Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Narco-Terrorism: The Merger of the War on Drugs and the War on Terror

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The aim of this article is to analyse the phenomena of narco-terrorism and the practical measures utilised to counter this threat. By adopting the model of the crime-terror continuum developed by Tamara Makarenko, the article will outline the similarities and dissimilarities of narcotics trafficking and terrorism in order to provide a more nuanced perspective on the concept of narco-terrorism. By doing so, the article will evaluate the kind of approach taken in combating the threat of narco-terrorism.

Keywords: Narco-terrorism; Terrorism; Narcotics trafficking; War on terror; War on drugs; Crime-terror continuum

Introduction

The several decades long 'war on drugs' and the more recent 'war on terror' have found common ground in countering the threat of narco-terrorism, thus combining two threats that have traditionally been treated separately. The concept of narco-terrorism originates from an understanding that the two phenomena of narcotics trafficking and terrorism are interconnected and subsequently that a coordination of anti-drug and anti-terror policy can be used, and is necessary, to effectively deal with both threats.

That a link exists between the narcotics trade and terrorist organisations, as implied in the term narco-terrorism, has been known to exist for decades, yet the international focus on terrorism since 11 September 2001, has also increased the attention given to the phenomenon of narco-terrorism [1]. Although, traditionally a concept connected with Latin America, in contemporary policy, narco-terrorism is increasingly linked to the regions of Central and Southeast Asia, and specifically the narcotics-producing regions of the so-called Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle.

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This article examines the concept of narco-terrorism in terms of the two phenomena it incorporates as well as the anti-drug and anti-terror measures that takes place as a result of the coordination of policy in relation to narco-terrorism. The article will emphasise both similarities and dissimilarities between different kinds of narco-terrorist organisations and similarities and dissimilarities between counter narcotics and counter terrorism efforts. This is done in order to analyse the merger of the so-called war on drugs and war on terror in an attempt to determine the usefulness of combating these two threats by adopting a unified policy approach. This article recognises the benefit and necessity of acknowledging the links between narcotic trade organisations and terrorist groups in law enforcement efforts. However, it agues that caution be taken in assuming a one-front war on drugs and terror under the umbrella of the threat of narco-terrorism since this fails to account for the differences that also exists between organisations.

Defining Along a Continuum

Narco-terrorism is one of today's buzzwords in foreign and domestic policy. It should be noted however, that even though the word is frequently used and serves as the foundation of several policy decisions, its definition is ambiguous in that it has different focus and implications depending on what part of the composite word is emphasised. The term narco-terrorism was first used to describe campaigns by drug traffickers using terrorist methods, such as the use of car bombs, assassinations and kidnappings, against anti-narcotics police in Colombia and Peru [2]. Narco-terrorists in this context refers to individuals such as the drug lord Pablo Escobar from the Medellín cartel in Colombia and other members of drug cartels, mafia or other criminal organisations, whose actions were defined as "the attempts of narcotics traffickers to influence the policies of government by the systematic threat or use of violence" [3]. According to this definition, the narcotic trafficking organisation serves as the referent object of analysis, with the illegal dealing of narcotics being the prime activity and terrorist methods something which is sometimes resorted to.

However, focus can also be placed on the terrorism part of the composite word narco-terrorism. The United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has covered this aspect in a part of their definition of narco-terrorism which states "narco-terrorism may be characterized by the participation of groups or associated individuals in taxing, providing security for, or otherwise aiding or abetting drug trafficking endeavours in an effort to further, or fund, terrorist activities" [4]. The DEA definition brings focus to terrorist organisations, highlighting the relatively recent attention given to the fact that some terrorist organisations use narcotics trafficking for the purpose of gaining revenue [5].

This makes the definition of narco-terrorism almost dual in character, where the emphasis placed on the drug aspect or the terrorism aspect may vary considerably. It might be argued that the difference in emphasis matters little since the concept of narco-terrorism can be seen as a middle-way convergence of two phenomena: drug

trafficking and terrorism, with organisations doing a bit of both. This is however at best partially true.

It should be noted that even with the acknowledgement of the duality of the term, narco-terrorism is a problematic concept and can be argued to complicate rather than facilitate discussions on the two concepts that it embodies. With regard to terrorism, Weinberg et al argue that the concept of terrorism suffers from 'stretching' and that its attachment to other concepts such as cyber-terrorism and narco-terrorism runs the risk of adopting the term terrorism to a vast number of different concepts and thereby diffusing its definition [6]. There are also authors that seem to avoid using the term altogether when discussing the convergence between criminal and terrorist organisations [7]. Despite, and arguable due to the ambiguities of narco-terrorism, as well as the frequent usage of the word, this article will use the term, narco-terrorism in its discussion. Thus hoping to make a modest contribution to a more nuanced perspective of the concept both with regard to the academic and policy sphere.

In order to acknowledge the ambiguity of the concept of narco-terrorism and to provide the reader with a theoretical framework, this article wishes to draw upon the crime-terror continuum model developed by Tamara Makarenko [8]. The model depicts organised crime and terrorist organisations existing on a continuum with organised crime and terrorism situated at the far left and right respectively. In general the model illustrates the increased interaction between organised crime and terror since the 1990s and specifically accounts for four different forms of relationships between the two types of organisations: alliances, operational motivations, convergence and the 'black hole' [9]. Hence organisations are placed on the crime-terror continuum with regard to the governing motivations of their acts and the environment in which they operate [10]. The crime-terror continuum model also accounts for changing in motivation governing group action and subsequently and the position of an organisation is fluid rather than fixed [11]. Such a move along the continuum by an organisation can be catalysed by a change in external or internal circumstances. For example, a change in leadership, as in the case of Juma Namangani, the leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), who is assumed to have been killed at Konduz following an air strike in November 2001 [12], can significantly change the motivational factors of an organisation [13]. In this case the Namangani advocated ideological reasons for the use of violence yet after his death these were to a large extent abandoned in favour of financial motivational factors. This then changed the reasons for the IMU to engage in organised crime.

