

## Strategic Vigilance as a Decisive Mechanism for Mitigating the Risks of Drug Spread in Algerian Society: A Sociological Reading

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### Abstract:

The spread of drugs and psychotropic substances is among the most serious sociological and security challenges facing Algerian society today. Its danger lies in its deep dimensions and in its destructive effects on the value system, the social structure, and the economic order. This has made traditional approaches, which focus on deterrence after the crime has occurred, insufficient for confronting cross-border trafficking and promotion networks. These networks are constantly changing and becoming more complex. Hence the importance of adopting strategic vigilance as a decisive anticipatory mechanism. It monitors the surrounding environment and anticipates threats before they become intractable crises. This study offers an in-depth sociological reading. It seeks to analyze the nature of the phenomenon and its new developments in the Algerian context. It also discusses how strategic vigilance, through its intelligence, social, and technological dimensions, can help build a preventive shield. Such a shield anticipates risks and protects the most vulnerable groups, especially young people.

A sociological analysis of this phenomenon requires an understanding of the structural transformations that Algerian society has experienced. These transformations have been accompanied by changes in behavioral and consumption patterns. Drugs are no longer merely an individual form of deviant behavior. They have become a complex system in which many factors intersect. These include economic factors, such as rapid changes in the labor market and unemployment. They also include social factors, such as the weakening of traditional family ties and the decline of the educational and guidance roles of institutions. Psychological pressures and frustration may also push some individuals to escape reality through addiction. The sociological reading shows that these dynamics have made society exposed to new kinds of toxic substances. This is especially true of hallucinogenic pills and synthetic drugs. They are cheap, easy to circulate, and highly damaging to the nervous and behavioral systems of users. They have also produced new criminal manifestations that are alien to Algerian values and to social tranquility.

In light of these interrelated facts, the classical security and legal response remains essential. It has made major efforts to foil repeated attempts to flood society with drugs. Yet this response still needs organized scientific and methodological support. Strategic vigilance can provide such support. It transforms scattered information into applicable anticipatory knowledge. This mechanism is based on integrated pillars. These include monitoring the regional and international political, economic, and social changes that directly affect the flow of toxic substances across borders. They also include following the methods used by organized crime networks in promotion, especially their use of digital media and encrypted applications to reach clients. Strategic vigilance also keeps pace with scientific developments in the manufacture of narcotic substances and emerging psychotropic substances in order to facilitate detection. It further gives close attention to behavioral and health indicators inside society. This helps detect the first pockets of spread, deal with them early, and dry up their sources before they expand.

On this basis, there is an urgent need to activate this vigilance through an integrated national system for data and information exchange among all actors. These actors include security and judicial bodies, as well as ministerial sectors such as health, education, higher education, and national solidarity. They also include sociological research centers and universities. This academic and institutional partnership makes it possible to monitor changes in the map of consumption and promotion. It also helps identify the groups most exposed to risk and

the real causes that push young people toward this dangerous path. Sociological research can therefore provide decision makers with a clear and continuous scientific vision. This allows them to revise preventive policies and update laws in line with the scale of renewed threats. It also helps move beyond temporary and immediate solutions toward sustainable long-term strategies. These strategies preserve societal security and the cohesion of the national fabric in the face of this soft war directed against its vital energies.

Moreover, the sociological dimension of strategic vigilance cannot be complete without integrating civil society and institutions as a central and genuine partner in this process. The Algerian family is now required to develop internal mechanisms of vigilance. These mechanisms should be based on emotional dialogue, understanding, and conscious follow-up of children's behavior and their psychological and physical changes. They should replace practices of neglect or harsh control that create rejection. Educational institutions, including schools and universities, must also create an intellectually and morally protected environment. This can be achieved through innovative awareness programs that use contemporary language and modern information and communication technologies. The media, mosques, and local associations must also help spread a culture of strategic awareness of risks. They should dismantle the misleading stereotypes promoted by criminal networks about drugs. In this way, the Algerian individual can move from being a target of these toxic substances to being an active actor in reporting them and resisting their spread.

