

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY:

THE INTERCONNECTION OF TERRORISM AND ORGANIZED CRIME

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The environments that undergo economical and commercial liberalization, the technology developments, the immigration flows, the porous borders-in combination with the increasing in numbers, list of “weak” states-create and constitute a “suitable” environment for organized crime organizations. In such cases, the national borders can be easily trespassed, the dividing line between legal and illegal activities becomes ambiguous and the ability of risks’ management is constantly improved.

In “weak” states, the dynamics of globalization led to the emergence of “warlords, mafias and mercenaries, for many of whom the perpetuation of conflicts is in their best interest”. The state structure, the legal power, the law and order collapsed, creating the conditions under which the power is distributed among three factors: «to the remnants of official corrupted state structures, local warlords and bosses of gangs/mafias. By seeking alliances and co-operation, the criminal and terrorist organizations exchanged “know-how” methods and today their overwhelming majority is characterized by common structures and perform similar criminal/terrorist activities.

According to the American author W.G Potter, “organized crime is just a business activity that happens to be illegal”. Organized crime and transnational terrorism know no geographical limitations, are multifaceted phenomena with excellent organization, that destabilize states, threatening their economic, political and social systems.

Organized crime and terrorism present the following common characteristics: network structure and cells, perform activities beyond local-national-international borders, search for safe havens, take advantage of diaspora communities, use similar target and attack planning methods, have at their disposal advanced information and

counter-espionage systems, as well as command structure, while are dependent on external funding sources.

Extremely dangerous is the crime-terrorism convergence point, the convergence point of criminal and ideological/political motives, without being possible to make any distinction. Numerous terrorist and criminal organizations are already based on the same world infrastructures, exploit the power disruption in collapsing states and try to increase their profit shares deriving from narcotics trade and other illegal activities. No matter whether the mercenaries are hired by drug smugglers or terrorists, the motive remains the same: *the profit*.

Indeed, terrorist and criminal organizations have the same goal: profit. However, what makes the difference is that the former are/should be distinguished by ideological motives and the profits are used as a mean to achieve ideological/political objectives, by contrast with the latter.

At this point, the interconnection among between terrorism and narcotics trade-one of the most lucrative organized crime activity-is further examined. As it is well known, the drug cartels and terrorist groups forged de facto alliances in the '70s, in the Middle East and Asia and in the '80s, in Latin America. In Colombia, the cocaine cartels Medellin and Cali, usually hired members of FARC¹ and M19 for protection of cocaine crops. It is a common practice for terrorists to make enormous profits by the taxation imposed in order to protect drug barons, laboratories, illegal air corridors, transports of products, precursors and chemical substances. Thus, terrorists used the profits for future activities and the cartels secured their business. In the '80s, in Colombia, drug barons, guerillas and anti-state groups were undoubtedly, dominant.

The organized crime-terrorism nexus gained significant importance after 1991, as a result of various factors, as the end of the Cold War and globalization. Direct consequence was the borders opening, the surplus of arms and globalization of markets.

The international pressure, mostly on terrorist groups and their supporters became more intense after the 11th September 2001, in USA. Governments took more vigorous measures against terrorist funding and closed down many "Relief" NGOs, connected to terrorists.

In most cases, the relation between terrorist organizations and drug cartels is interactive. It includes the drugs-for-guns exchange, the use of same trafficking routes and the same methods for concealment of profits (e.g. laundering systems, such as Hawala and Black Market Peso Exchange - BMPE) and for the corruption of government officials.

¹ Forces armées révolutionnaires de Colombie - Armée du peuple (*Fuerzas armadas revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo*, FARC-EP, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).

Alvin James, a former employee of the American Internal Revenue Service (IRS), has stated that terrorists use BMPE as a front for concealment of illegal funds. Those funds amount, annually, to 5\$ billion. The terrorist attacks on World Trade Center were partly funded through this system. It is true that, those funds are ideal for everybody who needs a secret source of funding, given the fact that it is very hard to be detected. This tactic is very common today, given the fact that the placement of drug profits in any financial institution is a method followed worldwide. The BMPE is active in Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti and Venezuela and connected to Israel, Palestinian territories and Australia.

Criminal and terrorist networks conclude agreements for provision of products/services. For instance, Russian organized crime has cooperated with FARC for the exchange of drugs-for-weapons and money laundering. Usually, terrorists and criminals act in territories with insufficient state control (e.g. Afghanistan). The former-such as Abu Sayyaf² and IMU³-in the name of Islam conduct lucrative illegal activities and the latter take advantage of the political instability, promoting economic and political interests. Thus, money often replaces any political, ideological and religious purpose. In addition, the criminals do not seek to gain attention, by contrast with the extremists.

It is said that almost every terrorist organization involved in drugs is connected to Al Qaeda. Approximately, half of the 28 organizations listed in the past as terrorist, by the Foreign Department, are involved in narcotics trade. Typical examples are the following:

- In Peru, the organization Sendero Luminoso⁴. Guerillas and other anti-state groups from Colombia and Peru manufacture cocaine and control cocaine crops, laboratories and air corridors, imposing as tax, 100\$-500\$ per kilo, always in exchange with protection.
- In Colombia there are three organizations: ELN⁵, FARC και AUC⁶. FARC is also involved in transport of drugs and precursors and has its own laboratories. FARC and ELN take pure cocaine in exchange for services provided and they resale it to Brazilian organizations, this time, in exchange for military equipment. FARC collaborates with Brazilian, Colombian and Mexican drug cartels.
- In Canada, according to National Police data, in an annual basis, arrive at the country up to 25 tones of cocaine, worthing 50\$ millions. The biggest part of the 100 tones of cannabis entering Canada, come from Afghanistan and Pakistan and the main “responsible” are suppliers from S.E. Asia who have a strong presence the last 10-20 years. Terrorists from Eastern India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey and Middle East are suspected for collecting funds in Canada.

