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**NAVAL  
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**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**THE USE OF TERRORISM BY DRUG TRAFFICKING  
ORGANIZATIONS' PARAMILITARY GROUPS IN MEXICO**

by

Cesar A. Barria Issa

December 2010

Thesis Advisor: Michael Freeman  
Second Reader: Kalev Sepp

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PARAMILITARY GROUPS IN MEXICO**

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**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the early 1990s, Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) created their own military arms that later evolved into sophisticated paramilitary groups, now engaged in an all-out war against the state and/or anyone who represents an obstacle for their criminal activities. Furthermore, they are not hesitating to use tactics of extreme violence as terrorism to psychologically impact their enemies and those civilians not supporting them. Historically, terrorism related to drugs is new in Mexico but not in Latin America. The illegal drug trade has funded terrorist groups in Peru and Colombia, empowered criminal organizations and caused them to challenge the state's authority. An objective comparison of these cases can teach important lessons and show new paths to follow in the solution of Mexico's costly conflict. This thesis will define: How, where and why are DTO's paramilitary groups opting for terrorism in Mexico. It will outline the proper mechanisms to counter that terrorism. There is a long way to go to win the war on drugs in Mexico, but in order to apply new long term, less direct, and more social-based strategies, it is urgent for the state to set the proper security conditions in the short term.



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## **I. INTRODUCTION: TERROR ENTERS THE WAR ON DRUGS**

Drug trade dynamics in Mexico have proved, in the past, not to have needed extreme violence to achieve goals, on either sides of the game, the criminals trafficking and the state enforcing the law. So, what is wrong with Mexican counter-narcotics enforcement recently? Why, over four years, has the present war on drugs in Mexico been as costly in lives as a medium intensity regular warfare conflict? Why are there now paramilitary groups fighting openly, in daylight, right in the middle of the most important urban centers? And, why are innocent civilians, not related to the drug trade, being killed?

The so called "War on Drugs" in Mexico is a conflict that has brought the Mexican State and the Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) operating in Mexico face-to-face. By general consensus, the present war on drugs started in December 2006 when President Felipe Calderon sent 6,500 Army troops to support law enforcement forces to contain the increasing violence in the central west coast state of Michoacán. After that date, the Mexican government's strategy against drugs has seemed to be focused in applying "all the State's power" to ending drug trafficking in Mexico. Since 2006, the death toll related to drug violence has increased to a rate not seen in Mexico since the 1910 Civil War (McCaa, 2003). Drug related violence has reached all social sectors in unprecedented levels. Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) have developed into complex and powerful criminal networks. Notwithstanding, DTOs are constantly expanding and improving their

traditional structures to better administer their businesses; now they are adding military arms to their organizations in order to compete with rival DTOs and to cope with the state's law enforcement efforts. The DTO's military arms are being designed to operate as decentralized groups to achieve mobility and adaptability as military-type units. The current intense government anti-drug campaign has resulted in a high number of detentions, causing internal hierarchical re-arrangements inside DTOs that along with external factors such as alliances and splits have increased turf war violence. Moreover, some of the original DTO's military arms, originally created to support the largest organization, have become independent. Now, independent groups with the size and organization of small armies are starting to play their own roles in the already complex war on drugs. Some of these new paramilitary groups are led by Mexican military deserters, some of them from elite special operations units.

The DTO's paramilitary groups are growing and are quickly adapting to the war on drugs in Mexico. They have created fully operational training camps and logistics networks, and have acquired advanced weaponry and high-tech tactical communications. They have their own ethos, almost sectarian, focused on attracting recruits among the younger people in Mexico. According to recent studies by the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, (Autonomous National University of Mexico), UNAM, estimates are that about 18 million people around 18 years old neither attend school or have jobs (Aviles K., 2010). This sector of the young population is being recruited by DTO paramilitary

groups with a promise of easy money and power (Informador, 2010). Another fact is that DTO paramilitary groups' ideology is far from the traditional *mafia* ideology. There is no longer the old rural drug lord providing welfare and services to the people living in the towns where they came from. Now, they are extremely violent and negotiate less. Some of the groups' founders were professional soldiers trained as experts in irregular warfare in some of the world's best military training centers and they know how to inflict the worst damage possible to their enemies. They know what a Psychological Operation is, what it means to intimidate the adversary, and they know how to do it at its most extreme level. Moreover, within their turf wars, everybody between them and their criminal activities is the enemy, making no distinctions. Terrorist tactics, such as massacres, indiscriminate raids and bombings are being used in an increasing rate.

It can be argued that DTO paramilitary groups are using terrorist tactics to psychologically impact the general population and law enforcement forces in order to influence their decisions and benefit their criminal purposes. Nevertheless, organized crime's ultimate goal is the profit realized from their illicit activities. And because these activities are illicit, they must be kept at low visibility. Terrorism leaves signatures, and attracts undesirable attention, mainly when it is used in a country where terrorism is not common. So, what is the real cost and the benefit for criminal networks such as DTOs paramilitary groups to opt for terrorism?



All DTO paramilitary groups are aiming at highly symbolic targets within a society that they know very well since they are part of it. They have no political purposes at this time, but paradoxically, can operate as guerrillas to ambush stronger forces, or as terrorist cells to destabilize urban areas.

Terrorism is a word that is associated with totalitarian governments, insurgencies, separatist groups, religious violence, asymmetric warfare and extremist ideology. It is not easy to relate terrorism and criminal violence within a relatively advanced democracy, despite it belonging to a developing country. Organized crime is morphing in Mexico and it is happening faster than enforcement laws and forces designed to contain it can be adapted. The DTOs in Mexico are not behaving as they used to do. They are applying as many characteristics from insurgent and terrorist groups as the achievement of their criminal goals seems to require, and with the advantage that the vast resources coming from drug trade gives. What is most concerning is that the Mexican state and society's conditions are allowing it, just as a liquid fluid takes the shape of the container that holds it.

**A. RESEARCH QUESTION: WHY TERRORISM?**

Drug trafficking organizations are basically criminal enterprises. They are typically most involved with generating profits by providing drugs to consumers (Hanser, Wakeley, Smith, & Wallace, 2008). In Mexico, DTOs have developed successfully through the last three decades. They set up what Huang (2008) calls the "first type of efficient functional establishments"(p. 50) by setting up corruption

rings within law enforcement and then political systems. In the last decade, the largest DTOs started fragmentizing into smaller DTOs that engaged in turf wars. Since December 2006, the core government administration's policy has been to target and disrupt organized crime, mainly DTOs. The deeply corrupted systems have made it difficult for the state to eliminate DTOs, which in four years of war have killed about 1,000 state officials, among them candidates for governors, judges, majors, municipal level employees, 59 journalists, about 200 military and 2,073 policemen. On the other hand, jails have increased their population 241% with approximately 131,000 inmates indicted. More than 10,000 criminals were killed in turf wars and about 28,000 were shot down by federal forces in 963 firefights. Despite numbers being on the government's side, the general population's perception of security has been seriously damaged. Entire towns and small cities in the north have been abandoned. Thousands of people have fled their residential areas to safer places, even abroad. In border cities, such as Matamoros, local periodicals and television news broadcasts do not report anything related to DTOs. Bombings happen almost every day at TV and radio stations and newspapers. Clubs, bars, restaurants, private parties, health centers, service centers have been raided indiscriminately with assault rifles' fire. According to international comparisons from the World Health Organization, Mexico's 11.2 rate of violent homicides per 100,000 inhabitants is far under the Colombia's 52.5 or Venezuela's 31.9 (PAHO/WHO, 2010). Social violence in Mexico, at least by statistics, has not required a state of emergency in any part of Mexico. However, the population's

perspective of safety has already been influenced. The terrorist tactics DTOs are applying are psychologically impacting Mexican society. Beyond an integrated strategy must be launched to successfully cope with the drug trade. Law enforcement must use reliable tools to set an environment of security and stability in opposition to the DTOs' terror campaigns. Terrorism by DTOs has first to be understood in order to be able to counter it successfully.

**B. ORGANIZATION: PAST AND PRESENT OF DRUGS AND TERRORISM'S CONVERGENCES IN LATIN AMERICA**

To provide an objective answer for DTO's complex terrorism problem the next chapter will review the theory about the logic of terrorism and advantages and disadvantages of its use, in order to establish a reference frame. The review will also be focused on the logic of the organized crime structures and dynamics, in order to establish a coherent relationship.

In Chapter III, some previous organizations that historically were involved in the drug trade and terrorism at the same time, such as Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in Peru, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) FARC, and the Auto-defensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Force of Colombia) AUC in Colombia will be outlined. However, despite these groups having entered large scale terrorism in Latin America, their cases are different from organized crime's terrorism explained in this thesis. Therefore, Chapter III will continue with a discussion of Pablo Escobar's Medellin Cartel, which although not designated as a terrorist organization was the DTO that introduced

terrorism to organized crime in Latin America and is, historically, an organization closer to Mexico's current phenomena.

In Chapter IV, the war on drugs in Mexico, starting with the history of DTOs in Mexico, their organizations and structures and how, when, and why their first military arms appeared will be described. Then, a description of the most important paramilitary groups, how they have developed and how they operate will be presented. It is essential to have a clear image of each group since some specific characteristics have made some of them more and less prone to use terrorism. Another important aspect that must be considered is the way they have developed, the differences between them, and the organizations they came from. These differences will help to better lay out the problem's dynamics. The last part will be a description of the state's military response to define what role the Armed Forces have in the current drug related violence.

Chapter V will start with a comparison of the historical case and current DTOs paramilitary groups' use of terror in Mexico to outline recurrent and unprecedented patterns and produce the answers to what they are and what they are not, and when, where, and why they choose terrorism. The chapter's conclusion explains what is needed and what is available in the Mexican Armed Forces in relation to the requirements to successfully counter DTOs paramilitary terrorism.

Government and society in Mexico rely on the Armed Forces as the strongest institution that has proved to be the least permeable to corruption. There are some important

themes beyond the scope of this work that should be considered in the big picture. Aspects, other times ignored, such as society's perception of the Armed Forces, will not be discussed in depth. However, it is necessary to mention that the population's perspective represents decisive advantages to the kind of war that is most likely to come: the war for people's minds. At the end, terrorism is a tactic based on psychological influence; so, it must be the society's minds that are the first fortress to reinforce.

### **C. CONCLUSION: SECURITY IS FIRST**

The answer to the research question sums up many factors that merge from all the different sectors of Mexican society, which have roots so deep that they cannot be seen at first glance. Constant and serious failures in politics, foreign policy, and economics had contributed to weaken the state and strengthen the society. Drug trade has been present for decades, but it has become a national security issue in recent years. Drug trade has taken advantage of the survival politics' models that Mexican governments have applied during the last sixty years (Migdal, 1988). At some times, positive indicators such as democratic transition, international trade treaties and the discovery of important natural resources have built up Mexican society's hopes. Nevertheless, in the end, they just fed the state's weakening factors, such as corruption, nepotism, and partisan division that have caused a failed relationship with its own society. Mexico has a strong society that is being supported by a weak and outdated governing system that is starting to show its lack of

balance by undergoing the worst scenarios possible on problems that might be controlled. Terrorism-related organized crime is one of them. Finally, the institutions on which the state relies for the mobilization of public forces are the most affected in the DTO problem because they were corrupted so long ago that their vulnerability reached a breaking point. A state's reliance on its armed forces is not a failed strategy, but it must be followed by a solution to the social disruption that is feeding the destabilizing actors. To comprehend and properly respond to organized crime's terrorism in Mexico, the role of the armed forces must be changed to one less supportive and more active, with an updated and well-defined legal basis, to avoid painful lessons learned by other countries in the past.

