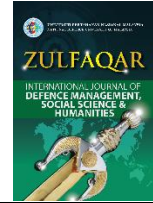




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### Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTO) in Latin America: Various Definitions and Impact to National Security

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#### ABSTRACT

*Latin America is an important geographical zone for the production and distribution of drugs. Andean countries such as Colombia, Peru and Bolivia are the major producers of cocaine in the world, while Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean have been the major corridors for transporting drugs to the United States and Europe. Using the literature study, this paper discusses the Defining Difference of Drug Distribution Organization and Its Impact on National Security in Latin America in the 21st century. As a result, countries in the region have experienced various drug trafficking problems that threaten national security. Throughout the region this, drug production and distribution, there is increased violence, corruption, the eradication of rule of law, and human rights violations caused by the emergence of powerful organized criminal groups and drug cartels*

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#### Introduction

Latin America is a huge continent, which areas covering from Mexico down towards South America. As much as 30 countries are in Latin America. Most of these countries have gained independence except for some small countries that are still colonised by other countries. These countries are rich in gold, silver, oil and timber sources and based on history, these countries belong to huge colonial powers such as Spain, Portugal, and Germany since the 17 century. According to Holmes (2009), there are four main issues that compromise the security in Latin America includes drugs, emigration, poverty and border conflict. Geographically, United States is the closest country to this continent, which makes it as the destination for people from Guatemala, Colombia and Bolivia to illegally emigrate there to find job opportunities and improve their lives. Recently, US implemented a sanction on its border with Latin America which became an issue for immigrants as they are dependent on currency exchange to provide for their families.

Mexicans who work in the US gained USD70 billion annually and this sanction has caused a great deal for them if they are ordered to return back to their country. Drug abuse, however, is seen as the biggest threat towards the security in Latin America (Hakim, 2006). Hakim (2006) also stated that Latin American countries possess huge risk of becoming hub of crimes, especially in drugs and money embezzlement. These crimes will impose threats on nation's stability and humanity. It is feared that if the crimes are not resolved, it could also affects other nations in the region. Butchart (2005) stated that a region partnership to counter this issue was made through an Organization of American States (OAS). This organization is lead by the United States and involves countries from Canada to the countries in South America. The Merida Initiative was also a partnership the United States and Mexico involving all the countries in Central America to combat drug issues and cross border crimes that happened up until today.

### **Concept of Human Security**

Researches regarding drug issue can be relate through several factors, among them are national security, poverty, environment and human security (Hough, 2004). This discussion will focus more onto human security by looking through how far it will affect the people in Latin America. Based on Siti Daud and Zarina (2005), the concept of human security expands from the understanding of national security. Although there are no visible threats from outside the country, but there are always inside threats that can create fear and suffering to its citizens. According to the United Nations (2010), there are seven factors that can pose as threats to human security, namely food, health, politic, economy, environment, individual and the community. These factors will be the bench mark on how far human security is seen as safe or vice versa. Baylis (2008) views the concept of human security evolves around four factors, which are the decline in economy development and human capital, increase in national conflict, globalisation effects and lastly, suppression on human rights. All four factors indicate that human security arise from the suppression of these factors and can spread throughout borders.

### **Drug Trafficking Organization**

Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO) is defined by the United States Department of Justice as "complex organizations with highly defined command-and-control structures that produce, transport, and/or distribute large quantities of one or more illicit drugs" (Caetano, 2005). These organizations are responsible on most of the drug trafficking activities into the United States annually. However, there are other definitions for DTO (Diaz, 2009).

### **Issues with Definition**

There are slight differences when it comes to elaborate on the definition. Threats on national and international borders do not necessarily best defined with existing definitions. For example, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was setup by terrorism group, but this force has been battling off resistance for over 40 years. Terrorist group always keep changing on their methods and targets and the same thing is seen through a lot of Mexican DTOs alongside the United States-Mexico border. Should the drug trafficking course moves from the Caribbean to Mexico and Central America, it will affect situation where more violence will occur and lead to war (Heinz, 2014). According to Longmire (2008), this organised crime will weakened any motivation to win a war against DTOs.

#### **i. Terrorism**

Since the 9/11 incident, United States has associate the term 'terrorists' with Muslims and Islam as the religion of terrorism. Latin America also does not exclude from the reality of terrorism and accept it as an issue needed to be effectively solved. But for Latin America, terrorism is often associated to mafia or gangsterism (Beydoun, 2018). In Mexico, terrorism activities include drugs, fire arms, kidnapping and other crimes. From here it can concluded that terrorism activities occur with motif and according to Mohamed Mustafa Ishak (2005), there are three factors influencing a motif. The first factor is to obtained long term control towards the enemy. The second factor is to show their ability to control an area, and the third factor is to make sure that their message is widely know to the world.