According to Makarenko, the most common criminal activity that terrorist organisations are involved in is the international drug trade [14], thus although organised crime may involve different criminal activity such as arms trade, human trafficking, racketeering, by viewing the crime aspect of the continuum as solely narcotics trade, the continuum can be used as a tool to view the concept of narco-terrorism. Although the crime-terror continuum model fails to account for certain occurrences, such as why there seem to be few, if any, organisations moving from more criminal to the more political side of the spectrum, the model is here utilised for its

contribution to a clearer understanding and practical depiction of the interaction of crime and terrorism and as a theoretical complement to the ambiguous definition of narco-terrorism. This is because the phenomena can be found along the entire continuum, thus accounting for any of the two foci of the definitions, incorporating organisations such as Russian criminal gangs and al-Qaeda, which have fundamentally different motivations and level of involvement in the different criminal activities, narcotics trade and terrorism. Bearing this more nuanced picture of narco-terrorism in mind, the article will now explore the similarities and dissimilarities of organisations along the continuum and see how the combining of the war on drugs and the war on terror manages to counter the threat of narco-terrorism.

Similarities of Illegal Organisations

In today's political statements as well as in the media and academic literature, use of the term narco-terrorism implies more than organisations involved in both drug trade and terrorism, it also signals a cooperative link between organised crime and terrorism and this link is a main reason as to why a coordinated policy approach is advocated. What is less apparent however is the character of the link. The ambiguous definition of narco-terrorism does not actually imply a partnership between the drug trade organisations and terrorist organisations. It could simply mean the merger of the two phenomena, i.e. drug trafficking and terrorism in one organisation, irrespective of any formalised cooperation between networks. In the case formalised cooperation does exist, it is difficult to determine to what degree of cooperation is present, nor is the available information overly detailed concerning the precise character of such cooperation. However, through arrests of illicit narcotics traffickers, law enforcement officials have learnt of interaction between terrorists and persons in the narcotics trade. Arrests also confirm that the interaction is international in nature [15]. Although, empirical studies of the exact relationship between certain groups are essential to enhance our understanding of the relationship, the purpose of examining similarities and dissimilarities between organisations is to evaluate the policy with regard to narco-terrorism [16]. In this regard, what is most important is that there is a perception that there is interaction and this has an effect on policy. However, regardless if formal cooperation exists between certain narcotics and terrorist organisations or not, there are certain similarities in the character of these organisations worth exploring.

Structure and Activities

Both entities, narcotics and terrorist organisations, are criminal in the eyes of international law regardless if their activities are motivated by politics or economics. As criminals, terrorists and narcotics traffickers both emphasise secrecy and concealment from law enforcement officials, as this is essential for the survival of the organisations and individual members. Since both are in the same position in this

regard, narcotics traffickers and terrorists recognise the need for non-exposure and share the same interest of remaining undiscovered by the authorities [17].

Moreover, due to the criminal character of their activities, organisations usually are forced to operate in the more murky part of society, thus coming into contact or even sharing a common turf. This also increases the chances of interaction between organisations by pure coexistence.

Also, the structures of narcotic trafficking groups and terrorist organisations are similar. Many of the organisations have internationalised during the past decade and operate transnationally [18]. Both organised criminal groups and terrorist organisations generally are characterised by a vertical structure in the upper levels of the organisation, whereas a more horizontal structure is utilised from the mid and lower levels.

The use of widespread cells, comprised of few individuals, that run day-to-day operations is common. The cell-structure also represents a shared concern by both entities to prioritise security, since the use of a cell structure significantly limits the information available to officials in the case of arrests, thus ensuring the survival of the organisation [19]. In addition to common structures and interests, cooperation between terrorist and narcotics organisations can also be based on the principals of mutual gain. Largely due to their modus operandi, these organisations require certain types of goods and services, such as weapons, fake passports and ways of laundering money. These kinds of goods and services can be accessed by trading or even sharing resources between organisations.

Tangible Resources

In the cases in which cooperation does exist, this is because there are gains available to both parties valuable enough to merit collaboration. For example, the narcotics possessed by narcotics organisations can provide substantial amounts of revenue for a terrorist organisation, whereas a terrorist group's access to explosives may benefit a narcotic trading organisation. And resources in demand are in no short supply.

The drug production in Afghanistan is blossoming again after a downturn due to the ban set in place by the Taliban in 2000 and the military action against Afghanistan in 2001. According to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) drug production has now recovered and heroin production in 2003 was estimated at 3600 tones that were grown in over 80,000 hectares, showing a 6% increase in drug production from 2002 [20]. Projections for 2004 indicate an increase of 20–25%. The total monetary quantity of the drug trade is estimated to occupy 1.5–4.5% of the world's gross product [21] and seizures of tones of narcotics all over the world substantiate the trade to be truly global in character. How much revenue is generated from the narcotics trade by different criminal or terrorist organisations, is extremely difficult to appreciate. Not only is information hard to come by due to the criminal nature of the activity and the classification of certain government and intelligence reports, it also depends on where the revenue is gained since prices of narcotics vary

immensely depending on the geographical location of where they are sold, in what state of refinement they are purchased, production rates in comparison to market demand, or if revenue is collected on the production or consumer side of the trade or at some point in between. Yet the total annual amount of finances emanating from the narcotics trade is estimated to be between US\$500 billion-US\$1.5 trillion [22]. Of this total revenue the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Antonio Maria Costa stated in February 2004 that approximately US\$2.3 billion end up in the hands of organisations like al-Qaeda [23]. In addition, weapons, mainly small-scale arms, became more easily available after the dismantling of the Soviet Union and security protocols and physical security of storage facilities deteriorated [24]. As a result, a large quantity of weapons circulated on the illegal market and fell into the hands of clandestine organisations at the end of the Cold War [25]. Drugs and weapons are of interest to both narcotics organisations and terrorist groups for military and economic purposes thus making the illegal arms and drug market a common area of interest where they would have a strong presence. Also the facilitation of access to different goods or the possibility of pure trading of materials can serve as an incentive for increased cooperation between the networks.