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## II. LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK: THEORY OF TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

Terrorism is a word that is hard to define. Many authors and scholars have tried but there is yet no a universal definition. It is said that this is because it is a word with a high emotional charge.

Jeffrey Bale has defined Terrorism as:

The use or threatened use of violence, directed against victims selected for the symbolic or representative value, as a means of instilling anxiety in, transmitting one or more messages to, and thereby manipulating the perceptions and behavior of wider target audiences.

For the scope of this thesis, the definition of terrorism will be used because it can embrace the Mexican federal law's terrorist definition in every article it which it is mentioned.

Dr. Bale states that the definition of terrorism does not have exact boundaries since it had been used broadly in politics in a partisan fashion. For this thesis the definition will cover acts when the relationship between perpetrators, victims, and wider target audiences are clear. Other considerations are that sometimes the relationship includes more than one target audience to be influenced, and that victims are either randomly selected or selected by symbolic representation. Terrorism as it is punished by law in Mexico will be discussed in Chapter IV where the types of DTO paramilitary groups' attacks are defined.



Another important distinction to take into consideration is the use of the word narco-terrorism. By the close relationship between terrorist tactics and the drug trade that are described in each case in this work, the word comes to mind naturally. Nevertheless it will be deliberately avoided in this thesis because it falls victim to many ambiguities and different scopes. The term narco-terrorism's first appearance was when it was used by former Peruvian President Fernando Balaunde Terry in the aftermath of Shining Path attacks on Peruvian counter-narcotic forces in 1983 (Lucero, 2008). The term was broadly used later to describe the violence that Pablo Escobar's Medellin cartel carried out against government targets in the 1980s and 1990s in Colombia. Now, however, the term is used to describe those terrorist groups that use the illegal drug trade as their primary funding source. A current and well documented case is the FARC in Colombia. The term as described in the U.S. Department of Defense Dictionary is:

Narco-terrorism - Terrorism that is linked to illicit drug trafficking (DoD, 2001).

It can be noted that this definition embraces two activities that have, on their own, countless subdivisions. Terrorism can be conducted in any of its different types, as state terrorism, religious terrorism, or cyber-terrorism, and others that link the world-wide drug trafficking network's universe and can refer to a very broad classification of groups far away from the criminal structures that this thesis will describe.

## **A. THE LOGIC OF TERRORISM**

A broad theoretical framework has been created since terrorism became the primary tactic for groups that use violence to achieve their objectives. Nevertheless, the wide variety of studies on the topic has not yet defined a clear profile of the terrorist and his motivations. That is, possibly, because terrorism's ultimate goal is to influence psychologically, and psychology is a complex and subjective field. The terrorist attack is always a violent and impacting event. Terrorism is costly for both perpetrators and victims, and to exhibit that cost is the optimum result desired by the terrorist. For ages, fear management has been used in warfare. From painted faces and battle-cries to a Stuka's screaming sirens, to instill fear in the enemy has been a conventional part of war. However, in the irregular warfare that faces asymmetric contenders, the fear management, is literally another weapon. As invisible as subjective, fear can turn to its maximized expression, terror. The "size" of terror waged as a weapon can be a substitute for a physically smaller and weaker arsenal. Insurgencies, separatist movements and dissident groups enter in this field. They may be weak, small and out of the standard system, but in their scope of reality, without exception, these groups are waging a war. The enemies, their causes and ultimate goals can be as different as the political and social differences which exist among individuals and communities. However, for them, it is a war with its tactical and strategically rational decisions. Crenshaw (1990) assumes that in this kind of struggle, terrorism is a "resort to violence as a willful choice made by an organization for political and

strategic reasons rather as the unintended outcome of psychological or social factors"(p. 8). The process of decision-making within the group, whatever its nature is, is bounded, as Crenshaw states, "between two poles: the psychological and the strategic, and in between it lays the motivations' explanatory landscape for the intentional choice"(p. 45). According to Clausewitz (1908), "war is an extension of politics," so for these groups, terrorism is their way to conduct politics. It can be a change in the political situation, a religious posture or a territorial split. Whatever the motivation for the struggle is, these groups have a clear and legitimate motivation that has made them choose violence. Whether they are legal inside a state or social order or not, they match the conventional territorial delimitations or not, or if their social order is defined by abstract codes such as religion, the ultimate goal is to obtain a new status for them within the general social and political order. They are not going to invent a new political ideology or create a new territory; they just want a piece of what already exists, but for their own. Terrorists' purposes, enter, perhaps extreme, but well delimited boundaries of what Crenshaw calls "a collective rational choice"(p. 47). For terrorists that see themselves as fighters and as Crenshaw claims "assume to display a collective rationality," terrorism is an instrumental strategy with a purpose and a clear conceptual process, a military tool to fight a war with all what war implies. So, why is terrorism sometimes used beyond the violent extension of politics? Which mechanisms work inside a collective rationality beyond the political struggle, and

deep inside a society, when its conception comes from highly complex rational organizations such as organized crime?

## **B. ORGANIZED CRIME AND TERROR**

Phil Williams (2008) describes organized crime as, an "entity organization whether networked or higherarchical, that systematically adopts criminal activities in pursuit of profit as its ultimate objective"(p. 126). He also states that crime, as the Clausewitzian definition for war, is the extension of business by criminal means. Organized crime has existed throughout thistory. Probably it was born the same moment conventional transactions were born. It is a business system inside a larger and more general business system, but that works in the opposite direction. According to Williams, its main characteristics are that organized crime works as a criminal enterprise, it is pragmatic rather than ideological, and if it is involved in political activities it is just to protect its own illegal ones. Furthermore, because its processes work opposite to conventional legal ones, organized crime constantly resorts to violence in order to fulfill the lack of market regulations. Illegality turns organized crime's enterprises vulnerable, mainly to other illegal competitors. As William continues, organized crime uses violence to eliminate rivals, remove threats, and remove obstacles. So, violence is not the ultimate goal of organized crime, it is just a tool it applies internally and externally, to regulate the business. The criminal procedeeings and networks must be complex in order to keep them safe. Organized crime's veil that divide its enterprise from the main stream is

precisely the clandestinity or the skill to keep its activities far from law enforcement's range. In these terms, corruption is another negotiation necessary for the enterprise and it has a cost with a benefit. Violence is another negotiation with a cost and benefit, most of the time a not desirable cost. Violence attracts attention, and illegal organizations do not want attention. The most successful criminal enterprises have been those which have kept violence low. If non-violent negotiations were effective and efficient, the organization was able to stay "under the radar." Consequently, a low profile assured profits to flow steadily over time. This was the case of Pablo Escobar's Medellin cartel's struggle against the Cali cartel in Colombia in the 1990s. The extreme violence used by Escobar against the state made the Medellin cartel quite visible to law enforcement. The Cali cartel was more discrete in the use of violent methods and was a better negotiator, including its participation in its competitor's brake down. Pablo Escobar engaged in a rampant terrorist campaign that undermined the enterprise because, as Kydd and Walter (2006) state, "terrorist violence is a form of costly signaling by which terrorists attempt to influence the beliefs of their enemy and the population they represent or wish to control"(p. 52). The cost for Escobar's criminal enterprise was higher than the influence profits. Illegal enterprises are integrated by a liquid capital and by a network capital made of influence that is built on trust and corruption. Ultimately, the lack of influence profits cut off the financial profits and the Medellin cartel went into a general bankruptcy. The state's cost for enforcement against the Medellin cartel was also

too high in lives and losses of the state's power symbols. Terrorism and drugs have had many different convergences throughout the recent history of Latin America. Some of those entered the political war and used terrorist strategic logistics described by Kydd and Walter (2006): attrition, intimidation, provocation, spoiling and outbidding (p. 60). Latin America's most important terrorist groups engaged in long wars that let them challenge the state with many different strategies over time, including terrorist campaigns. Organized crime's terrorist strategic logistics on the other hand, are not the same since criminal enterprises logistics work along the state's power. The state's controls should be between a point where commercial exchange works acceptably and where enforcement controls are weak enough to be corrupted. A serious disruption of the state is not profitable for a criminal enterprise that survives by covertly taking the form of the container that holds it.

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### **III. TERRORISM AND DRUGS: HISTORICAL CASES IN LATIN AMERICA**

#### **A. TERRORISM ENTERS LATIN AMERICA: INSURGENTS AND PARAMILITARIES**

Terrorist strategies, as explained, have been used broadly in Latin American revolutionary struggles, mainly in the last thirty years. The first relationship between drugs and terrorism was Peru's insurgent group, Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path). Sendero Luminoso was created in Peru as a faction of the Peruvian Communist Party in the late 1960s. According to many authors, Shining Path's label as a terrorist group is open to discussion. Hazleton and Woy-Hazelton (1988) argue, "In Senderos's eyes, the terrorist label, applied by the Peruvian government, the United States and the Peruvian Left, seeks to discredit and isolate its genuine revolution, to hide the people's war" (p.63). David Scott Palmer (1994) states that "Shining Path uses terror to further its revolutionary ends but is not a terrorist movement"(p. 265). Neither source labels Shining Path as a terrorist group because it did not engage in "indiscriminate violence" (Hazelton, 1988),"with no political focus"(Palmer, 1994). Sendero Luminoso's rampant violence through its insurgent campaign made them, regardless of the "revolutionary" personality the movement wanted to show, more suitable to fit the majority of the current terrorism definitions including Dr. Bale's.

In 1983, Shining Path became involved in drugs by moving its operatives to the Upper Huallaga Valley, the world's larger coca producing region. The group claimed it would liberate peasants from Peru's government law



enforcement and Colombia's DTO exploitation (Martin, 2010). By taxing DTOs and then by becoming directly involved in the drug trade, Sendero Luminoso became one of the wealthiest guerrilla movements in modern history. It collected an estimated US\$30 million per year until 1992, when the leader's group was arrested (Gregory, 2009).