The foresight made possible by strategic vigilance confirms that confronting the risks of drug spread in Algeria requires a necessary shift. Society must move from a culture of reaction to a culture of action and preparedness. It must also move from a single-sector approach to a comprehensive participatory approach. This orientation is the real safety valve for protecting human capital, especially young people. This group is expected to contribute to sustainable development and national renewal. Success in reducing this scourge is closely linked to the degree to which strategic vigilance is institutionalized and turned into a daily working culture adopted by state and societal institutions. It also requires continued support for in-depth sociological and field studies. Such studies must examine reality with courage and scientific rigor. This is necessary in order to anticipate and frustrate the plans of organized crime forces and to build a cohesive, aware Algerian society capable of facing contemporary challenges with steadiness and competence.

**Keywords:** Strategic vigilance; drug proliferation; psychotropic substances; social security; Algerian society.

## **Introduction:**

The drug phenomenon in Algerian society is no longer a traditional security challenge. It has become a complex and multidimensional social phenomenon. It threatens the Algerian social fabric and obstructs the path of development. Rapid social transformations, the effects of globalization, and internal social and

economic problems have all created an environment that favors the unprecedented spread of this scourge. The increasing quantities of seized narcotic substances, their growing variety, and the widening of the targeted groups to include many social categories all show that deterrent approaches based on confronting crime after it occurs are no longer sufficient on their own.

In this context, the concept of strategic vigilance appears as an effective analytical and methodological framework for response. Unlike the traditional approach, strategic vigilance is based on anticipation, foresight, and continuous institutional coordination among different security institutions, the judiciary, the National Office for the Fight Against Drugs and Drug Addiction under the Ministry of Justice, intermediary centers for addiction treatment, and the National Agency for Health Security under the Ministry of Health. This coordination allows for a precise and dynamic understanding of threats before they worsen. This paper aims to provide a sociological reading of the drug reality in Algeria. It also analyzes the role of strategic vigilance as an effective mechanism for reducing its risks. The methodology is based on the analysis of official data and on a review of comparative international experiences. It focuses on the new Law No. 23-05 as one of the most important manifestations of this approach in Algerian drug-control policy.

## **First: The Conceptual Framework of Strategic Vigilance in the Context of Societal Security**

## **1.1. Defining Strategic Vigilance: From the Business Context to Societal Security**

In its original context, namely business management, strategic vigilance is defined as a collective and continuous process. It aims to collect and use information in a proactive and voluntary manner in response to possible changes in the organization's external environment. Its main purpose is to detect opportunities and reduce uncertainty. This concept can be extended from business management to the fields of societal security and public health. In this transition, opportunities become preventive and therapeutic possibilities. Risks become societal threats that target individuals and institutions. Unlike economic intelligence, which seeks to influence and change the environment, strategic vigilance is limited to capturing signals from the environment and observing them regularly. This makes it a decisive tool in forecasting and decision-making.

A direct applied model can be drawn from the concept of pharmacovigilance. This field is concerned with monitoring and assessing medicine-related risks and with developing effective policies to reduce them. It represents a direct application of strategic vigilance in the health field. It is closely related to the fight against drugs and psychotropic substances because it requires the monitoring of the negative effects of these substances and the adoption of preventive measures based on risk assessment.

### **A. The Structural Deconstruction of Strategic Vigilance in Business Management**

At the first epistemological level, administrative and economic literature agrees that strategic vigilance is the core of the forecasting process within economic institutions. In this classical and original context, it refers to a collective, organized, and continuous process. It aims to monitor, collect, process, and use information and environmental data surrounding the organization in a proactive and voluntary way (Lesca, 2003).

This definition includes dynamic dimensions that can be analyzed sociologically and administratively through three main pillars:

1. Collective and voluntary action: Vigilance is not limited to one person or one department. It is an institutional culture through which all parties consciously and deliberately commit themselves to monitoring environmental changes.
2. Continuity and permanence: Vigilance is an uninterrupted process. It depends on continuous feedback in order to keep pace with the dynamics of an unstable external environment (Martinet & Marti, 2001).
3. Reducing areas of uncertainty: This proactive monitoring seeks to remove the ambiguity surrounding the future. It enables decision makers to identify latent opportunities and reduce the effects of risks before they occur (Shoemaker & Day, 2009).