Intangible Resources

Intangible resources are a further element with regard to the similarities of these organisations' need for operability and survival and can thus also serve as an incentive for cooperation and interaction. For example, narcotic traffickers generally have expert knowledge of methods and routes for illicit transfer of their shipments and transportation of narcotics, information that can be of use to terrorists for the relocation of goods and people. Narcotics traffickers in turn can tap into the expert knowledge in military tactics, weaponry and skills of explosives that terrorists possess. In 1993, for example, Pablo Escobar, allegedly hired the National Liberation Army (ELN) to construct car bombs, since no one in his organisation possessed this knowledge [26].

Moreover, knowledge of infrastructure is vital for narcotics and terrorist organisations. Well-used drug routes, such as one of the Balkan routes, from Afghanistan through Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania and from there in to Europe through Italy and Greece, are also capable of transporting other illegal goods or people. In recent years the Balkan route has lost some of its previous importance as the primary transit route of narcotics entering Europe due to the war in former Yugoslavia and to increased border security in Iran. In its place, the so-called Northern route has gained in prominence, allowing narcotics to move from northern Afghanistan through the Central Asian states, dominantly through Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, passing into the Caucasus and/through Kazakhstan into Russia, the Baltic states and on toward Scandinavia and Europe [27]. The active use of these routes was apparent following 9/11 when terrorists were smuggled out of Afghanistan through Iran, Central Asia, and Ukraine.

Established routes and more newly developed transport ways are equally useful for the purposes of organisations on either end of the crime-terror continuum. Moreover, illegal organisations need connections, safe houses and corrupt border guards to ensure the security of the routes and such information and contacts can be exchanged or shared. Close cooperation between organisations can also enable them to use and extend each other's networks and connections with suppliers and outsourced services. Narcotic trafficking organisations and terrorist groups also require the service of forged documents such as passports, identification papers and custom papers. These groups also use channels for laundering money such as the *hawala* system or the black market peso exchange, and could possibly share their connections within such systems [28]. The extension of networks and contacts, together with the use of each other's skills and expertise are ways and areas where drug organisations and terrorist organisations could benefit from cooperation, and even if no collaboration exist these resources are still needed and utilised by every organisation on the continuum.

Dissimilarities Between Terrorist and Criminal Organisations

As is indirectly indicated by the concept of narco-terrorism, and illustrated by the crime-terror continuum, the more dominant activity in narco-terrorism can be either narcotics trafficking or terrorism. To further clarify: the phenomenon of narco-terrorism does not represent one category of organisations; rather it includes a great variety of them.

There obviously are significant similarities between these organisations and there also seems to be a substantial amount of convergence points where cooperation could be initiated. However, if one looks beyond the structural make-up of the organisations, means of operation, needs and practical requirements, significant differences also come to light. Some of these differences are, paradoxically, actually due to their similarities and actually argue against the possibility of unproblematic interaction and cooperation. The organisations along the crime-terror continuum are often dependent on the same suppliers, means of transport, infrastructure and source of income. This condition of requiring the same resources is not a failsafe recipe for cooperation; it can equally lead to competition. This was evident in Peru when disputes between drug traffickers in the Upper Huallaga Valley and the terrorist group Sendero Luminoso led to armed clashes in the second half of 1987 and in the numerous reoccurring clashes over land between cartels and terrorist organisations such as the Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC) [29]. Even the frequently-used example of terrorists taxing drug producers for protection, a procedure exemplified by organisations such as al-Qaeda, and highlighted in public addresses as an example of the linkages between drugs and terrorism, actually is less an example of cooperation than it is an example of a classic patron-client relationship. Such an exploitative relationship has also commonly led to the killing of terrorist by traffickers refusing to pay 'patriotic taxes' and vice versa [30].

In addition to armed conflict over resources, the two stereotypical types of groups as incorporated in the concept of narco-terrorism, rarely share the same objectives or have the same motivations for their involvement in criminal activity.

Objectives and Motivation

Notwithstanding individual discrepancies between narcotic trafficking groups and terrorist groups in terms of motivating factors, objectives and regional circumstances in which they operate, some generalisations regarding the two entities can be made. One fundamental factor, which also merits the existing legal discrepancy between organised criminal activity and terrorism, is the difference in motivation. Although controversy exists over definitions, especially with regard to terrorism [31], it can be agreed that terrorism is a form of political violence where the political aspect of motivation is a significant factor in classifying an organisation as terrorist. On the other hand, for actors in organised crime the driving force is mainly economic gain. Due to their differences in motivation, narco-terrorist organisations on different ends of the crime-terror continuum can be argued to constitute quite different types of security threats with regard to magnitude of attack, choice of target and weapons. The motivation of an organisation to a certain extent also dictates for whom or what it poses a threat. The state is a case in point. So far as mainly economically-motivated organisations are a threat to the state this primarily concerns the control of parts of the state, such as the judicial branch, law enforcement agencies, as opposed to actively challenging the state. Politically-motivated organisations on the other hand, wish not only to control parts of the state and society, they wish to reform or revolutionise the state and societal structures to fit their ideological conviction [32].