Another terrorist group that became involved in drugs was Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). The FARC was created in 1964, as the military arm of the Communist party in Colombia. In 1983, the FARC's First Front took control of coca producing regions in the departments (states) of Meta and Guaviare in order to tax the coca farmers in those regions (Pulido, 2005). In 2005, the Junta de Inteligencia Conjunta de la Republica de Colombia (Joint Intelligence Board of the Republic of Colombia), JCI, reported the estimated finances of the FARC in 2003. The information gathered by Colombian state intelligence agencies gave a total estimated maximum income of US\$1.28 billion from which 45.8% of that, 97% came just from drugs. Total expenditures equaled US\$250 million, and 73% of the expenditures went to obtain chemical substances and explosives used to carry out terrorist attacks. The profit result was about US\$1.01 billion (JIC, 2005). The FARC profits for 2003 were 28.8% of the Colombian Armed Forces (Army, Navy and Air Force) budgets all together for 2005 (Security, 2007). From 2003 to 2010, FARC has been blamed for at least nine terrorist bombings on urban areas with 71 people killed and hundreds injured. Indiscriminate gun raids have killed 119 people, along with the countless assassinations and Improvised Explosive Devices and personal mines that have terrorized the peasantry in those

remote areas where FARC has had a presence (Pulido, 2005). The FARC is categorized as a terrorist group by the Colombian Government (Office, 2008), as well as the United States (USDS, 2010), Canada, and the European Union (Pulido, 2005).

The last terrorist group largely involved in drugs was the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, AUC, an extreme-right paramilitary group created in 1997 with private capital to protect private property from the FARC and other guerrillas. The AUC resembled a federation of civil anti-subversive groups which, according to its leader Carlos Castano, were not paramilitaries, but civilians with the right to fight the crime of subversion (Castano, 2001). The AUC has been pointed to by many Colombian and international human rights NGOs as responsible for systematic mass killings of civilian targets (HRW, 2000). The AUC was officially designated on September 10, 2001 as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States Department of State (USDS, 2010). Its leader, Carlos Castano, was charged with illegally introducing 17 metric tons of cocaine to the United States, and in 2004 he was sentenced in absentia by Colombia's government for his roles in massacres and mayhem (McGirk, 2006).

The three groups were closely linked to organized crime in Colombia. Dudley (2004) states that AUC's origins came from 1982, when Pablo Escobar's Medellin cartel, along with land-owners, and some industrial representatives, created a self-defense force to protect their properties and personal integrity from guerrilla kidnappings: The Death to Kidnappers (MAS) death squad (p. 74). That MAS

group joined the federation of self-defense forces that integrated into the AUC in 1997 (Hanson, 2008).

**B. PLOMO O PLATA (LEAD OR SILVER): PABLO ESCOBAR AND THE MEDELLIN CARTEL IN COLOMBIA**

Violence in Colombia has been an ongoing and extremely complex issue. According to Dudley (2004), most of the "local revolutions" that have been fought in Latin America during the previous century have faced conservative and liberal parties (p. 6). The struggle for power in Colombia was not an exception, and in 1948 the tension between conservatives and liberals escalated in to what is known as La Violencia (The Violence). Dudley also claims that "La Violencia forms the backdrop to the common use of Political Assassinations and every other tale of war in Colombia. It also shaped people's form of resistance and struggle"(p. 7). The patterns acquired by Colombian society towards the use of violence are clearly illustrated by the guerrillas, the paramilitaries and the DTOs who now have the main role in Colombia's conflict. Terrorists in Colombia and Peru were born and raised in the middle of a chaotic environment. They had their minds shaped by psychological forces that, as Jerrold Post (1990) states, "rationalized acts that other people were not compelled to commit" such as terrorism. For that reason, the leftist guerrillas, the private paramilitaries and the DTOs had their own reasons to exercise violence in Colombia, rather than negotiate, as Pablo Escobar's Medellin cartel showed.

In the late 1970s, the drug trafficking from South America to the United States, the most important consumer on the continent, shifted from marijuana (Cannabis Sativa)

to cocaine (a psychoactive alkaloid from the coca leaf) following the new preferences among consumers (Adolfo Aterhotua, 2008). The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) reported in 1976 that approximately between 14 and 19 metric tons of cocaine were smuggled into the United States that year (Bruce Bagley, 1990). Three years later, in 1979, the total estimate was between 25 and 31 metric tons, and by 1980 it easily passed 50 metric tons. A DTO, the Medellin cartel was the main supplier (DEA, 2010). According to Aterhotua and Rojas (2008) Medellin traffickers were named a "cartel" by the DEA in 1982 after a drug seizure in Cleveland to better explain the narcotraffickers' alliances and to be able to gather all of them into one prosecution process(p.13). The term became popular and has been applied to every drug trafficking organization since then. For the scope of this work, drug cartels created after the Medellin and Cali cartels (the second largest cartel created in Colombia) will be named Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs). They now work as one organization with a centralized hierarchical or networked structure, different from the small syndicates working as federations that shared trafficking routes and warehouses in the past. The first drug trade organizational coherence changed in the late 1980s when other region's traffickers also formed their own drug federations as the Cali or Valle cartels (Escobar, 2009). With time, every cartel became a sole organization with a monolithic higherarchical structure. Independent traffickers became part of the bigger organizations voluntarily or by force. The drug enforcement strikes produced vacuums in the higherarchical structure and they modified their operations causing internal and

external adjustments, and therefore, the turf and cartel wars. These readjustment mechanisms by the use of force, caused the DTOs to acquire more and better weapons, even more and better than those used by the government. The Medellin cartel's most visible leader was Pablo Escobar Gaviria, a former car thief, bank robber and kidnapper who began in drugs by buying coca paste in Ecuador and transporting it by himself to Bogota (Adolfo Aterhotua, 2008). According to Pablo's brother and the cartel's accountant, Roberto Escobar (2009), in the 1980s the demand for cocaine suddenly skyrocketed in the United States and the Medellin cartel established more dynamic and larger shipments, routes, and distribution networks in South Florida, California and other parts of the U.S. At one point it was estimated that 70 to 80 tons of cocaine were being shipped from Colombia to the U.S. every month. At the peak of his power, Escobar was shipping to the United States, in jetliners, as much as 11 metric tons of cocaine per flight (DEA, 2010). The Medellin cartel quickly controlled a large portion of the drugs that entered into the United States, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. Its cocaine was brought mostly from Peru and Bolivia, as Colombian coca was initially of substandard quality (Escobar, 2009). The Shining Path's drug activities in Peru's Upper Huallaga Valley were closely related to the Medellin cartel, mostly in the early 1980s when the Medellin cartel was expanding and coca producers were invited to take their produce to the cartel's warehouses in Colombia to be shipped to the United States (Steinitz, 2002). The customs authorities were still unaware of the drug trade because of the unsophisticated enforcement

mechanisms in North America. In the first years of smuggling, the cartel received large amounts of revenues in cash (Escobar, 2009). Pablo Escobar was quickly known as a wealthy entrepreneur with a good rapport with local poor people in Medellin. The people, who received money and many benefits such as roads, schools, and entertainment centers, used to see Pablo Escobar as a sort of Robin Hood. Escobar's behavior received a payoff in the support and esteem of the population (Guillen, 2007). In 1982, Escobar was elected as a deputy/alternative representative to the Chamber of Representatives of Colombia's Congress, as part of the Colombian Liberal Party (Guillen, 2007). Escobar's seat in the congress was a result of the financing he had been contributing to liberal party congressmen since the late 1970s. Escobar's troubled financing was stated by journalist Gonzalo Guillen (2007) when he met him as part of the Colombian political group invited to attend the Felipe Gonzales Socialist Party's victory in Spain. A violent *modus operandi* started to identify Escobar's dealings, either with his criminal colleagues or with the State powers he rapidly began to infiltrate. Corruption and intimidation characterized Pablo Escobar's dealings with the Colombian system. He had an effective, inescapable policy in dealing with law enforcement and the government, referred to as "*plata o plomo*," (literally *silver or lead*, colloquially [*accept*] *money* or [*face*] *bullets*) (Bowden, 2001). This resulted in the deaths of hundreds of individuals, including civilians, policemen, and state officials. At the same time, Escobar bribed countless government officials, judges and other politicians (Bruce Bagley, 1990). The Medellin cartel leader's boundless

campaign of corruption and intimidation reached a tipping point when Supreme Court Justice Rodrigo Lara Bonilla pointed publicly Pablo Escobar's illegal source of income, as the leader of the Medellin Cartel (Hylton, 2008). As a consequence, Escobar was expelled from the Liberal Party and started to be known as a dangerous criminal instead of the wealthy businessman he wanted to seem to be. Justice Lara Bonilla promoted the legislation needed to establish an extradition law for those committing drug related crimes because the justice system was drowning in corruption and Colombian judges feared to prosecute drug traffickers. An extradition law would allow drug traffickers to be prosecuted in any foreign country, including the United States, thus guaranteeing a cleaner process and a sure imprisonment (Bruce Bagley, 1990).

The response to the extradition threat made Pablo Escobar opt for violence against the government officials, pushing them to declare the extradition law as unconstitutional (Adolfo Aterhotua, 2008). In April 1982 a 17-year-old hitman, hired by the Medellin cartel, shot Justice Lara Bonilla to death in Bogota (Escobar, 2009). After the assassination, President Belisario Betancourt approved the extradition law, thus beginning the most violent period of the Medellin cartel.

### **1. Medellin Cartel's Hitmen and Paramilitary Groups**

In 1981, the Colombian Insurgent group 19 de marzo (March 19) or M-19, kidnapped Jorge Luis Ochoa's sister, Marta Nieves Ochoa. Jorge Luis Ochoa was one of the Medellin cartel's founders along with Gilberto and Miguel Rodriguez Orijuela, Carlos Lehder, Jose Santacruz, Gustavo

Rodriguez Gacha and Pablo Escobar (Adolfo Aterhotua, 2008). Instead of paying the ransom for Ochoa's sister, the Medellin cartel called 223 mafia kingpins for a meeting where each agreed to contribute US\$200,000.00 and ten of their best hitmen to create a private counter-kidnapper group (Escobar, 2009). They called the group *Muerte a Secuestradores* (Death to Kidnappers), MAS (Adolfo Aterhotua, 2008). This meeting was a key episode in Colombian violence's history. Many other landowners in the region were victims of kidnappings and extortions by the guerrillas. Some authors, as among them Doug Stokes (2005), claim that among the attendants to the meeting were representatives of the private sector (oil companies) and the military who was interested of self-defense forces as counter-insurgent measures. In just fifteen days, the MAS group captured 25 M-19 members and liberated Ochoa's sister without making any payment to the kidnappers. The group did not stop there and continued fighting the M-19, killing, capturing and turning in its members to Colombian authorities (Paulino Marca, 1995). This group was the foundation of the later paramilitary groups in Colombia. Jose Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha, one of the Escobar partners, was interested in the development of MAS and he personally funded the training and weapons for the group. He was recognized as a leader in the MAS group, and later, along with Fidel and Carlos Castano, in the self-defense paramilitaries that resulted in the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) (Dudley, 2004).