From this perspective, the conceptual use of strategic vigilance in the business environment centered mainly on preserving competitive advantage and ensuring the survival of the organization in an economic market marked by turbulence and intense competition (Al-Khafaji, 2014).

## **B. The Terminological Use of the Concept in Societal Security and Public Health**

When this concept moves from the commercial and corporate sphere to the sphere of societal security and public health, it undergoes a deep process of sociological adaptation. This process is linked to the structure of society and its vital functions. The transfer imposes a radical change in aims and purposes. The binary relation between opportunities and risks is reformulated in a purely protective and societal direction, as follows:

### **First: The transformation of “opportunities” into “preventive and therapeutic possibilities”**

In the business world, an opportunity means material gains and the expansion of market share. When strategic vigilance is applied to societal security and public health, the opportunity detected in advance becomes a preventive and therapeutic possibility.

Sociologically, capturing early signals of behavioral transformations or deviant tendencies gives socialization and health institutions a suitable opportunity for early intervention. This intervention allows for the formulation of positive behavioral models, the activation of value-based and social protection programs, and the construction of health safety networks. These networks protect individuals from anomie and prevent social scourges from becoming entrenched and difficult to treat (Miller & Zuckerberg, 2015).

### **Second: The transformation of “risks” into “societal threats targeting individuals and institutions”**

If risk in the business context threatens profits or the financial survival of the organization, risk in the context of societal security becomes a direct societal threat that undermines stability.

These threats openly target two basic structures in society:

- The individual: They target psychological, mental, and physical safety. This leads to alienation and to a disturbance in the individual’s functional performance within society.
- Institutions: These threats also affect the family, educational, health, and security institutions. They create disorder and confusion. This weakens society’s ability to achieve social control and organic solidarity in the Durkheimian sense (Durkheim, 1951). On this basis, strategic vigilance becomes a cognitive and anticipatory shield that protects societal security from factors of disintegration and shock (Hijab, 2011).

### **Epistemological and Methodological Distinction: Strategic Vigilance Versus Economic Intelligence**

A strict conceptual definition requires a precise and clear separation between strategic vigilance and economic intelligence. Many researchers confuse the two concepts. The essential difference lies in the nature of practice and in its relationship with the surrounding environment:

Economic intelligence goes beyond simple monitoring. It has an offensive and influential character. It mainly aims to use collected information as a tool of action and pressure in order to influence the environment, change it, and direct its

variables in favor of the organization or the state (Jakobiak, 2004).

Strategic vigilance, by contrast, remains structurally and functionally limited to the process of capturing signals from the environment and observing them regularly and continuously. It does not intervene directly to impose forced change on that environment during the early stages of monitoring (Lesca & Lesca, 2011).

Based on this distinction, strategic vigilance occupies a highly important position as a decisive tool in forecasting and decision-making. It provides decision makers and social and health policy makers with clear data and early indicators about social reality. It also allows them to read future scenarios with greater clarity and to reduce error and improvisation in protective decisions (Al-Kinani, 2019; Roubelat, 2006).

### **The Applied Dynamic Model: Pharmacovigilance as a Basis for Combating Drugs and Psychotropic Substances**

To move the concept of strategic vigilance from abstract theory to direct operational application in public health and societal security, pharmacovigilance emerges as one of the most useful and persuasive models. It demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2002) defines pharmacovigilance as the science and activities relating to the detection, assessment, understanding, and prevention of adverse effects or any other medicine-related problem.

This medical and health model fully embodies the spirit and mechanisms of

strategic vigilance through several structural points of convergence:

1. Permanent and continuous monitoring: It monitors unexpected effects of pharmaceutical substances and medicines after they are placed in human use.
2. Precise scientific assessment: It subjects indicators and weak signals to laboratory and statistical analysis in order to identify the degree of harm and its source.
3. The development of effective risk-reduction policies: It builds and updates preventive and therapeutic measures on the basis of continuous assessment results in order to ensure community safety (World Health Organization, 2002).