The variety of objectives in organisations along the crime-terror continuum and between narcotics groups and terrorists could also restrain, if not the possibility, then the extent of cooperation between them. Consider an ethnic separatist group with a Marxist-Leninist ideological foundation such as the Kurdish PKK, or an essentially religiously-based group such as al-Qaeda. Their objective, although vastly different in character, is to change society and the state, to a state-run economy or a society based on strict religious laws and codes. They want to rebuild the state in the image that fits their sense of the proper order and organisation. In contrast, drug traffickers and producers want to exist within the state structure with minimum state intervention in the economy [33]. In a more sinister vein, their activities benefit greatly from societal disarray and minimal government control over land and population [34].

Even though an organisation's position on the crime-terror continuum can alter over time, knowledge of where on the crime-terror continuum an organisations is located at present can provide important information of the motives behind an organisation's actions or vice versa. Politically motivated acts for example, will probably target sites connected with the status quo power, which the organisation opposes, such as targets of symbolic power, political institutions or leaders. The choice of targets can thus indicate the underlying motivational orientation of an

organisation. In August 1999, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) made a raid into Kyrgyzstan from their base in Tajikistan. The attack generated social unrest and bewilderment but also resulted in the forceful abduction of twenty people. According to reports the IMU gained US$2 million in ransom for these hostages, considerably increasing the financial capital of the organisation. The raid itself however can also be argued to have been an investment protection mission. Before the attacks, Kyrgyzstan had, with moderate success, managed to supervise one of the main trafficking routes used in the 1990s, the highway from Khorog in Tajikistan to Osh in Kyrgyzstan, along which IMU bases in Tajikistan are located. Following the incursions, narcotic trafficking attempts were reported to have increased threefold. Experts agree that the IMU is heavily involved in narcotic trafficking in the region and that the organisation might at one point have controlled as much as 70% of opiates entering Kyrgyzstan [35]. It could be argued that the terrorist attacks in 1999 were carried out in order to protect their investment, implying that the insurgency had a primary economic, not political, motivation. The differences in motivational forces between organisations along the continuum to a large extent govern modes of operation, choice of targets and potential recruitment pools. Consequently, this generates significant differences between narco-terrorist organisations and points to the disparity among organisations along the crime-terror continuum.

Similarities of Counter-Narcotics and -Terrorism Policy

The traditional separation of narcotics and terrorism counter measures and agencies has gradually faded since 9/11. The urge for increased cooperation between law enforcement and intelligence agencies is advocated on a national, regional and international level. This can easily be seen when reviewing the many conferences, meetings and conventions signed on drug and terrorism associated security issues. Conventions contain clauses on the necessity for cooperation on combating narcotics and terror in concert, arguing that since both networks are interlinked in practice, they are inseparable in policy considerations [36]. International and regional institutions advocate that ignoring the link between narcotics and terrorism will lead to the failure of defeating either criminal entity. This line of reasoning was present even before 9/11 as seen in the Tashkent conferences in 1999 and October 2000, where the need to coordinate efforts to fight drugs, crime and terrorism since they were all interlinked, was pointed out [37]. After 9/11, the importance of policy cooperation was advocated by the UN in conjunction with the drafting of Resolution 1373 when the Security Council noted that "the close connection between international terrorism and transnational organised crime, illicit drugs, money-laundering, illegal arms-trafficking, and illegal movement of nuclear, chemical, biological and other potentially deadly materials, emphasises the need to enhance coordination of efforts on national, subregional, regional and international levels to strengthen a global response to this serious challenge and threat to international security" [38]. Focusing on the link between narcotics and terrorism the law enforcement efforts and intelligence gathering

agencies began a more developed framework for cooperation and the war on drugs and the war on terror became interlinked.

Intelligence Gathering

The premises for combining the two wars is based on the similarities of the threats and it is advocated that the tools used to combat drug trafficking and terrorism are identical [39]. Much of the counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism measures are dependent on intelligence gathering to receive information on networks, individuals, shipments, money laundering systems and plans of forthcoming activities or attacks. For instance, as many of the routes used by traffickers are also used by terrorists to transport people and equipment, intelligence regarding these routes can, through well-developed interagency communication, benefit both agencies fighting narcotics and counter-terrorism units. Bearing the cooperation of criminal networks in mind, sharing information on shipments, transports and communications between suspects can give leads related to drug trafficking, terrorism or both. To maximise information gathering, agencies and institutions have increased their cooperation on intelligence concerning narcotics and terrorist organisations. In his testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism and Government Information, DEA Administrator Asa Hutchinson pointed out that the DEA Financial Investigations Section has links to aid in intelligence gathering and conduct analyses with both the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) and to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Financial Review Group, who are responsible for tracing terrorist-related money. Additionally, the DEA Intelligence Division has created six-person intelligence Response Teams that can be located world wide with the task to assist and provide intelligence support in matters related to narco-traffickers and other trafficking groups [40]. Also, the State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) received US$900 million in 2003, to further activities such as combating narcotics production and trafficking. Propagating the increased linkage and merger between and among drug, terrorism and other criminal groups, the INL has also increasingly begun to integrate counter-narcotics programs with broader regional and multilateral law enforcement efforts [41].

Law Enforcement

The narco-terrorism concept has also lead to the merger of legal acts. The Vital Interdiction of Criminal Terrorist Organisations (VICTORY) a bill proposed in 2003 is being discussed in the United States [42]. The act is intended to extend the powers of the Justice Department's mandate according to the Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (PATRIOT) Act of 2001. This proposed act would give the Department the right to investigate drug dealers, terrorists and narco-terrorists [43]. It would also facilitate the indictment of drug dealers proven to have a connection to terrorist organisations and advocates harsher punishments for

such individuals [44]. This correlation of counter-drug and counter-terrorism measures within national judicial legislations shows the view increasingly taken by policymakers that if the overlap between drug traffickers and terrorists are increasing, then policy and practical countermeasures must also overlap to effectively combat the organisations involved and block loopholes in law enforcement efforts due to lack of coordination and cooperation.