The MAS group was successful in fighting and frightening guerrilla groups that were a threat to the narco's properties and trafficking facilities, such as



clandestine runways and laboratories (Hylton, 2008). In 1984, after the first criminals were extradited to foreign countries, the Medellin cartel organized a series of violent retaliation attacks in behalf of a group of criminals who called themselves *Los Extraditables* (The Extraditable ones), and who, according to Dario Villamizar (1995), used groups of young hitmen hired from the lower social strata in Medellin, the people whose minds and hearts the cartel had won in earlier years. They were later trained as a military arm. According to the *New York Times* (1987), *Los Extraditables* fought the extradition policy with more than threats and bribes. They claimed responsibility for murdering, thirty judges, twenty journalists and thousands of police officers in three years (Katherine Roberts, 1987). Nevertheless, incorruptible government forces responded to *Los Extraditables'* violence and threats with an intense use of force. The government operations resulted in 11,000 criminal arrested; 467 properties inspected; 1,313 vehicles, 346 aircraft, 28 boats, and more than 1,000 weapons confiscated (Paulino Marca, 1995). The escalation in violence required the cartel to use its paramilitary forces that were, by that time, strongly organized and operating under Rodriguez Gacha's sponsorship. Other cartel partners such as the Rodriguez Orijuela brothers started hiring former professional military, both national and foreign, to increase their military capabilities (Robinson, 1989).

In 1989, the military expertise capabilities injected into the cartel's paramilitary groups were more evident. The intimidation campaign run by the cartel turned to terrorism. From 1989 to 1993, the Medellin cartel was

responsible for 118 bombings killing 324 people and injuring 1,265, and nearly 3,000 selected assassinations. The selected assassinations included three presidential candidates, journalists, judges, high ranking military officers, and 2,976 police officers (Paulino Marca, 1995). The terrorist campaign included an attack on Avianca Flight 203. A Boeing 727 airliner with 107 passengers and crew aboard exploded while on route from Bogota to Cali killing all passengers, crew and three people on the ground (FSF, 2010). In another terrorist attack, the Medellin cartel used a school bus loaded with approximately a half metric ton of jelly dynamite to strike the Departamento de Administracion de Seguridad DAS (Colombian Intelligence Administration) headquarters in Bogota. The explosion killed 100 including children in a care center, and injured 950 people (Paulino Marca, 1995). It was the biggest car-bomb ever exploded outside the Middle East (Hylton, 2008). It is alleged by Colombian intelligence sources that Escobar backed the 1985 storming of the Colombian Supreme Court by left-wing guerrillas from the 19th of April Movement (M-19), which resulted in the murder of half the judges on the court. Some of these claims were included in a late 2006 report by a Truth Commission of three judges of the current Supreme Court. At the time of the siege, the Supreme Court was studying the constitutionality of Colombia's extradition treaty with the U.S. (Jorge Anibal Gomez, 2006)

In 1989, Rodriguez Gacha was killed and Fidel Castano became the paramilitaries' leader. Many of the former foreign and national military were hired by Cali's cartel and many Medellin traffickers joined other cartels or ended

negotiating surrender with the government (Bowden, 2001). In 1991, Pablo Escobar himself and nine of his most trusted men, surrendered to the government under some special conditions: to be imprisoned in a special jail, with only police guarding the jail, and with his family's security guaranteed (Escobar, 2009). The same day a new legal amendment forbidding extradition was adopted by the Supreme Court (Adolfo Aterhotua, 2008). The Medellin cartel's terrorist strategy received its payoffs. However, the government knew that within a short time Pablo Escobar was running the cartel from inside the jail. The government planned to transfer him to another facility (Paulino Marca, 1995). Pablo Escobar feared the transfer and escaped from jail in August 1992. Pablo Escobar retaliated violently against everyone in the cartel he thought had betrayed him. He included anyone who tried to flee the cartel, which was cracking from inside out (Bowden, 2001). Among those former partners now hunted down by Escobar was Fidel Castano, the leader of "*Los Tangueros*", a paramilitary group that terrorized the north of Colombia in the late 1980s. Castano, the Ochoa brothers and some former military that were also persecuted created a group called "*Los Pepes*" (Spanish acronym for People Persecuted by Pablo Escobar) to defend themselves from the Medellin cartel (Hylton, 2008). This group used the same tactics that Pablo Escobar had used and set many bombs on Escobar's properties (Bowden, 2001).

The government created a special group with U.S. trained elite Colombian police officers called "*Bloque de Busqueda*" (Search Bloc) that mounted one of the largest man hunts in history. More than 600 troops were killed by Pablo

Escobar's hitmen before he was finally found and shot down in a security house in Medellin (Paulino Marca, 1995). There are allegations about the participation of Los Pepes in the hunt for Escobar due to their sharing information with the Colombian National Police (Bowden, 2001). A fact is that one of Los Pepes leaders, Fidel Castano, was later the founder of the Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Cordoba and Uraba, the paramilitary group that later became the United Self-defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), the terrorist group that spread terror and violence in Colombia in the late 1990s (Hanson, 2008).

#### **E. CONCLUSION: A COMMON CENTER OF GRAVITY**

It has been established in this chapter that even when the three historical cases were different in time and space, there were some factors that all had in common. The first one is the drug trade, more specifically the cocaine trade and its potential to fund any illegal organization. Second is that each case represents different aspects of the endemic social disequilibrium that prevails in most of the Latin American countries and that is an essential condition for dissident groups to arise and develop. Third is the state's political partisan divisionism that makes it difficult to delegitimize any terrorist activity, since there are still sectors of society which, as Crenshaw states, "psychologically benefit in their collective rational."

Moreover, there is the drug factor a source of funding. Peru's Shining Path and the FARC found a golden well in the cocaine trade that let them grow dangerously, and let them also approach unaware and unprepared security

forces. It is a reality that, as Luis Villamarin (2005) states, the dark and complex drug networks, quite more sophisticated than in the 1980s, represents the underground well where many different networks like tree roots can easily connect and feed. The drug trade, as a global problem, is naturally embedded to an offer and demand process. Insurgents and terrorists have opened their drug trade branches since they represent the most profitable illegal business on the continent. It has been said that even their ideologies shift slowly to the raw capitalist style drug trade. Nevertheless, step by step, Peru and Colombia's governments responded to terrorist threats more by a "rule of thumb" system than by solid counter-terrorist strategy. The financing source for terrorists, as Bierstecker and Eckerd (2008) state, is not just their fuel but their firm also. By tracing the paths of the funding after an attack, it can be easier to track down the perpetrators, techniques used, and all the information needed to intelligently attack a network. The Medellin cartel was not the exception. The Colombian enforcement authorities were reaching a tipping point due to the deep corruption. The weakened government institutions were making the state weak too. The Medellin cartel was an organized crime enterprise that did not invent something new. As any enterprise, mainly with so vast and uncontrolled profits, it grew as far as the surrounding competitors allowed it. Then, the Colombian state should have acted as a competitor rather than as a suppressor. At the end the state's capability to absorb terrorist attacks' effects will discourage terrorists to spend more efforts on targeting the same way. Nevertheless, organized crime

learns too and can be adaptable. Mexico's organized crime's case is ongoing currently with escalating violence. Terrorism is being used now in Mexico. It is essential to determine if there is any similarity to the historical lessons presented in order to apply and manage Mexico's cost-benefit against crime.

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## IV. MEXICO'S WAR ON DRUGS

### A. DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS' (DTO) DEVELOPMENT IN MEXICO

Contraband and corruption have been an historical problem for Mexican society since the 19th century. Illegal commerce of foreign products was common in the main ports of Mexico. Walther Bernecker (1993) claims that customs officials and other authorities' low salaries caused systematic corruption in commerce controls of the ports (p. 394). Briberies opened entire "alternate" log books to the merchant loads coming from Europe or Asia. Luxury items forbidden in Mexico were the most popular contraband entering the country (p. 395). Government contraband enforcement efforts in the mid 1800s made smugglers change their operating ports to the north where the centralist government had a low or non-existent presence. Ports such as Mazatlan or Guaymas on the Pacific coast became an optimum option for illegal imports and, as it were learned later, for illegal exports too (Mayo, 2006).

The Northwestern territories' main activity was mining. According to United States diplomat Joel R. Poisset (1824), an estimated value of smuggling imports were about US \$4.5 million, and gold and silver bars exported about US \$2.5 million (p. 33). Most of the minerals illegal exportation left from Mazatlan and Guaymas, in the states of Sinaloa and Sonora (Mayo, 2006). The introduction of the railroad after 1880 consolidated the contraband networks connecting the Mexican Northwest coast with the United States' territories beyond the post Mexican-American War



Rio Grande border division (Ramirez, 2009). In 1886, President Porfirio Diaz decreed the Foreign Nationals and Naturalization Law, which allowed foreigners to enter the largely uninhabited Northwest of Mexico. Railroad construction had brought many Chinese immigrants as workers to that region. From 1886 to 1930 an estimated 30,000 Chinese immigrants entered Mexico and settled mainly in the Northwest coast states. As many of them had fled from the England-China opium wars, Chinese immigrants introduced techniques for growing poppies (*papaveraceae* family) and extracting the alkaloid gum that produces opium and many narcotics used in pharmaceuticals, such as morphine (Ramirez, 2009). The mining industry in Mexico's Northwest fell into a crisis after 1920. Violence from the Civil War, the drop in metals' prices and labor union problems caused an important number of mines to shut down (Aguilar, 1997). Metals' smuggling was diminished as a consequence and contraband networks had to shift to other profitable products. As an example, the Prohibition Law in the United States made alcohol one of these profitable goods and psychoactive drugs were another option (Ramirez, 2009). According to Doctor Samuel Ojeda Gastelum from El Colegio de Jalisco, many Chinese immigrants who had settled in Sinaloa Sierra, started to grow poppies and produce opium gum that after 1939 began to be illegally exported to the United States by the already well organized smuggling networks in Sonora and Sinaloa (Cabrerera J. L., 2007). At that time, commercialization of hard drugs was prohibited in Mexico and the United States. Marijuana and poppies were the only crops cultivated in Mexico. Coca did not yet exist

there. The main trafficking product was opium because marijuana's generalized consumption began later, in the 1960s (Astorga).

## **1. The First Generation**

### **a. The Golden Triangle**

The region of Sinaloa is known as drug trafficking's birthplace in Mexico. Before the 1960s, drug trafficking was focused on the opium produced in the isolated Sierra areas where the climate was ideal for the poppies' growth. Marijuana (*Cannabis Indica*) was also cultivated in the same areas (Astorga, 1996). Marijuana, due to climate conditions, can grow in most of the Mexico's North and Central West territories; however, the Sierra region where poppies were cultivated was also ideal for marijuana as was far from supervision by authorities (Astorga). The people that used to grow and trade in opium were known as "gomeros" in relation to the word "goma" that translates to gum, as opium was known in Sinaloa. After the 1960s there was an important increase in marijuana consumption, mainly in the United States, and the former "gomeros" shifted to growing and smuggling marijuana. (Astorga, 1996). Marijuana was easy to grow and pack and it started to be produced in large quantities.