### **Applied Use in the Fight Against Drugs and Psychotropic Substances**

This model has a close and deep connection with the fight against drugs and psychotropic substances. Addiction in contemporary societies is no longer an isolated behavioral problem. It has become a structural and evolving risk that requires monitoring mechanisms similar to pharmacovigilance. This can be done at two main levels:

Monitoring negative and emerging effects: This field requires the activation of strategic vigilance that regularly monitors the appearance of new chemical compounds. It must also monitor the misuse of some medicines and psychotropic substances of pharmaceutical origin. It should trace their routes of spread among youth groups and identify the negative behavioral, social, and psychological effects that result from them (National Center for Social Studies and Research, 2022).

Establishing preventive measures based on risk assessment: A deep understanding of the signals captured about narcotic substances allows the institutions concerned to move from later punitive approaches to anticipatory preventive measures. These measures should be designed according to the real size of assessed risks. They include updating laws and protective schedules, directing specialized awareness campaigns, and strengthening the therapeutic capacities of care institutions. This prevents these scourges from penetrating the social fabric and preserves the balance and sustainable stability of societal security (Saleh, 2017; Al-Sudairi, 2020).

## **1.2. The Basic Components of Strategic Vigilance in Drug Control**

Strategic vigilance consists of a set of interconnected elements that work together to create an integrated system:

Foresight and organized analysis: Vigilance requires the ability to read the features and developments of modern crime, such as cybercrime and drug-related financial crimes. This, in turn, requires the development of capacities in critical thinking and evidence- and data-based decision-making.

Information collection and exchange: This element is not limited to security bodies. It also includes the voluntary exchange of information among the relevant sectors, including health, social, and educational actors. The aim is to create an early warning system that brings together diverse field experiences and allows for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Partnership and institutional coordination: Strategic vigilance is not the task of one body. It is a framework for adapting and directing the behavior of all economic and social actors toward one unified strategic goal. This requires close coordination among security bodies, such as the police and gendarmerie, health actors, such as treatment centers, the Ministry of Justice, and social institutions, including the family, the school, the mosque, and civil society.

Strategic vigilance represents a shift in the intellectual model of drug control. Success is no longer measured only by the quantities seized. It is also measured by the ability to predict risks and prevent them before they occur. Weak coordination among institutions is one of the main obstacles facing vigilance. It leads to fragmented efforts and to the absence of a complete picture of the threat. This makes the formulation of proactive policies difficult and ultimately increases drug-related risks for society. In a relatively new context, this strategy faces major challenges, such as limited technical and human resources and the lack of sufficient field experience in this area.

## **Second: The Sociological Landscape of the Drug Phenomenon in Algeria: Dimensions and Figures**

### **1.1. Field Reality: Types of Drugs and Targeted Groups**

Field studies and reports show that the drug phenomenon in Algeria is no longer confined to a specific age group or social category. It has affected all segments of Algerian society. It targets all groups and ages, including children. Psychotropic

substances have been seized inside primary schools. This confirms the seriousness of the situation and the expansion of the phenomenon to highly vulnerable groups.

As for the most widespread types of drugs, psychotropic substances dominate the scene. They are known by popular names such as “the rocket,” “the taxi,” and “the red one.” They are followed by natural drugs such as processed cannabis and “Tchouchna.” Hard drugs, such as cocaine and heroin, remain limited to a narrow social group, mostly among the children of wealthy families. This distribution reflects a social division in the nature of the problem. There is a broad quantitative problem represented by psychotropic substances, which is linked to wide social and economic factors. There is also a specialized qualitative problem represented by hard drugs, which is linked to international criminal networks and the economy of organized crime. Any effective vigilance strategy must take this distinction into account when designing preventive and deterrent programs.

## 2.2. National and International Statistics: A Reading of the Figures

The annual outcome for 2023 reveals worrying figures concerning drug-control activities in Algeria:

National seizure statistics:

According to the General Directorate of National Security, 129,471 cases were recorded in 2023. These cases involved 146,309 persons in drug-trafficking cases. The seized quantities included more than 13.5 million hallucinogenic pills, more than seven tons of cannabis, 169 kilograms of cocaine, and three kilograms of heroin.