Security Analysis

The focus in policymaking on the linkages between drug criminals and terrorist serves an important function to enhance effectiveness of countermeasures taken in these areas. Moreover, the recognised connection between these networks also provides for a more holistic perspective of security analysis, enabling analysts to incorporate several factors relevant for a complete security analysis of organised crime and organised non-state violence. Recognising that narco-terrorism embodies the merger of two phenomena, and even actual cooperation between two criminal networks, can make security theories more encompassing and more relevant and useful for policymaking upon implementation. Despite the ambiguous definition of narco-terrorism, the commonalities that exist between the criminal networks merit a coordinated undertaking from law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Dissimilarities Of Policy

Yet, as mentioned above, narcotics and terrorist organisations display significant differences in terms of motivational forces, which result in differences regarding target selection and other operational priorities. A similar argument can be made for counter-narcotics and counter-terrorist agencies. There are certain areas within counter-narcotics, for example, that deal with issues far removed from those of concern in counter-terrorism and vice versa, thus leaving certain areas without any connection to narco-terrorism and where cooperation between agencies is less motivated. There are also activities within counter-narcotics measures that can have the effect, at least in the short term, of undermining counter-terrorist efforts.

For example, with regard to counter-narcotics measures, there is an emphasis on finding viable economic alternatives for the producers or to use pesticides to destroy coca and poppy fields [45]. This objective for the war on drugs is arguably compatible with the objectives of the war on terror since it could reduce the availability of narcotics and simultaneously reduce finances for terrorist organisations. However, eradicating or replacing the growing of coca and poppies for illegal use actually increases the price of the product, in this case cocaine and heroin, thanks to market forces as a diminution of supply is not coupled with any reduction in demand. This was actually the observed effect after the ban on poppy cultivation set in place by the Taliban in 2000, when the prices of Afghan opium drastically increased in the region. If supply had been further reduced prices were expected to have increased also in Western Europe [46]. Hence a decreased supply of narcotics, although possibly

a partial victory in the war on drugs, could actually increase the revenue made by terrorist organisations involved in the narcotics trade. Also, anti-drug measures focus not only on halting the illegal drugs from entering consumer countries or neutralising traffickers on the supply side, but see to the demand side as well. In some consumer countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Canada and Spain, needle-exchange programs have been implemented as a way of preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C within and outside the drug using community [47], yet this dimension of the narcotics threat has received less attention [48]. Moreover, a main component of a holistic counter-measure approach towards narcotics trafficking entails conducting information and awareness programs regarding drug abuse to the public. Even though a zero demand of narcotics would naturally eliminate the possibilities for both terrorist and narcotic traffickers to profit from the drug trade, cooperation has not yet taken place in these areas nor do they serve as the base for discussion of reasons for a unified policy approach towards narco-terrorism.

In addition, since narcotics pose a chronic problem for a consumer society, the war on drugs again has to be fought on home turf in the shape of health care, treatment programs and detoxification clinics in order to reduce the social costs related to victims of drug addiction. Most importantly, with regard to policy cooperation towards narco-terrorism, the character of the war against drugs differs in many aspects depending on whether it concerns a producing, transit or consumer country, and thus the type of anti-drug measures undertaken depend on the dominant aspect of narcotic trafficking in a specific country. As can be seen from country surveys on the status of narcotics the configuration varies greatly, from one country being mainly a consumer country like Great Britain and some having features of the full cycle of the drug trade, like Tajikistan.

With regard to terrorism, in order to solve existing conflicts involving terrorism and terrorist organisations it may be necessary to include more than law enforcement activities and consider the political motivational factor behind terrorist acts. Whereas narcotic traffickers' motivation is mainly economic, the reasons terrorists have for committing criminal acts are extremely varied. Thus countermeasures have to include deep analysis of the contesting parties' interests, agendas and claims. Resources and commitment must be devoted to building trust and relations, if not for the immediate warring parties then for the next generation of society to dissuade them from continuing the struggle. The political issue must, to the greatest extent possible, be solved for the complete eradication of terrorism. This means that resources should be spent on diplomatic relations, foreign aid, in cases where underdevelopment is part of the cause of incompatibility, and governance in assisting the formation of democratic political systems. These countermeasures do not have a practical place in counter-narcotics policy and represent another area where the anti-drug and anti-terror policies diverge.

Narco-terrorism as Policy?

In the case of a unification of anti-drug and anti-terrorist policy, narco-terrorism does provide a common denominator in the fight against narcotics and terrorism. In light

of the war on terror it could be assumed that links between criminal and terrorist organisations would decrease due to the unwanted attention accompanying terrorism, yet it appears as the opposite is occurring. Due to intensified law enforcement and counter-measures both organisations have had to decentralise in order to remain elusive. As argued by Dishman, this has led to less control being exerted by leaders of organisations and increased involvement in otherwise off-limits activities such as the narcotics trade to gain finances [49]. Although the focus on the relationship and similarities of organisations is valid, it also runs the risk of obscuring the differences between organisations and focusing too much of resources available to government agencies into areas where cooperation is possible, thus leaving some important areas of anti-drug and anti-terrorism polices unattended. The similarities of the narcotics and terrorist networks are significant, but so are their differences, and these should both dictate policy.