In 1968, *Look* magazine estimated marijuana smuggling from Mexico to the United States at around 3.5 to 5 tons per week (Astorga). The marijuana smugglers were a new breed of traffickers. For years gomeros had worked among the contraband networks that had well established free passages through corrupt authorities. The old gomeros were ranchers and farmers, people from the countryside that

did not rely on violence to run their businesses (Astorga, 1996). However, the new trafficking generation started to use mafia style violence and disrupted the established contraband networks to impose their own. Young and better educated, they stopped being gomeros to establish the first drug trafficking organizations. The first DTO was founded by Pedro Aviles Perez, a physician from Durango state (Astorga, 1995). In the early 1960s, Aviles moved to Sinaloa and established his own drug trafficking organization with his own structure and networks. Aviles' organization had a defined structure that started to work independently from the traditional networks. It had a treasurer, Ernesto Fonseca; a crops supervisor, Rafael Caro; a liason in charge of negotiations with enforcement authorities, a former Police officer Miguel Angel Felix; a transportation manager and supervisor, Manuel Salcido, and many other minor workers with specific roles (Astorga, 1995). Aviles' revenues were invested and laundered on local infrastructure in theregion. He paved roads, gave money for schools, and helped people without jobs. He was known as a kind of patriarch and earned the support of the people when drug trafficking culture was not a synonym of violence. There were no moral judgements about drugs, they just become another commercial activity.

The low rate of drug consumption in the rural areas were so low that there was no perception of drugs damaging the population. Violence was usually related with police agents or the military, whose local highest ranking officers, far from centralist government supervision, often were despotic an authoritarian (Astorga, 1995).

With time, heroin, a drug processed from poppy gum, became popular too, and was cultivated in the same area. Marijuana and poppy crops grew exponentially, and were extended through the Sierra beyond Sinaloa state's borders into Durango and Sonora. The area formed a triangle that was known by locals as the "Golden Triangle" because of the high profits the drug trade started bringing to the region (Astorga, 1996). The increase in drug production worried the government and in 1977 it launched a joint Federal Attorney - Military eradication program called Operation Condor (Toro, 1995). Operation Condor's target was the Golden Triangle zone. Ten thousand Mexican Army troops were deployed to track and destroy drug crops. Federal Attorney agents targeted the urban centers around the Golden Triangle to track and arrest the new drug lords and the corrupt officials involved (Toro, 1995). In 1978, Aviles was killed in a shootout with police officers. His closest collaborators fled the area to the neighboring state of Jalisco, to its capital city Guadalajara. Ernesto Fonseca, as the leader, along with Miguel Angel Felix, Rafael Caro, and Manuel Salcido settled and made connections with the cocaine providers in South America and started smuggling the alkaloid to the United States (Astorga, 1996). In 1984, DEA U.S. undercover officer Enrique Camarena was killed in Guadalajara and the Mexican Federal Government turned against Fonseca's organization. Ernesto Fonseca and Rafael Caro were arrested, and found guilty of Camarena's assassination, among other charges. Manuel Salcido was killed by Colombian gunmen over a cocaine shipment dispute. Miguel Angel Felix, as the new leader, divided the organization into key corridor zones in

order to enhance the smuggling's efficiency and to compartmentalize it. He commissioned Guadalajara to Aviles's nephew, Joaquin Guzman; Tijuana, Baja California to his own nephew, Benjamin Arellano; and Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua to Fonseca's nephew, Amado Carrillo. In 1989, Miguel Angel Felix was arrested and the organization's leadership went to Joaquin Guzman (Beith, 2010). Nevertheless, the zone managers formed their own drug trafficking organization empowering themselves in their corresponding areas. For that time on, drug trafficking changed its shape and every adjustment by the new leaders would be accompanied by embedded violence.

***b. The Gulf Corridor***

The Aviles' Drug Trafficking Organization on the Mexican Pacific coast developed parallel and geographically opposite to another powerful and less visible organization in the Gulf of Mexico.

According to the United States/Mexico International Boundary and Water Commission, the border's total length is 1,969 miles (3,169 km), and shares 42 border crossings. It is the world's most frequently crossed border with an estimate of 250 million people legally crossing it per year (SRE, 2010). San Diego-Tijuana, on the Pacific and Brownsville-Matamoros, on the Gulf of Mexico are the two largest metropolitan areas that share a common border.

Dynamic border crossings made them ideal for contraband, too. In 1930 the prohibition law in the United States had made alcohol profitable goods to smuggle from Mexico. Juan Guerra Cardenas was a smuggler from Matamoros,

Tamaulipas who illegally transported *Mezcal* (liquor made from the Agave plant, the same as Tequila) to exchange for tires he would sell on the Mexico side. With the prohibition law, he started smuggling whiskey, tobacco, and marijuana (Peralta, 2001). In the late 1950s, as Peralta states (2001), the shipments were larger and Cardenas hired many people to take the shipments into the United States while he stayed in Mexico. He hired one of his nephews, Juan Garcia Abrego, who was a car thief, as a shipping supervisor. Garcia Abrego improved his uncle's smuggling network and in the 1980s started introducing cocaine through Brownsville. Garcia Abrego, as Guerra Cardenas did, invested important parts of the revenues in corrupting authorities. The cocaine shipments were negotiated with the Cali cartel,

The high quantities invested in bribes toward government official at all levels kept the organization in Mexico invisible and growing (Camin, 2009). In 1987, Guerra Cardenas attended the meeting where Miguel Angel Felix compartmentalized the drug trade in Mexico, although Guerra Cardenas had always worked independently. and (Blancornelas, 2002). In the early 1990s, Garcia Abrego expanded his organization to the neighboring cities of Reynosa and Nuevo Laredo and the major sea ports on the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean in Veracruz and Progreso (Blancornelas, 2002). Drug trafficking was now based on a fleet of trailer trucks. Osiel Cardenas Guillen, from Matamoros joined the Garcia Abrego organization as a trailer mechanic. He rapidly earned the leader's trust and escalated in rank (Blancornelas, 2005). Juan Guerra Cardenas' health was deteriorating due to diabetes and

Garcia Abrego took over the organization's leadership. According to Peter Lupsha (1995), in 1993, the United States Federal Government indicted an American Express Bank branch in California for laundering US\$100 million from Garcia Abrego's organization. The investigation found that Garcia's network was deeply rooted in the Gulf, smuggling an estimated 300 metric tons of cocaine per year. Mexico's General Attorney estimated that Garcia's network was worth US\$10 billion (p. 87). In 1996, Garcia Abrego was arrested and extradited to the United States and incarcerated in a Federal Prison in Colorado (Astorga). After Garcia's trial, Osiel Cardenas Guillen, the former trailer mechanic, reached the top of the organization and became leader by assassinating other possible members of the organization that could substitute for Garcia Abrego (Blancornelas, 2005). The organization started to be known as The Gulf cartel.

## **2. The Second Generation: The Colombian Connection**

The drug trade was compartmentalized in 1987 as a measure to keep the business dynamic, even if top leaders were to be arrested as had happened to the first generation of traffickers. Nevertheless, what really happened was the opposite. Instead of a drug trafficking synergy, the divisions turned to independent drug trafficking organizations which grew and became empowered by a new shift in the cocaine trade. Instead of being intermediaries in the cocaine route from South America to the United States, Mexican DTOs became main providers and started to control the entire cocaine network. In the first generation, Miguel Angel Felix met Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha,

a member of the Medellin cartel and main supporter of the MAS (Muerte A Secuestradores [Death to Kidnappers]), in Sinaloa (Blancornelas, 2009). An agreement made was that cocaine shipments were to be transported to the United States by the Mexican DTOs with a twenty to thirty percent tax, arguing that shipments would have a safe route through opium and marijuana established networks (Poppa, 1998). The business was so profitable that compartmentalized new DTOs grew quickly and became so powerful by corrupting and re-investing drug revenues that by the mid 1990s Colombian DTOs had no choice but to adjust themselves to Mexican DTOs conditions (Astorga). The DTO controlling the Ciudad Juarez-El Paso crossing in Chihuahua and Texas was headed by Amado Carrillo Fuentes, Ernesto Fonseca's nephew. He was known as "the lord of the skies" because he owned a fleet of 27 Boeing 727s which he used to ship the cocaine from Colombian soil directly to the United States (Poppa, 1998). In 1997, the Counter-Narcotics Czar in Mexico, General Jesus Gutierrez, was indicted charged with protecting the Ciudad Juarez DTO. At Carrillo Fuentes' death in the same year 1997, Carrillo Fuentes was charged by the U.S. DEA for laundering US\$ 20 million ; however, the Federal Attorney in Mexico estimated the Ciudad Juarez DTO was making US\$200 million per week and taking 10% just for bribes (Poppa, 1998).

The empowering rate, the growth and the expansion of Mexican DTOs, along with the back up each DTO had from corrupted officials faced a conflict of interests with violence as the solution. With the end of the drug trade's original monopoly, each DTO started to compete for hegemony on trafficking routes, key shipping nodes and



influence on governments officials. With the absence of commercial controls for drug trafficking DTOs started pushing to secure their own interests by deterrence. Therefore, the war on drugs was triggered.

### **3. The Third Generation: Paramilitary Capacity**

The second generation of DTOs came directly from the first generation's monopoly bloc. As most of the first leaders came from the same regions and belonged to closely related families, the regional, family and cultural ties shaped the drug trade in Mexico. Violence was embedded with drugs. However, violence among first DTOs was limited to selected assassinations. A non-written honor code ruled the behavior of the drug lords. Along with money laundering, they used to seek social acceptance and provided welfare and a sense of justice in areas where they operated. If violence was used, it was executed by members of that DTO. The general civilian population was never forced to support DTO activities.

In the late 1990s, Sinaloa and Tijuana DTOs were at war for the control of routes and influence. Nevertheless, the general population knew about turf war violence from police notes in the media. Shootouts, although often involving the use of Armed Forces' exclusive weapons, were isolated cases of a well-defined problem: the "narco" culture. The narco culture was known as violent and extravagant, but with well demarcated boundaries among society.

In 1999, the new Gulf DTO leader Osiel Cardenas decided to hire a corrupted military officer, temporarily commissioned in the Federal Police, Arturo Decenas

(Grayson, 2008). Cardenas was afraid of his enemies within his own DTO. He was known to have killed many of the higher ranked members in order to obtain leadership for himself. Inside his own DTO, he was known as "*El mata amigos*" (The friends' killer) (Blancornelas, 2005). Decenas was asked to gather a security force of former Army soldiers and deserters (Grayson, 2008). Decenas had a force of 31 ex-military. Some of them were already members of Cardenas' DTO. Four of the ex-military were former Special Forces with counter-insurgency training. They were in charge of the group's training. Decenas adopted the coded call sign designated for high ranking officers in the Federal Police, Z, and were called Los Zetas, the Zs. (Grayson, 2008).