By contrast, National Gendarmerie units announced the seizure of more than ten million hallucinogenic pills, 29 tons of processed cannabis, and 58 kilograms of cocaine during the same year.

The discrepancy between the figures reported by different security bodies reveals a real challenge in the structure of strategic vigilance. The absence of a unified central system for collecting and analyzing data from different actors leads to scattered and inaccurate information. This hinders the formulation of evidence-based preventive policies and allows the phenomenon to continue worsening. This discrepancy makes it urgent to establish a unified national information platform.

Type of drug	Quantity seized (National Security)	Quantity seized (National Gendarmerie)
Hallucinogenic pills	13,566,993 pills	More than 10,000,000 pills
Processed cannabis	More than 7 tons	29 tons
Cocaine	169 kg	58 kg
Heroin	3 kg	Not mentioned

International statistics and their impact on Algeria:

The 2025 World Drug Report issued by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) indicates that synthetic drug and cocaine markets are expanding globally. It also indicates that cocaine traffickers are expanding into new markets in Africa.

The UNODC regional report also shows that North Africa is a major transit point for drugs. It highlights the growing use of

pharmaceutical opioids such as tramadol. Africa accounted for 90% of global tramadol seizures during the past five years. These facts confirm the need for cross-border vigilance.

### **3.2. A Reading of the Sociological and Psychological Causes**

Field sociological studies in Algeria show that drug use is closely linked to many psychological, social, and family factors. The main reasons that push young people toward drug use include the following:

Psychological factors: forgetting problems (45.5%), relieving stress and anxiety (27.5%), seeking temporary happiness (46.6%), and searching for distinction.

Social and family factors: peer pressure and the desire to belong to a group, including imitation of friends at a rate of 18% and belonging at a rate of 23.5%; family problems at a rate of 22%; and free time that is not used positively.

The discovery of psychotropic substances in primary schools is not merely a security report. It is a sociological vigilance signal that raises the alarm about the weakening of social immunity and the value vacuum experienced by children at an early age. This justifies the urgent need for comprehensive preventive programs that target both the individual and the family. Family disintegration and weak parental supervision increase children's vulnerability. They make them more exposed to peer pressure and to involvement in drug use.

## **Third: Strategic Vigilance in Algerian National Policies: Law No. 23-05 as a Model**

### **1.1. Law No. 23-05: A Legislative Embodiment of the Vigilance Approach**

The new Law No. 23-05 on the prevention and control of drugs and psychotropic substances represents a major legislative shift. It reflects Algeria's adoption of the strategic vigilance approach. This law strengthened the previous legislation, Law No. 04-18, and granted broad powers to the National Office for the Fight Against Drugs and Drug Addiction (ONLCDA). This legislative shift is based on several pillars:

**Institutional integration:** The law entrusted the National Office with preparing the national drug-control policy and coordinating it with an evaluation and follow-up committee that includes 14 ministerial sectors. This step aims to unify efforts and avoid fragmentation.

**Analysis and decision-making:** The law gave the Office the authority to analyze drug-related indicators in order to help the authorities take appropriate decisions.

**Pharmacovigilance:** The law provides for a national classification of drugs and psychotropic substances. It also requires pharmacists to report irregular prescriptions and establishes a national electronic register of medical prescriptions. These measures are a direct application of pharmacovigilance. They aim to control the leakage of medicines from legitimate sources into the black market.

**Rehabilitative treatment:** The law gives the judge the authority to refer an addicted

person to treatment when addiction is established. This step reflects a qualitative shift in dealing with addicted persons as patients and not only as offenders. It is a basic principle of health vigilance.

### **2.1. Community Vigilance: The Role of Social Institutions**

The success of strategic vigilance depends on activating the role of social institutions as a first line of defense:

The family: It has a central role in providing a good model, maintaining family stability, strengthening positive communication, and practicing responsible monitoring.

The school: Its role goes beyond supervision. It includes health education, awareness-raising about the dangers of drugs, and targeted preventive programs for young people and students.