Harun Yahya (2003) in his book entitled 'Only Love Can Defeat Terrorism' wrote that terrorism is on its depressing state in the 21 century. Terrorism sees the act of violence as the only way to reach a political cause. In the eyes of terrorists, political dilemma and conflict can only be resolve through violence. Harun (2003) also added that terrorism developed the most during the French Revolution or the Russian Nihilist movement in the 19 century.

## **ii. Narco-terrorism**

The term 'narco-terrorism' is used recently, with the term being invented by former Peru president, Belaunde Terry in 1983. He referred the term with terrorism acts against the police. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan spoke about narco-terrorism when associating on drug trading activities and terrorism. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) defines organised narco-terrorism associations as groups that are involved in illegal drug trade, finance, political-based violence aimed at civilians for the cause to influence the government or certain interest groups (Casteel, 2003).

## **iii. Insurgence**

The term 'terrorist' and 'rebellion' are commonly used but does not carry the actual definition. According to the United States Army Counterinsurgency Manual, insurgency is an established movement to overthrow the current government through subversive and armed conflict (Ross & Esposito, 2008). It is also stated that insurgency is held for political-military conflict to weaken the government's power and control, to conquer other political power and increasing power to control any insurgency. Insurgency ultimate goal is to challenge the governing body in order to gain control on all or certain territories or political consensus. For instance, power sharing. Insurgency cannot depend on their strength alone and must gain support from the civilians. Rebellious activities are associated with terrorist groups, which cause confusion between both. The huge difference between these two is the political movement behind it. Guerrilla wars and violence are among the methods used in insurgency, but not all insurgency involved violence. Insurgency usually does not target civilians while terrorist does not differentiate their fighters with civilians when launching an attack (Terrorism Research, 2014).

## **iv. Organize Crime**

In historical aspect, organize crime is associated with organisations like La Costa Nostra or Russia Mafia and other activities such as fraud, prostitute and extortion. Today, these criminals portray themselves with violent images such as the Mexico drug cartel and their influence. The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) defines organize crime as any group who commit crimes through various structures and main objective to gain money from illegal activities (Salvatore, 2009).

## **Types of Drug Cartels**

### **i. Poly Drug Trafficking Organization**

Poly Drug Trafficking Organization has trafficked in huge amount of weed, cocaine, heroine, methamphetamine and amphetamine to the United States. Intel sources estimate 65 per cent of cocaine was trafficked into the United States through Central America-Mexico by vessels which operated in the East of Pacific. Colombian drug cartels used fishing boats to transport cocaine to west coast of Mexico and Yucatan (Kaihl, 2002). One of the cartels is Cali Cartel, a drug cartel which operates in Southern Colombia, among the city of Cali and Cauca del Valle. Cali Cartel was founded by the Rodriguez Orejuela brothers, Gilberto and Miguel, alongside several allied companies of Jose Santacruz Londono. After that, Gilberto Rodriguez Orejuela, Jorge Alberto Rodriguez, serta Helmer Herrera, Jairo Ivan Urdinola Grajales, Julio Fabio Urdinola Grajales, Henry Loaiza Ceballos, Victor Patiño-Fomeque, Phanor Arizabaleta-Arzayus, Raul Lemos Grajales, Luis Grajales Amir, Bernardo Saenz, Juan Carlos Ortiz Escobar, Javier Marlin Rojas, and James Andrae (Ron, 2005). Cali Cartel started trafficking weed and later on trafficked cocaine because cocaine is easier to make and has huge marginal profit. The cartel is known to innovate in its drug manufactures, trafficking method and adjusting movements from Colombia to Peru and Bolivia, besides being the pioneer of trafficking drugs to the Panama. The cartel also diversifies their illegal

drug trading with opium and it was reported that one of Japan chemist had helped in the filtering process. According to Constantine (2005) to the United States Congress, Cali will become the dominant group in South America illegal heroine trade because of their increase access to Colombian opium. It was believed that the leader of the cartel was not involved in the heroine trade; instead it was Ivan Urdinola-Grajales, an ally company who are closely associated to the cartel. Their relationship was believed to have lead to the cooperation with the heroine distribution centre (Youngers (2005).