#### **B. DTO'S PARAMILITARY GROUPS**

Los Zetas structure and organization was a turning point for the war on drugs in Mexico. The drug trade problem, embedded in Mexico's deepest problems as a state and as society, followed a spiraling path from mid-20th century clandestine contraband to an uncontrolled violent rampage of open crime. The drug trade existed worldwide. The vast source of economic power that its trade created affected countries different ways. The degree of affect depended on the strength the state. Los Zetas, and later groups, have evolved into paramilitary groups for different reasons from those paramilitaries that evolved in Colombia. The reasons in Mexico are due more to the state's side than to the DTOs. Los Zetas and other DTO military arms that use violence as a means to commit crimes, terrorize the population, and defy the state, were not born as a drug trade necessity. Drug trade dynamics require what one of

the first generation's drug lords, Juan Esparragoza, said that the drug trade just needs a few willing and smart people; drugs and arms, and violence, do not match; it is well known that it ends badly.

Drug trade can exist due to a lack of integrated law, lack of other financial opportunities and societal programs at country levels. Paramilitaries, whatever the reason they exist, happen for a lack of a state's basic characteristic to effectively monopolize the use of force.

### **1. Struggle for Power and Territory**

In the Pacific, the compartmentalized DTOs started to fight each other for territory and influence. Each city was called a "plaza." A plaza is a commercial agreement between the authorities of a city and specific enterprises or companies to prevail among other competing brands. The DTOs considered the corruption and co-option of authorities in a city as these agreements. Although DTOs were compartmentalized into dynamic networks, the networks started to work too independently which resulted in a clash of interests. In the Gulf, Los Zetas rapidly became a powerful tool for Osiel Cardenas' DTO. Its military tactics were far more violent and effective than that of other DTOs. and the group started to deter forces supporting neighboring DTOs. Cardenas, a criminal with a tough psychological profile, targeted other territories and networks in order to expand his influence. The government became concerned about the power that Osiel Cardenas' DTO had and that it was an Army-trained led operation. He was arrested in Matamoros. In 2007 Cardenas was extradited to the United States to face charges in Texas. Los Zetas

continued to be well organized as an autonomous body. The Gulf DTO leadership was taken over by Osiel Cardenas' brother Ezequiel Cardenas, and a former municipal police officer Jorge Costilla. However, Los Zetas was already growing; by 2006 the United States Drug Enforcement Administration estimated 300 gunmen. The other DTOs in Mexico started hiring their own security personnel or military arms, mainly from former municipal and state policemen. Groups as Los Negros (The Blacks), Los Linces (The Lynxes), FEDA (Fuerzas Especiales de Arturo [Arturo's Special Forces]) and Los Escorpiones (The Scorpions) were all created by DTOs to counter Los Zetas.

## **2. Los Zetas**

Los Zetas, created as a personal guard for Osiel Cardenas, was a group of 31 individuals with a single leader that reported directly to Cardenas. With time, the group grew and was trusted with more tasks to take advantage of their military skills. Among these tasks were the security of the drugs and weapons' warehouses, the security of the shipments on route, the collection of debts and the assassinations ordered by Cardenas. The group continued to recruit and built training camps and started new recruits in military skills. In 2002, Guzman Decena was killed. The next year, Osiel Cardenas was arrested and the Gulf DTO suffered confusion among its leaders. Most of them hid or fled the area. Los Zetas became more independent.

Nuevo Laredo is the most western border city in Tamaulipas and it is just 150 miles from Monterrey, the third largest and the second most industrial city in Mexico. Its closeness to Monterrey makes the Nuevo Laredo

border crossing key because of its commercial flow. After Cardenas was arrested, the DTO from Sinaloa under Joaquin Guzman Loera's leadership sent 200 gunmen to control the drug trafficking on Nuevo Laredo. The Gulf DTO was weak and divided and the only way to keep the control was to employ Los Zetas. At that time Los Zetas was about 200 gunmen, focused on security tasks throughout Tamaulipas. After Los Zetas leader was killed by the Army, another former military, Heriberto Lazcano, took control. Lazcano had been a corporal in the Army Infantry branch. Nevertheless, he organized the group and focused it to fight a war in Nuevo Laredo against the Sinaloa DTO members. Outnumbered and without much capital since the Gulf DTO was disorganized, Lazcano distributed US\$3,000 to each Los Zetas member and ordered them buy cocaine from Gulf DTO providers and sell it across the border. They also started taxing, kidnapping, extorting and assaulting. They engaged in every criminal activity that could give them money for their war. Los Zetas allowed the Gulf DTO to keep certain control in the eastern area while fighting in Nuevo Laredo. Lazcano organized a solid structure with its own intelligence network, logistics, and sophisticated communications. The group had their own training camps in three states. They also hired Guatemalan Special Forces deserters that joined them in training. Los Zetas formed alliances with the Sinaloa DTO's rivals. In 2008 some Los Zetas cells went to Michoacán state and trained a vigilante pseudo-religious group called La Familia. La Familia was created in the 1990s as a vigilante group that tried to spread their own vision of religion and justice. Their ideology included eliminating vices and delinquency in the towns where they

started to operate, including those controlled by the Pacific DTOs. Los Zetas trained them and thus opened a new front in the south in order to split the Sinaloa DTOs forces and weaken them. Lazcano not only had a clear tactical organization, but also a strategic vision.

In 2010, Gulf DTO leaders agreed to a ceasefire with the Sinaloa DTO because violence was not succeeding and was weakening the groups against Federal enforcement. However, because Los Zetas was well organized by itself Lazcano rejected any agreement. With its alliances with Sinaloa rival factions, its large criminal networks, and by trafficking drugs by itself, (along with transnational networks, as N'Dranguetta's) Los Zetas became so powerful that it split from the Gulf DTO and became a DTO by itself; a new DTO with an unprecedented shape, organization and dynamics.

Los Zetas is networked by plazas. Each plaza has its own network and each plaza's leader reports directly to Lazcano. The group has an intelligence network integrated with surveillance personnel disguised as vendors, taxi drivers, and prostitutes. Everything about federal forces or rival DTOs is reported. The group has a special body called "*La direccion*" (The Headmaster's office) that controls all communications within the organization along with other tasks such as electronic warfare, deception, psychological operations (PSYOPS), police radio frequency intervention to spread hostile messages, and communication interception. Los Zetas operatives are organized by "*Estacas*" (pegs) composed of armored vehicles, twin cab pick-up trucks, a commander, a driver, and five gunmen.

Federal intelligence has reported the group moves convoys of 40 to 100 *Estacas*. The group has a large and powerful arsenal that includes AK-47 and AR-15 assault rifles, HK MP-5 submachine guns, automatic pistols, hand grenades, M-74 Antitank Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG), Caliber.50 machine guns and sniper rifles (as the Barret cal. 50), IEDs made of ground mines, and high explosives such as C4, Tovex and dynamite, and homemade bombs. Los Zetas manpower is still unknown but an estimate is of 1,500 3,000 criminals. Los Zetas is linked to the 72 foreign immigrant's massacre carried out in San Fernando, Tamaulipas, in August 2010.

### **3. La Familia Michoacana**

La Familia Michoacana's origins come from a criminal gang in the 1980s that worked as a sort of vigilante group in rural areas of Michoacan state. In the 1990s, the group worked as marijuana farmers for the Pacific DTO. In 2003, Los Zetas formed an alliance with La Familia trained its hitmen. In 2005, La Familia Michoacana ended its alliance with Los Zetas and became a DTO on its own. In 2008, the organization threw five human heads inside a disco club in Uruapan City accompanied by a banner stating that La Familia Michoacana did not kill innocents but just carried out *divine justice*. Since then La Familia Michoacana has been considered by the General Attorney as one of the deadliest and most dangerous criminal organizations in Mexico.

La Familia Michoacana's structure is a hierarchical network with a leader, a financial branch, an ideology branch and the operatives. The leader, Servando Gomez, has tried to shape the organization into a parallel state in

Michoacan. In every attack, La Familia Michoacana claims to be doing legitimate social work by ridding Michoacan of low level criminals. The organization has conducted a media campaign trying to establish permanent contact with society in Michoacan. La Familia Michoacana's messages appear in regular periodicals, on public banners and also in phone calls to radio and T.V. broadcasts. The financial branch is in charge of every criminal activity conducted by La Familia Michoacana. They invest a high percentage of the revenues in corruption and co-option of authorities at every level, from the municipalities to the state government. The collusion of authorities at state and municipal levels allows La Familia Michoacana to be involved in extortion of high level commercial and industrial companies to arrange complex judicial trials where they have received large extensions of land. Since 2006, La Familia Michoacana has declared war against the Federal Police since they control the rest of the police at municipal and state levels. The spiritual branch is in charge of La Familia Michoacana's ideology dissemination, which is based on a pseudo-evangelic doctrine adapted from American writer John Eldredge's books. The spiritual branch was headed by Rafael Cedeno through the religious organization *The New Jerusalem*. This organization was responsible for adapting Eldredge's books into La Familia Michoacana's Bible distributed among its members and the educational system in the municipalities they already controlled. The operatives were trained under Los Zetas model in camps by Guatemalan, Mexican and Colombian former Special Forces (DEA, 2009). The recruits spend six months in the training camps, isolated from society and under a



though training regime that includes the introduction and adoption of La Familia Michoacana pseudo-religious ideology. This training system and the spread of the ideology is intended to give legitimacy to the brutal methods of La Familia Michoacana making them appear to their members as providers of supernatural justice. According to the Attorney General, this is the characteristic that makes La Familia Michoacana so dangerous. Because of their training, La Familia Michoacana gunmen estimated at 300, leave the camps as potential terrorists. Nevertheless, despite their unorthodox ideology and modus operandi, La Familia Michoacana has gained control of most of the networks that previous DTOs had in Michoacan (Mendez, 2010). Therefore, according to United Nations expert Edgardo Buscaglia, by politically disrupting Michoacan, La Familia Michoacana is trying to cause governing vacuums to later fill According to the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, La Familia Michoacana already controls 77 municipalities, nearly 60% of the state's 133 municipalities (DEA, 2009). The group has also expanded its presence to the neighboring states of Estado de Mexico and Guerrero, in order to monopolize those states' criminal networks by controlling supply routes. La Familia Michoacana is linked to the terrorist attacks carried out in Michoacan's capital city Morelia, during Independence Days in 2008, which killed eight and injured 100 civilians attending the celebrations (Gomez, 2008).

#### **4. Other Groups**

The creation of Los Zetas, and the threat they represented to other DTOs, forced those other DTOs to

create their own military arms. Many groups of gunmen, with diverse nicknames, emerged and started fighting in the streets as pseudo-military units. Many of their members were former regular Army troops or policeman who knew the basics of military tactics. According to the DEA, they are adapting and improving their operations in the major urban centers, precisely where it is most difficult to be engaged by conventional Armed Forces. These are the largest and more dangerous groups:

**a. *Los Negros***

The Sinaloa DTO created Los Negros (The Blacks) in order to provide personal security to the DTO member's families, and to the drug trafficking activities of shipping and storing. In 2003, after the Gulf DTO's leader was arrested, 200 Los Negros' gunmen were sent to take control of Nuevo Laredo's plaza (Beith, 2010). Nuevo Laredo has been a key city in drug trafficking since approximately 9,000 trailer trucks, nearly 40% of ground traffic, passes daily through the border crossing (INEGI, 2010). The leaders and organizers of Los Negros were the brothers Alfredo, Arturo, Carlos and Hector Beltran Leyva. In 2008, Alfredo Beltran was captured by Mexican Army Special Forces, and his brothers blamed Sinaloa DTO leader Guzman Loera of betrayal and split from the largest organization to create their own DTO. In 2009, Arturo Beltran was killed by Navy Special Forces and Carlos was captured, causing the organization to defragment again.