² ASG, Jamāyeh Abū Sayyāf, al-Harakat al-Islamiyya.

³ Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Party of Turkestan.

⁴ SL, Shining Path.

⁵ Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional, National Liberation Army.

⁶ Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, United Self Defense Forces of Colombia.

- In Europe, ETA,⁷ had been connected to drug trafficking and money laundering and IRA⁸, accordingly, to drug trafficking in Middle East. UÇK⁹ is extremely active through the Balkan Route, which connects the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran) to European markets.
- PKK¹⁰ smuggles drugs and launders money. Asa Hutchinson, from DEA/ Drug Enforcement Administration, pointed out that PKK taxes drug shipments and protects dealers in S.E. Turkey.
- In Middle East, Hizballah smuggles cocaine from Latin America into Europe and Middle East. In the Bekaa Valley, it used to smuggle opiates. The analyst Frank Cifullio stressed out that in 2000 Hizballah cooperated with PKK for exporting drugs in Europe. Hizballah, has enjoyed substantial economic aid from Iran, which used to send thousands of dollars from the Tri-Border Area in Latin America (Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil) to Canada, Lebanon etc.
- In Central Asia, it is interesting to remember that in 2000, before the Taliban's opium ban (which consulted to dramatic decrease in 2001's production), Afghanistan produced 70% of world opium production. However, this ban had a slight impact in world market, since Mullah Mohammed Omar, had stocked 65% of the previous crops. This consulted to the increase of the price and finally the Taliban sold in a higher one...

Another organization, IMU, is financed from narcotics trade and controls the principal drug trafficking routes in C. Asia. According to Tamara Makarenko, IMU has clashed with security forces in the southern borders of Kirgistan and Uzbekistan for reasons that had to do with its activities. Tamara Makarenko continues, arguing that: "The fight against IMU depends on the ability and capacity of the interested parties to control narcotics trade and also on the situation in Afghanistan".

Islamist Terrorism.

According to Joseph Bodansky, Islamist International's a military branch is called Armed Islamic Movement or International Brigade/Legion of Islam and its vanguard is known as the "Afghans" (many of them trained with the mujahideen in Pakistan or fought in Afghanistan). Since the beginning of the '90s, the Islamist Legions used to send fighters to Asia, Africa and Europe, so as to serve the "liberation cause". In 1992, the Armed Islamic Movement having received funding from the Secret Service (ISI) of Pakistan trained terrorists in country's and Afghanistan centers, in order to send them all over the world. Due to the co-operation of various Islamist movements, an "International Jihad Organization" was created, at first based in Pakistan and Afghanistan, with the purpose to control and co-ordinate activities at a global level.

⁷ Euzkadi Ta Azkatasuna, Basque Homeland and Freedom.

⁸ Irish Republican Army.

⁹ Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës, Kosovo Liberation Army.

¹⁰ Kongra-Gel (KGK), Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, KADEK, Kurdistan Workers' Party.

Although the “Afghans” considered to act in autonomous and flexible cells, Bodansky points out that they were, in some way, the “unifying link”, because they integrated the organizations and the movements-to which they belonged-into the islamist cell”.

By 1996, with funds from ISI, the terrorist infrastructure was established in Afghanistan and under the guidance of Osama Bin Laden and ISI, the October of 1997, action was taken, from areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan, for the escalation of Islamist terrorism worldwide. In 1998, the islamist networks in Europe and Middle East, activated a broad system for the transport and infiltration of terrorists, from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen to S. America, M. East, Balkans, West Europe and vice versa. In the beginning of the '90s Bin Laden sent “Afghan Arabs” in Albania and Bosnia to take part in the conflicts between Serbs and Muslims and by the spring of 1999, Al Qaeda had been established in Albania, where also Bin Laden had invested tremendous sums of money in the Islamic Bank (Tirana) and Sheikh Claude Ben Abdel Kader, recruited young Muslim fighters-for Al Qaeda-all over the country.

As Bodansky said: “...the factors of support and control of the new islamist networks act jointly with organized crime”. The ISI took the initiative to encourage the involvement of fundamentalist groups in narcotics trade. Since then, those groups expanded in a broader range of activities such as women trafficking (mainly Muslims from Bosnia but also from South Africa), money laundering and counterfeiting.

Another extremely interesting aspect of the narcoterrorism nexus is that Islamist terrorism regards narcotics trade not only as a strategic necessity for the achievement of goals, using it as a vital source of revenue, but also as a mean of weakening the enemy. The original fatwa of Hizballah (in the middle of '80) reveals a certain perception about the narcotics trade: *We manufacture these drugs for Satan - America and Jews. If we can not kill them with guns, we will vanish them with drugs.*

Thus, with narcoterrorism posing a strategic threat to the notion of security, in this point, the question that remains to be answered is how could be possible to control the “invisible hand of Allah”, which continues to determine the fate of millions of people?