Even though narco-terrorism blurs the line between criminal groups, narcotic traffickers and terrorists, the result of independent or cooperative actions within the law enforcement community is likely to strike against both drug trafficking elements and terrorist organisations. Investments in security devices and customs apparatuses can be used for the dual purpose of detecting bombs as well as narcotics. Furthermore, capacity-building programs and training of national and foreign law enforcement officials can benefit counter-crime measures be they narcotics or terrorism related. For example, education of law enforcement officials on bomb-blast investigations will prove beneficial in the case of any bombing despite the motivation of the perpetrator. Thus, British initiatives in Afghanistan in their role as leaders of the international effort to combat the narcotics trade have trained and equipped Afghan security forces for this purpose. The skills being taught are advocated to be equally useful in combating terrorists [50]. Law enforcement and security equipment also have versatile uses in fighting crime. Scanners that detect hidden compartments are useful regardless of what is being hidden and databases at airports capable of crosschecking passports with international criminal databases and outstanding warrants, alert officials to narcotics traffickers as well as terrorists.

It appears as tough in certain areas such as law enforcement actions, intelligence gathering, and security devices that the war on drugs and the war on terror can find a common ground for cooperation based on mutual gain. Other areas are not as suitable for cooperation and do not produce mutual gain, such as eradication policies and political solutions to conflict, or they may simply not be perceived as mutually beneficial as with drug rehabilitation. However, the focus on narco-terrorism that has gradually increased since the attacks on 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror, in a way threatens certain important countermeasures in both the struggles by diverting material and human resources to areas connected with narco-terrorism.

Also, by disregarding more nuanced threat models such as the crime-terror continuum developed by Makarenko and instead applying the term narco-terrorism to various criminal organisations with ties to terrorism and narcotics trafficking and thus lumping together groups like IMU and al-Qaeda or even outright mafia

organisations, does little to provide for an accurate and empirically sound analysis on which to base policy. They may all be involved in narco-terrorism, but the reasons for why and what element, narcotics trade or terrorism, is the dominant feature of the organisations, and if it is changing over time, remains hidden in such a broad classification. The fact that the motivational factor for some organisations is more of less greed and in others based on political grievances constitutes a main difference for any policy that hopes to be encompassing in scope. Thus a one-front policy objective based on the fight against narco-terrorism does not cover the wide range of motivations presented in the crime-terror continuum and subsequently fails to deal with the narco-terrorism problem in a complete manner. In some areas the war on drugs and the war on terror can be fought like one homogenous war, and resources in those areas are important for the success of anti-drug and anti-terrorism efforts. In other areas such as those dealing with organisations with different underlying motivations and objectives, they remain two different wars and there is the risk that the focus on only the similarities between narco-terrorist organisations, results in the neglect of certain areas of counter measures.

"Fighting Drug Trafficking Equals Fighting Terrorism"[51]

Regardless of whether the two wars share a common front or if they occupy different flanks, one war seems to take precedence over the other and further diverting resources. The war on drugs has gained much attention in recent years, yet this can be argued to be mainly due to its established connection with the war on terror in the aftermath of 9/11.

Different Levels of Security

The policy of anti-drugs and anti-terrorism as separate issues occupy different levels of security, which traditionally has had an effect on the attention given to the respective issues. When it occurs, terrorism, and international terrorism particularly, constitute a threat to national and international security. It is, especially today, top of the agenda at many international and regional conferences or organisational meetings. In contrast, according to the conventional perspective on the drug issue, it affects human security. Effects of the drug trade such as the spread of HIV/AIDS and other transmittable diseases such as Hepatitis C creates immense suffering for the infected and also imposes huge costs on society in terms of health care, medical treatment and lost productivity, yet the drug threat has not until recently and, only in some instances, been regarded as national security threat. This viewpoint originates in a focus on the effects of drug abuse in the consumer societies. Yet in sharp contrast to this perspective, much of policy implementations in the war on drugs have been directed at the supply side. Millions of dollars have been spent on eradication, infiltration of drug cartels and interdiction. Even though the problem of narcotics could be presented as a national and even international security threat, especially considering the implications

of narco-states and the possibility of regional instability originating from such states as well as growing numbers of drug abusers in consumer, as well as in production and transit countries, it remained through the twentieth century an issue for low politics.

However, with the attacks on the USA on 11 September 2001, the attitude toward the war on drugs gradually changed. The perceived link and cooperation between the drug trade and the terrorist organisations meant that the threat of narco-terrorism was presented as a global threat and the war on drugs was placed at centre stage, albeit within the context of the war on terror. The traditional position in the security hierarchy of the fight against drugs versus the fight against terror speaks for the precedence taken by terrorism in constructing a unified one-front policy of the two wars embodied in the fight against narco-terrorism.

Priority of Resources

Although much of today's counter narco-terrorism efforts are concentrated in the Central Asian region in the proximity of the Golden Crescent, and the perceived location of several terrorist organisations, an example of the unequal attention given to the two wars is illustrated by the attitude versus Colombia in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. Colombia had received much aid from the US and the state of the country was a top US foreign policy priority. The 2000 aid package, Plan Colombia, would grant the region US$1.3 billion of which 860 million would go to Colombia itself. Since 1999, more than half of the aid allocated to Colombia has been earmarked for the formation of the 'First Counter-Narcotics Brigade', a 2300 man strong unit. The underlying policy for this aid package was made clear by one of the main advocates of the legislation who in November 2000 stated that "the primary focus of this supplemental effort is to provide for Colombia's intensifying counter-drug effort. As a matter of Administration policy, the United States will not support Colombian counterinsurgency efforts" [52].