**b. *La Linea***

La Linea (The Line) is the Ciudad Juarez DTO's military arm. After Amado Carrillo died in 1997, his brother Vicente Carrillo became the leader and created La Linea as a military arm to counter Los Zetas and Los Negros (Blancornelas, 2009). La Linea is the responsible for the spiraling violence that has had Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua under siege. According to the Attorney General, La Linea is acting almost as an independent DTO. The group is linked to a car bomb explosion in August 2010 that killed two police officers and a Red Cross paramedic (Milenio, 2010).

**c. *Los Escorpiones***

Los Escorpiones (The Scorpions) is the military arm that Gulf DTO leader Ezequiel Cardenas created after Los Zetas split from the organization. The group is in charge of the Gulf DTO's plazas defense against Los Zetas in the Northeastern state of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon (SEMAR, 2010). In November 2010, Ezequiel Cardenas was killed in a shootout with Mexican Navy Marines. The operation to capture him had lasted six months since Los Escorpiones fire power and mobility capacity allowed him to escape twice from Navy Marine sieges (SEMAR, 2010).

As noted, first and second generation DTO's hierarchical monolithic organizations could not control the paramilitary cells. All the military arms split from the larger organizations creating one or more independent DTOs, but with totally different shape, structure and operative focus. The ways they are networked now make them prone to converge with other networks that may be either criminal or

politically-focused, such as insurgents or terrorists, and worsen the already unstable environment in Mexico.

### **C. INSURGENT CONNECTIONS**

Most of the DTOs world wide have interacted with other organizations, such as insurgencies and terrorist groups because of the advantages found in illegal income from the drug trade. Nevertheless, intelligence reports have not yet linked domestic insurgent groups with DTOs. However, DTOs in Mexico do have alleged links with foreign terrorist groups and insurgencies, such as the Colombian FARC, AUC and Lebanese Hezbollah because of the transnational range of the drug trade. The insurgent groups in Mexico are active and any given day can join the historical pattern of drug and crime funding. The following are the most important insurgent movements in Mexico and their actual situation in relation to the drug trade.

#### **1. Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional**

The Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation), EZLN is a post-Marxist movement focused on the uprising on the eve of 1994's New Year. Approximately 3,000 guerrillas assaulted and captured seven towns and the municipal government of San Cristobal in Chiapas (Arquilla, Ronfeldt, Fuller, & Fuller, 1998). That was the first and only time that the modern Mexican Army has launched the DN-II plan, the strategic plan to contain serious internal peace disruption such as insurgencies. Army firefights with EZLN lasted for twelve days until Mexico's President ordered a cease fire

to open the government to dialogue. After 1994, the EZLN has not conducted any military operation.

However, the EZLN is still active in Chiapas. Its presence is solid in the so-called autonomous territories, where ELZN rules under ancient indigenous law. The EZLN was known to have launched a "netwar" before and after 1994 military operations which gained substantial support from international NGOs and public opinion (Arquilla, Ronfeldt, Fuller, & Fuller, 1998).

## **2. Ejercito Popular Revolucionario**

The Ejercito Popular Revolucionario (People's Revolutionary Army), EPR is a Leftist Maoist guerrilla group operating in Mexico's Southwest. The group's ideology is based on the peasant revolution and was created in 1995 after the Aguas Blancas incident when 17 activist peasants were allegedly killed by Federal forces in Guerrero State. Its first strike against federal forces was exactly one year after the Aguas Blancas incident. Between 1996 and 2007, EPR military operations have been of low scale, limited to ambushes and sniper shooting against small police and military units, and some homemade explosive devices set in commercial and banking facilities without civilian casualties. Nevertheless, in 2007, the EPR successfully conducted a series of bombings that targeted natural gas, propane and oil from the state oil company PEMEX's distribution pipelines. The explosions caused 20,000 people to be displaced for security, 2,500 commercial gas users were affected, financial losses of an estimated US\$100 million per day, and nearly 60% of the steel industry closed (Jenkins, 2007). The EPR is broadly

linked to kidnapping of executives for ransom to fund their activities. They justify their targets as part of their struggle against capitalism. The EPR has never been proved to have any relationship with the drug trade; however, Brian Michael Jenkins claims that the EPR's funding is not clear enough. Jenkins' thinks the PEMEX bombings, the operation's complexity, explosive devices' sophistication and geographical dimension are likely to be funded and assessed by DTO's paramilitaries. In 2009, the most radical arm of the EPR, the ERPI (Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo Insurgente [Insurgent People's Army]), announced that they were having more firefights with Sinaloa DTO's paramilitaries than with the Federal Army in areas that were not important for drug trade, which implied that DTOs were conducting counter-insurgency raids (Camacho, 2009).

**D. ARMED FORCES ROLE: IS VIOLENCE ATTRACTING MORE VIOLENCE?**

Many nongovernment organizations, such as the National Commission for Human Rights, CNDH, argue that one of the main factors that triggered violence in Mexico, was the drug enforcement strategy applied by the current presidential administration (Crespo, 2010). The core of the present counter-drug strategy is the use of the Armed Forces as the main enforcement tool. Allegedly, their active presence in the counter-narcotics operations caused violence to increase (Vega, 2010). Nevertheless, Mexican Armed Forces' direct participation in counter-drug operations in Mexico is not new. In the late 1970s, the Mexican government set an ambitious anti-drug operation with the participation of the Army and the Air Force (Toro,

1995). It was called Operation Condor. The Operation's theater was the area known as "The Golden Triangle," a vast mountainous zone where the northern states of Sonora, Durango and Sinaloa share their borders (Toro, 1995). State presence was almost nonexistent in that area. Too far from populated areas and not easy to access, this area had the proper climate to cultivate Cannabis leaf (marijuana) and poppy crops (Blancas, 2008). The expansion of the drug trade concerned the government and the roughness of the terrain made it almost impossible for police to be deployed. Police forces were very limited in equipment and training and the only option for the government was to send the Military. On January 1, 1977, Operation Condor was launched and 10,000 Mexican Army troops were deployed to the area (Toro, 1995). The Operation's commander promised to end drug trafficking in just four months, but Operation Condor lasted for ten years (Astorga). In 1987, the Operation finished and troops were recalled. The results, however, were not encouraging: more than 1000 rural families were displaced, hundreds of villages were left abandoned, popular discontent toward the Army arose and environmental damage was caused by intense and indiscriminate defoliation (Cabrera, 2006). Drug lords just fled from the Golden Triangle to neighboring States, and the cocaine trade began and flourished as a more profitable and convenient business (Cabrera, 2006). Violence was sporadic because DTOs were few and were run under the old Mafia style. Assassinations and "Vendettas" were common among them, but they rarely affected people who were not involved in organized crime, including their own families. They had a non-written honor code (Escolar, 2005).

During Operation Condor, gunfights between Mexican Army troops and narco-traffickers were rare. The DTOs were limited in men and weapons and most of the Mexican Army casualties were as a result of aerial accidents. The cost in soldier lives for the Mexican Army during the ten-year Operation Condor was 116 casualties, which included Air Force personnel (Defense, 2009).

The end of Operation Condor did not mean that Mexican Armed Forces were abandoning counter-narcotic operations. The DTOs changed and evolved with time becoming more powerful, shifting to cocaine transportation, extending their transnational networks and corrupting authorities. Meanwhile, authorities' corruption caused law enforcement to weaken (Astorga, 1996). In the 1990s, the Mexican Army and Navy started regular counter-narcotics operations in those areas where police could not be deployed. With nonexistent aerial support, limited armament and without proper training, police from all levels were not able to operate outside major urban centers. Operationally, the Mexican Army updated its COIN model after the Zapatista Army uprising in 1994. There was no modernization of the counter-narcotics forces because counter-narcotics operations were always, from the Armed Forces point of view, just a support for law enforcement forces, and not the military's mission. By their organization and doctrine, the Armed Forces in Mexico were not prepared to carry out police functions (Portillo, 2000). Nevertheless, from 1988 to 2005, the Mexican Army had 362 casualties on counter-narcotics operations. All of them happened in remote unpopulated areas when troops were ambushed while destroying drug crops or because of aerial accidents during



surveillance operations (Defense, 2009). The Mexican Navy had 34 casualties, most of them also by accidents (Laguna, 2008). In sum, the entire DTO's local and transnational networks in Mexico have been disrupted by the government with or without the Army.

The most important DTO's "capos" have either been killed or incarcerated - Arturo Beltran, Osiel Cardenas, the Arellano Felix brothers (Grayson, 2010). The Mexican government has implemented tough anti-drug consuming policies. Improved laws have created new police forces and equipped them better. During the last decade the Armed Forces and federal police have intercepted by air, sea and land drug shipments, destroyed hundreds of thousands of crops and hundreds of processing laboratories. The Armed Forces have been directly involved in drug enforcement in Mexico for 33 years. The present rampage violence in Mexico, including the use of terrorism began just four years ago.

#### **E. CONCLUSION**

The DTO's criminal profiles have changed a lot in thirty years. According to Federal District Supreme Court's Justice Edgar Elias Azar, Drug Trafficking Organizations have four stages in their lifetimes. The first is the phase of co-option of farmers and peasants to make them shift their life style into the drug trade's produce. The second is the narco-economy that establishes complex operations to launder large money sums. The third is narco-power, or the capacity to infiltrate politics, authorities, legislators, and all the state's rings of power. The fourth and last stage is narco-terror, which uses extreme psychological

threats to influence all sectors that could not be influence in previous stages. Following this pattern, Mexico's DTOs are already entering the fourth stage, which is the most painful and costliest to the society. The evolution in the hierarchical structure and then networked compartmentalization was clearly obeyed in a necessity to improve the DTOs' efficiency as enterprises. A crucial part of the business was the state's drug enforcement avoidance in order to keep the commercial flux dynamic. The compartmentalization forced by the state's intervention in areas they could not control split the main organizations into smaller divisions that became empowered quickly because of two factors, the constant internal corruption that kept the state's containment control porous, and the external drug trade chain continuum, from the producers to the final consumers, that has increased. The last compartmentalized DTOs, and their decision to create military arms, split the networks even more to an almost leaderless level. According to Dishman, these leaderless structures are now more likely to converge with other leaderless ones, notwithstanding if they are criminal, terrorist or insurgents, but just with a convenient synergic nexus as unique condition.

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## V. HISTORICAL COMPARISON, CONVERGENCES, DIVERGENCES AND CONCLUSION

Drugs and terror convergences are not the same in every case and have to be analyzed separately. The terrorist groups with political interests, such as the Shining Path, FARC and AUC, found a convenient source of funding in the drug trade and then slowly became DTOs themselves. The loss of legitimization and loss of the population's support are condemning the Shining Path and FARC's revolutions. The protracted war strategy that tried to gain support from the peasantry has been undermined by criminal activities that caused the population's aversion. However, the global illegal drug trade is far from being disrupted, and FARC, Shining Path, AUC or organization can turn into a DTO and continue in that criminal and profitable world.

