugia province	Violence
57		11/10/2017	Moroccan	Southern Italy	
58		19/10/2017	Algerian	Turin	
59		19/10/2017	Moroccan		Common crimes
60		21/10/2017	Pakistani	Naples	
61		25/10/2017	Albanian	Bari province	
62		25/10/2017	Macedonian	Bari province	
63	Laaraj Noureddine	28/10/2017	Moroccan	Rome	Drug dealing
64		06/11/2017	Tunisian	Milan	
65	Ahmed Hassam Rakha	09/11/2017	Egyptian	near Milan	Drug dealing
66		19/11/2017	Tunisian	Perugia	Drug offences
67	Two unnamed people	19/11/2017	Moroccan	Turin	
68		21/11/2017	Moroccan	Milan	
69	Two unnamed people	06/12/2017	Albanian	Lucera	Human trafficking
70		15/12/2017	French	Cuneo province	Petty crime
71		17/12/2017	Tunisian	Florence	Petty crime
72		28/12/2017	Kosovan	Bolzano province	
73		05/01/2018	Moroccan	Trapani	Fraud
74		20/01/2018	Algerian	Padua	Drug dealing
75	One unnamed woman	24/01/2018	Moroccan	Milan	

#	Name (if given)	Deportation Date	Nationality	Location	Involvement in crime
76		24/01/2018	Egyptian	Parma	Violence
77	Two unnamed people	26/01/2018	Macedonian	Venice	
78		29/01/2018	Tunisian	Palermo	Drug offences
79		01/02/2018	Egyptian	Turin	Common crimes
80		05/02/2018	Tunisian	Rimini	Drug dealing
81		06/02/2018	Pakistani	Rome	
82		15/02/2018	Moroccan	Milan	Sexual violence
83		16/02/2018	Tunisian	Ravenna	
84		17/02/2018	Moroccan	Milan	Crimes against the person; Violence
85		22/02/2018	Moroccan	Reggio Emilia	Drug dealing; Common crimes
86		24/02/2018	Tunisian	Rome and Turin	Human trafficking; Fraudulent doc.
87	Atef Mathlouthi (#11)	06/03/2018	Tunisian	Vimercate	Drug dealing; Theft
88		14/03/2018	Moroccan	Alessandria	Common crimes
89	Unnamed father and son	04/04/2018	Moroccan	L'Aquila	Drug dealing
90		18/04/2018	Moroccan	Reggio Emilia	
91		19/04/2018	Moroccan	Mantua	Drug offences
92		01/05/2018	Moroccan	Biella	Crimes against the person
93		02/05/2018	Tunisian	Varese	Common crimes
94		09/05/2018	Moroccan	Milan province	Crimes against the person
95		15/05/2018	Egyptian	Udine	Common crimes; Violence

#	Name (if given)	Deportation Date	Nationality	Location	Involvement in crime
96	Ouahbi Ahmed Taib	22/05/2018	Moroccan	San Salvo	Drug offences
97		04/06/2018	Egyptian	Trapani	Human trafficking
98		06/06/2018	Moroccan	Piacenza	Common crimes
99		12/06/2018	Moroccan	Turin	Drug dealing
100		26/06/2018	Moroccan	Sollicciano	Common crimes
101	Hamza Manai	30/06/2018	Tunisian	Verona	Common crimes



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