This clear separation of drugs and terrorism was blurred in the months following 9/11 and the war on drugs in Colombia became engulfed in the war on terror. The separation between drugs and terrorism in Latin America that had existed in the previous year disappeared and government officials frequently spoke about the overlap between drugs and terrorism: "it is not just narcotics. It has developed into terrorism and we need to fight terrorism in our own hemisphere" [53]. Even though Colombia receives more aid now than before 2001, most of it is reserved for military and police resources. A piece of legislation, the H.R 4775, shows the priority in the war on drugs and terror. A clause in the H.R 4775 allows the Colombian government to use all past and present counter-drug aid, including helicopters, weapons, and personnel etc. against insurgent groups. This is referred to as a "unified campaign against narcotics trafficking and against activities by organisations designated as terrorist organisations" [54]. Although it may be seen and used as a cooperative effort against both threats, the fact is that when anti-drug aid can be converted to counter-terrorism measures, it is the war on terror that is allowed to use resources from the war on drugs and not

vice-versa. Also, as mentioned before, the cooperative efforts in combating narco-terrorism by combining material and human resources between agencies shows that personnel is usually taken from drug agencies and incorporated into anti-terrorist agencies and units. In addition to, and in some ways because of, the priority of the war on terror over the war on drugs in terms of perceived security threat and the distribution of human and material resources, the war on terror in ways undermine the war on drugs.

For example, there have been reports of a 25% increase in drug trafficking in the Caribbean after 9/11 [55]. It is advocated that this increase in drug trade to the US is due to the fact that national and international law enforcement is occupied with countering potential terrorism threats. This focus of agencies on terrorism can be seen in the inter-agency cooperation between the DEA and the FBI for example, which shows the unevenness with which the cooperation is taking place. Drug Enforcement Administrator Asa Hutchinson remarked in a statement that DEA resources had been "stretched thin" since 9/11 [56]. A hundred DEA agents were stationed as marshals on airplanes and another forty were assigned to the FBI to work as intelligence analysts on terrorism-related cases. Even though narco-terrorism allows for the common investigation to receive information about individuals engaged in both narcotics and terrorism the direction of the resources went from the war on drugs to the war on terror. Furthermore, and also linked to the increase in drug trafficking in the Caribbean is that the US Coast Guard reports that 75% of their personnel and boats earmarked for drug interdiction were transferred to anti-terrorist patrols [57].

The focus on the war on terror over the war on drugs is also visible in Afghanistan, which is where in time and place the two wars really are close with regard to the originating location of both threats. However, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) stationed in Afghanistan has a mandate that does not include attacking drug traffickers or intercept drug trade or eradication of drug produce. The only mandate of the ISAF outside Kabul is to protect civilian reconstruction [58]. Not only does the prioritisation of the war on terror over the war on drugs undermine anti-drug efforts on the whole, it leads to biased efforts in the struggle against narco-terrorism due to redirected resources. Most importantly, the dominant focus placed on certain areas of counter narco-terrorism measures, such as law enforcement, police and military training, where the two phenomena of drugs and terrorism truly interact and where anti-drug and anti-terrorism measures intersect, leaves other areas with dwindling resources.

Fighting Narco-terrorism at a Cost?

On a fundamental level the war on drugs and the war on terror are concerned with two different things: drugs and terrorism. Traditionally this is also how the two threats have been treated and combated: separately. However, in the concept of narco-terrorism these phenomena have been combined to promote a one-front policy mainly in the areas of intelligence gathering and law enforcement. And countermeasures in these areas

are effective even in the case where cooperation between the networks do not exist. Reinforcement of border and customs controls for example will facilitate the arrest of criminals regardless if they are only involved in drugs and terrorism separately, narco-terrorism within one organisation or if it is a courier for a terrorist organisation but affiliated with it. The similarities between organisations involved in drug trafficking and terrorism merit this kind of cooperative efforts within policy. However, as indicated by the dual definition of narco-terrorism and the crime-terror continuum and outlined in this article, there are significant dissimilarities between the two networks that have to be taken into consideration for counter measures to be effective. The discrepancies in underlying motivations and future objectives of the different organisations are by themselves an argument for a broader view on anti-drug and anti-terror policy.

Narco-terrorism, although an important concept for counter measure efforts, is still only a part of the threat image presented by the threats of narcotics and terrorism and the entirety of the security threats cannot be eliminated if the main focus is placed only on the parts where they converge. The great emphasis placed on combating narco-terrorism is not only directing resources on a limited range of countermeasures, it is also responsible for an unequal distribution of resources accommodated in the war on drugs and the war on terror. Although originally referring to organisations that were predominantly involved in drug trafficking and only rarely utilised terrorism to further their private economic goals, the troops fighting a coordinated and cooperative battle against narco-terrorism have been rallied to the flag of the war on terror. The way in which resources are taken from the war on drugs to assist in the war on terror leaves many of the flanks in the anti-drug campaign unprotected and unattended. The war on drugs has been going on for decades without victory being within reach, and with resources divided and scattered it will be even harder to achieve. Even though it might be tempting for anti-drug officials to jump on the terrorism bandwagon in an attempt to get more funding, it may prove to be an alliance that has a fairly high price in terms of the extra resources gained. A too strong focus on narco-terrorism will not contribute to any total victory in either the war on drugs or the war on terror and an effort should be made to include all areas of anti-drug and anti-terrorism measures to achieve the long-term objective of minimizing these threats.

Notes

[1] However, the direct effect of 9/11 was an increased focus on terrorism at the expense of the focus on drugs.

[2] Calvani, Sandro, "United Nations Perspective" paper presented at *The Crime-Terrorism Nexus: How does it really work?*, Virginia, 12 March 2004, pp. 6–14.

[3] Canadian Security Intelligence Service *Commentary* No.13, Ter*rorism and the Rule of Law: Dangerous Comprise in Colombia*, 1991, p. 1.