On the other hand, the Medellin cartel started its organization as a DTO and ended facing the state directly by using terrorism. Pablo Escobar's case exemplified an incorrect strategy for guaranteeing profits from an illegal enterprise. According to Kidd and Walter (2006), of the five terrorism strategies, Escobar successfully used the first two of attrition and intimidation. Beyond its strategic decision making, the psychological forces that Colombia's conflicts have exerted on the population position Escobar closer to Post's (1990) psychological profile within terrorist motivation-actions' boundaries. His psychological profile showed that he was frustrated when seeking to legitimize his enterprise by laundering money and looking for social acceptance among the elite. With

terrorism used anywhere in Colombia, Crenshaw's "perfect knowledge for available alternative options" (Crenshaw, 1990) to negotiate were already out of his reach. As was described, Escobar escaped from prison because he was comfortably running the cartel from inside which shows that the Medellin cartel was restricted higherarchically and was monolyitcal. Subordinates did not have the option to make their own decisions. As Dishman (2005) states, monolytic hyerarchical organizations take more care of the links they establish always attempting to not converge with alien structures that might make them vulnerable. In the case of DTO enterprises as terrorists, Escobar chose to make the links himself and then condemned his own enterprise. The wrong choice brought attention to him, domestic and international, along with the corresponding punitive reaction. The case in Mexico seems to be different. In Escobar's time there were (as in Mexico in the same time frame) three major cartels. In Mexico there is now a universe of DTOs. According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, there are thirty DTOs operating in Mexico. According to Mexico's General Attorney's Special Division for Organized Crime Investigations there are 130 (Sanchez, 2009). The high compartmentalization into smaller networks and the spread of new differently structured DTOs have made them prone to establish any kind of networked liasons where terrorism has taken its seat.

#### **A. DTO'S TERRORISM IN MEXICO, WHY, WHEN AND HOW?**

##### **1. Why?**

This thesis' observation of Mexico's DTO evolution matches Chris Dishman's theory of the Leaderless Nexus,

which states that lower to mid-level criminals and terrorists take advantage of their independence to for synergistic ties between two groups. The first DTOs in Mexico, the Pacific their (based in the Golden Triangle) and the Gulf split in twenty years into at least thirty groups (DEA). The phenomenon of the creation of paramilitary groups has seen them turn into smaller and more dynamic networks. Moreover, with their military organization, firepower and mobility, each group has the space necessary to grow and empower itself, and then split from, and then challenge, the larger organizations. Since the beginning of the government's frontal offensive in 2006, and after more than 30,000 casualties caused by drug related violence, many mid and low level criminals are now DTO's leaders, and their network contacts, related or not to the drug trade, but criminal, are being used to achieve their criminal objectives. The DTOs are nowadays fully involved with, and trying to control by force, those smaller criminal networks that used to be alienated by the first and second DTO generations. Clearly, DTOs, and their paramilitary groups, in Mexico are not concerned about being clandestine or discrete. Part of the chaotic Colombian environment that instills psychological forces in society exists in Mexico. The majority of DTOs gunmen are underage, part of a society marginalized and forgotten by the government and, of course, the society. There are leaderless nexuses, and also what Williams (2001) calls the "expendable periphery," hitmen that, as Escobar's Colombian underage hitmen called *Suizos* (a word that literally means

Swiss in Spanish, but that comes from the Spanish word for suicidal), are being recruited by large numbers by DTOs as expendable forces.

## **2. When?**

Observations of the development of the war on drugs can help to establish when a criminal network may choose terrorism, according to recent incidents. After the state's effective show of force, as when Ciudad Juarez's La Linea network was disrupted by Federal Police (Grillo, 2010), and in loose security environments where rule of law has been disrupted, as when 72 immigrants were killed in San Fernando, and turned cities into ghost towns. According to Crenshaw (1990), a terrorist attack by spreading insecurity, making the country, in this case the urban centers or municipalities, ungovernable, seeks to pressure the regime into concessions or relaxation of coercive controls. With the law of rule disrupted it, a group will be free to join the illegal organizations. Terrorists' attacks may be expected to increase in major urban centers and military facilities which are authority symbols of law enforcement, after successful counter-narcotics operations. Despite the DTOs force in the plaza, because the weaker they may feel, the more constraints they will feel from time and options. The other areas prone to be attacked are those places where federal force presence is minimal, as in the deep countryside or small isolated towns.

## **3. How?**

The DTOs terrorists' type described in the organized crime developing in Mexico, is mostly according to a

mercenaries' models corresponding to Malcolm Nance's (2008) Class IV and V terrorists: Guerrilla and or Mercenary Soldier, and Amateur (Civilian, Untrained Criminal, or Militia Vigilante) (p. 12). Under these classifications, the DTOs paramilitaries' trend may be predictable because they will fall back on basic military training and equipment used in military or paramilitary experience (p. 14). They have limited training in urban terrorism tactics such as bombings, simple assassinations, ambushes and light infantry weapons assault. Their common operations are rather, improvised explosives and military explosives bombings; weapons and explosives ambushes; weapons and explosives assassinations; armed raids; kidnappings; occasional suicide bombings (not-voluntarily, mostly unaware) and hostage barricades (p. 15). They use underage participant to conduct surveillance or as gunmen (p. 16). The amateurs conduct simple improvised or military explosive bombings (grenades), arson, pistol or sniper assassination; physical intimidation and maiming; drive-by shootings; small raids and cash robberies; and easy kidnappings (p. 18). They all are motivated by payment. Often these financial arrangements may use ethnic or territorial rhetoric as a "political" mask for moneymaking goals (p. 16). The best example for the latter in Mexico is La Familia Michoacana.

## **B. STATE RESPONSES**

The United States in its long time alliance with Colombia has implemented many aid programs to enhance Colombian stability efforts. By 1996, the U.S. military aid to Colombia was up to US\$66 million. It increased to US\$287



million in 1998, and jumped to a package of US\$1.3 billion in 2000 under the Plan for Peace in Colombia, later called Plan Colombia. The Plan was designed to establish an integral counter-narcotics and counter-guerrilla strategy and included 500 military personnel as trainers and 300 contractors to help with coca crops eradication (Livingstone, 2005). The Plan's aid was added to by US\$380 million in 2001 by President George W. Bush, and then with US\$463 million under the Andean Counterdrug Initiative. The Andean Counterdrug Initiative was implemented to aid all the Andean region countries, as it continues being the world's largest coca producer (Stokes, 2005). Most of Plan Colombia aid went directly to the improvement of the Armed Forces and Colombia's social stabilization has been exemplary (Haddick, 2010).

In 2008, the U.S. Congress approved US\$1.6 billion aid to Mexico as part of the security cooperation between the countries (Starr, 2007). Cooperation between the states directly related to the drug trade in Latin America is essential. The integral approach that Mexico must apply to tackle the drug trade problem from its roots must be backed up by similar counter measures in the states that are involved, to cause a restrictive effect on DTOs by limiting their movements. In Mexico's case, security stability has seriously deteriorated, even when numbers are not alarming, social perception and discontent continues to be. Industry, commerce, and tourism have dropped to alarming levels because the environment in Mexico is clearly unsafe. Security branches, such as the Attorney General, expect the

violence to rise and be considered terrorism mainly when DTO' paramilitary groups keep growing in number and weaponry.

According to the terrorism strategies outlined by Kidd and Walter, DTO paramilitary groups in Mexico are waging a war of attrition, intimidation, provocation and spoiling because the state conditions allow it. Mexico is a democracy that recently experienced a political transition that it had not had for nearly eighty years. The efforts to consolidate the Mexican state as a modern democracy represents some constraints in the use of force that benefite DTO's paramilitaries' attrition strategy. The lack of an effective police force at municipal and state levels benefits DTO's paramilitaries strategies focused on intimidation. The turf wars, when at least two rival DTOs are present in the same plaza, represent a strategy of provocation and spoiling.

The counter measures proposed by Kidd and Walter can be adapted. The concession of inessential issues to the DTO's paramilitary groups does not apply for Mexico's case since the rule of law that is at stake cannot be flexible. The valid counters must then be:

- a) Precise targeted retaliation that minimizes collateral damages. Strong and superior intelligence supported by a target centric approach, instead of the traditional intelligence cycle, and the technologic requirements to achieve it.
- b) Influence likely targets of government officials and the military and enforcement forces to avoid their cooperating with DTOs.

- c) Deny access to weapons for the DTOs. The reinforcement of the intelligence capabilities by the Armed Forces that a capable law enforcement force is ready to track and disrupt contraband networks.
- d) Strive to minimize the psychological costs of the attacks, mainly in public facilities in urban centers which are vulnerable.
- e) Strengthening of law enforcement. In this case a re-structuring of the enforcement system must be at every level including effective mechanisms to successfully compete with organized crime's recruiting.

### **C. CONCLUSION: MODELING VICTORY**

A victory in the war on drugs in Mexico depends on social factors far beyond the Armed Forces mission. Nevertheless, the Armed Forces are the most reliable institution in Mexico according to the Mexican society's perception. Social reconstruction can be supported by Armed Forces labor, just as aid to the population is based on Armed Forces operations during natural disasters, health contingencies and others that have required a rapid and solid response. However, some adjustments, mainly a new legal framework, are required in order to use the military effectively, and according to international law, in public security affairs.

The effective mechanisms to control the drug trade need further implementation, as global statistics show. Nevertheless, the power that drug incomes give to non-state actors can be countered if a state adapts rapidly. An effective anti-drug policy to be applied by the international community has not yet appeared. The drug trade, its offers and demands, are deeply rooted in social

factors. But, as in any other criminal activity, it will be diminished as the state recovers the capability to maintain law, justice and force monopolization. There were lessons learned in Peru and Colombia at a very high cost. Terrorism is just another tactic at any non-State actor's hand, notwithstanding the goals that made them opt to use it. Political, criminal or ideological, terrorism's utility and impact will be defined by the state's weakness or strength. Peru and Colombia spent vital time and resources trying to integrate governmental strategies to contain the violence. Social decomposition, inequalities and partisan interests cannot be tackled by a state in ten years; but in ten years, a state can be defeated by its own society if that society goes out of control. Latin American countries have more social similarities than dissimilarities historically. All the cases in this thesis were, and continue to be, social challenges more than a military one. Some of the deepest factors that can degrade the social contract are now present in Mexico. Mexico is facing spiraling violence that is escalating to unprecedented levels. Mexico's geographical situation benefited the drug trade's development by a veil of corruption. Peru and Colombia went through the establishment of emergency powers, called for international aid, and had a high cost in human rights violations. At the end, a decisive turn to efficient and professional security forces was the platform for a long term stabilization strategy. In those cases, terrorism was the red light that announced to the state that it needed to take a decisive step.

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