The mosque: It can help fill young people's free time through religious and recreational programs. It can also provide social support and strengthen religious and moral awareness as a protection against deviance.

The media: It is a strategic partner in spreading awareness through specialized programs, providing accurate information, and avoiding exaggeration as well as minimization.

Law No. 23-05 provides an ideal framework for strategic vigilance at the theoretical level. Its real success, however, depends on activating community vigilance and health vigilance. Without effective partnerships with social institutions and without sufficient resources for treatment centers, the law will remain ink on paper.

This shows the need to overcome obstacles related to resources and coordination, as some studies have noted.

### **Fourth: Lessons Learned from International Experiences: Toward Advanced Strategic Vigilance**

#### **1.1. The European Early Warning System (EWS) as an Advanced Vigilance Model**

The European Early Warning System (EWS) is an advanced model of strategic vigilance in the field of drug control. It was established in 1997 to monitor new psychoactive substances (NPS). It functions as a first line of defense for detecting new substances and assessing their health and social risks through a network of national systems in the member states. This model offers an important lesson for Algeria in dealing with renewed challenges. Global drug markets are constantly changing. Algeria, as a gateway to the African continent, is exposed to these developments. A similar vigilance system could give Algeria the ability to anticipate and respond quickly.

#### **2.1. Evidence- and Data-Based Prevention Strategies**

International experiences show that effective prevention strategies depend on identifying risk factors, such as the family, peers, and the community, as well as protective factors. Preventive programs are then designed accordingly. Many countries, such as the United States, rely on data analysis and trend monitoring. They also use modern technology, including artificial intelligence, to analyze data and predict risks. Global health models also adopt

comprehensive treatment programs. These include medication-assisted treatment, cognitive behavioral therapy, support through self-help groups, and social and family therapy.

### **3.1. Regional and International Cooperation: Cross-Border Vigilance**

Confronting the drug threat requires cross-border vigilance. Algeria is not an isolated island. It is part of North Africa, a region considered an important transit point for drugs. Countries such as the United Arab Emirates and France have shown the importance of international cooperation in drug control. Such cooperation may take the form of operational information exchange or the funding of projects that strengthen the capacities of partner countries. Algeria has also participated in Arab and regional conferences on drug control. This reflects an awareness of the importance of this dimension. International cooperation is not a mere exchange of information. It is an essential part of strategic vigilance. The failure of any neighboring state to monitor its borders becomes a vigilance signal for Algeria. It requires a proactive response.

### **Conclusion:**

The conclusion of this article shows that the worsening drug phenomenon in Algeria requires a radical shift from the traditional deterrent approach to a comprehensive approach based on strategic vigilance. The new Law No. 23-05 is an advanced and important step in this direction. It integrates preventive and therapeutic dimensions into the legislative framework and gives the National Office for the Fight Against Drugs and Drug Addiction broad powers of

leadership and coordination. Yet gaps and challenges remain. The most important are the inconsistency of national data and the need to activate community partnerships in practice.

Therefore, a set of measures should be adopted in order to strengthen the strategic vigilance system in Algeria:

1. Establishing a national information and early warning system: This would address contradictions in national statistics and provide a unified platform for collecting and analyzing data from different actors, including security services, the gendarmerie, customs, and health institutions. It should also benefit from international models such as the European Early Warning System.
2. Investing in community vigilance: This would address the root causes of the phenomenon linked to family and psychological factors. It would also activate the role of the family, the school, the mosque, and civil society as effective partners in prevention through awareness programs directed at vulnerable groups.
3. Strengthening health and therapeutic vigilance: This would help shift the view of the addicted person from offender to patient, as provided for by the new law. It requires increasing and improving addiction treatment centers, providing comprehensive treatment programs that include medical, psychological, and social care, and reducing the social stigma associated with addiction.
4. Developing regional and international cooperation: This is necessary to confront cross-border trafficking networks. It should be achieved by strengthening coordination with neighboring countries and international

organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It should also include the exchange of intelligence on trafficking routes and emerging types of drugs.

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