[4] Hutchinson, Asa, "International Drug Trafficking and Terrorism" testimony given before the Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism and Government Information, Department of State, Washington DC, 13 May 2002, p. 1.

[5] 14 of the 36 organisations on the US State Department's Designated Foreign Terrorist list have been connected with drug activities, see Casteel, Steven W. statement before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, "Narco-Terrorism: International Drug Trafficking and Terrorism a Dangerous Mix", 20 May 2003, p. 1.

[6] Weinberg, Leonard, Ami Pedahzur and Sivan Hirsch-Hoeffler, "The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism" *Terrorism and Political Violence* vol.16 no.4 Winter 2004, p. 779.

[7] Dishman, Chris, "The Leaderless Nexus: When Crime and Terror Converge" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* vol. 28, 2005.

[8] For a further discussion on the crime-terrorism continuum see for example Makarenko, Tamara "A model of terrorist-criminal relationships" in *Jane's Intelligence Review*, September 2003 and "The Crime-Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism", *Global Crime*, vol. 6, no.1, 2004.

[9] Makarenko, Tamara, "The Crime-Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism", *Global Crime*, vol. 6, no.1, 2004, p. 131.

[10] Makarenko, Tamara, "The Crime-Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism", *Global Crime*, vol. 6, no.1, 2004, p.130.

[11] Makarenko, Tamara "A model of terrorist-criminal relationships" *Jane's Intelligence Review*, September 2003, p. 4.

[12] US Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism* (Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism May 21 2002) Appendix B, p. 1.

[13] Makarenko, Tamara "A model of terrorist-criminal relationships" *Jane's Intelligence Review*, September 2003, p. 1.

[14] Makarenko, Tamara, "The Crime-Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism", *Global Crime*, vol. 6, no.1, 2004, p. 134.

[15] Reports of Foreign Police and Foreign Officials, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey

[16] For studies on this see for example: Andrew Silke, "Drink, Drugs and Rock'n Roll: Financing Loyalist Terrorism in Northern Ireland-Part Two", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* vol.23. 2000 and Mark Galeotti, "'Brotherhoods' and 'Associates': Chechen Networks of Crime and Resistance", *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, vol. 11 no. 2−3, 2002.

[17] "Terror and Drug Trafficking-PKK and drug trafficking", (2000) p.1 available at http://www.terror.gen.tr/english/drug/drug.html (accessed 23 February 2004).

[18] Makarenko, Tamara, "Transnational crime and its evolving links to terrorism and instability" *Jane's Intelligence Review*, November 2001, pp. 3−4.

[19] Joint Testimony by Rand Beers, Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and Francis X. Taylor, Ambassador-at-Large for Counterterrorism before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism and Government Information, "Narco-Terrorism: The Worldwide Connection between Drugs and Terror", (U.S. Department of State: Washington DC) March 13, 2002 p.1 available at http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/rm/2002/8743.htm (accessed 21 February 2004).

[20] International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) report 2003.

[21] Kellett, T, "Transnational Organised Crime: the Next Big Threat?", 2003 http://www.dnd.ca/admpol/eng/doc/strat_2001/sa01_26_e.htm (accessed 23 February 2004).

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[24] Bailes, Alyson J.K, "The Business of Security," *Axess Magazine*, Issue 6 (2004).

[25] FBI Criminal Intelligence Section Perspective, Presented at the Crime-Terror Nexus: How does it really work?, Virginia, 12 March 2004, p. 2.

[26] Dishman, Chris, "The Leaderless Nexus: When Crime and Terror Converge", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* vol. 28, 2005 p. 246.

[27] Cornell, Svante, "The Nexus of Narcotics, Conflict and Radical Islamism in Central Asia", Cornell Caspian Consulting, *Caspian Brief* No. 24, June (2002) p. 2.

[28] Asa Hutchinson, "International Drug Trafficking and Terrorism", Testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism and Government Information, Washington DC March 13 2002, p. 4.

[29] Miller, Abraham H. and Damask, Nicholas A., "The Dual Myths of 'Narco-terrorism': How Myths Drive Policy" *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence* vol. 8 No.1 (1996) p. 125.

[30] Miller, Abraham H. and Damask, Nicholas A., "The Dual Myths of 'Narco-terrorism': How Myths Drive Policy" *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence* vol. 8 No.1 (1996) p. 126.

[31] See Schmidt, Alex P. *Political Terrorism*, Transaction Books (1984) for a detailed report and analysis on definitions of terrorism.

[32] Makarenko, Tamara, "South Central Asia: The Organised Crime Angle" presented at "The Crime-Terror Nexus: How does it really work," 12 March 2004, p. 7.

[33] Miller, Abraham H. and Damask, Nicholas A., "The Dual Myths of 'Narco-terrorism': How Myths Drive Policy" *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence* vol. 8 No.1 (1996) p. 124.

[34] For an in depth discussion on incentives and disincentives for violence see for example Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler, "On economic causes of civil war", *Oxford Economic Papers*, vol. 50 (4) (1998).

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[49] Chris Dishman, "The Leaderless Nexus: When Crime and Terror Converge", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* vol. 28, 2005, p. 238.

[50] Hollis, Andre, "A war on drugs and terror", *The Washington Times* 14 January 2004

[51] *The Saigon Times Daily*, 11 February 2004, p. 1.

[52] Vaicius, Ingrid and Isacson, Adam "'The War on Drugs' meets the 'War on Terror'" (CIP International Policy Report February 2003) p. 13.

[53] Vaicius, Ingrid and Isacson, Adam "'The War on Drugs' meets the 'War on Terror'" (CIP International Policy Report February 2003) p. 13.

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[56] Associated Press, "Drug Traffic Up as DEA Shifts Focus", 18 October 2001.

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