#### **ii. Northern Border Smuggling Gangs**

The Northern Border Smuggling Gangs or Cartel de la Costa/Cartel de la Costa Atlantica is a drug cartel that operated in the Northern Colombia. This cartel guards mostly the coast of the Carribean and other routes in Colombia. They also control trading routes with neighbouring countries and local drug productions and trades. Its centre is the city of Barranquilla and is led by the vicious Alberto Orlandez-Gamboa "Caracol". This organization exported a huge amount of cocaine to the United States and Europe through the Carribean from the north coast of Colombia. As the leader of the organisation, Gamboa depended on his allies to carry out the operations. It is also known that drug distributors pay tax to the cartel to gain rights in delivering the drugs to the north coast. The cartel's influence in the region is huge, even drug traders must obtained authority before doing any assassinations or businesses (United States Drug Enforcement Administration, 2017).

#### **iii. Alien Smuggling Networks**

Smuggling illegal immigrants from South America to the United States brings profit \$300 million yearly and is the second highest after the Mexican illegal drug trade (Eugene, 2007). Organisations who committed this crime through the Mexico borders undoubtedly gained huge profit. Unlike other international organisations who viewed illegal smuggling as extra crime activities, these smuggling migrants groups have no clear hierarchy and are more depended on networks in smuggling movements. These networks typically include local agents who recruit people interested in the activities of illegal immigrants into the United States and elsewhere and take them off together; manage the travel and any necessary travel documents. Associates gave this group the flexibility to quickly and easily switch routes or alerted them if law enforcements disrupt their operations (Eugene, 2007). Alien smuggling networks including smugglers and escort, fraudulent document vendors, safehouse guards, corrupt airline, bus company employees, and officials. Although many of these smuggling groups are highly specialized, the increasing profitability of this business has increased the involvement of larger polycrime criminal syndicates (Reuters, 2001). One of the cartels involved in this operation is the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). Mara Salvatrucha (commonly abbreviated as MS, Mara, and MS-13) is a transnational criminal group from Los Angeles and has expanded to Central America. The majority of the ethnic gangs composed of Central Americans and active in urban and suburban areas. Members of the MS distinguish themselves with tattoos covering the body and also on the face, and use their own language (Johnson, 2006). They are famous for their use of violence and subcultural moral code which mostly consists of merciless revenge and cruelty. MS involved in trafficking in Central America through the Caribbean islands. MS typically conduct human trafficking for the purpose of prostitution. According to the Washington Post, MS uses the sea through Cuba and then to Miami in the United States as their trafficking route (Johnson, 2006).

#### **iv. Domestic Insurgent And Terrorist Organizations**

The South and Central America are distinctive in the overlapping area repeatedly and movements that embrace revolutionary goals with transnational criminal operations. Internet and social media allow the movement of modern large-scale crimes to expand their activities beyond kidnapping, extortion and trafficking in drugs, arms, people, including fraud, piracy, theft of information, hacking and sabotage (Miró, 2003). Among the groups that belong to this category are the People's Revolutionary Army Forces of Colombia (Spanish: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, FARC-EP and FARC). FARC is a Marxist-Leninist organization involved in the ongoing armed conflict in Colombia. Since 1964, the FARC has a claim to be a peasant army with a political platform agrarianism and anti-imperialism inspired by Bolivarianism. FARC operate financed by kidnapping for ransom, gold mining, production and distribution of drugs (Livingstone, 2004). The strength of the armed FARC is undetermined; in 2007, the FARC said they were a

military force of 18,000 men and women; In 2010, the Colombian military claims that FARC forces consist of around 13,800 members, 50 percent of whom are armed guerrilla fighters, and, in 2011, the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos said the FARC forces were fewer than 10,000 members. According to a report from Human Rights Watch (2005), about 20-30% of underage recruits, many of whom had joined the FARC. FARC guerrilla forces are centered in southeastern Colombia 500,000 square kilometers (190,000 square miles) of forest, in the square at the base of the Andean mountain chain and in northwestern Colombia. However, in 2010 the FARC lost control of the territory, forcing them to hide, especially in remote areas in the jungle (Livingstone, 2004). The FARC has been classified as a terrorist organization by the Colombian government, the United States, Canada, Chile, New Zealand, and the European Union; while the governments of Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, and Nicaragua did not regard the FARC as a terrorist group. Juan Manuel Santos, Colombia's current president has followed a middle path by recognizing in 2011 that there was "an armed conflict with the FARC" in Colombia despite his predecessor, Alvaro Uribe, strongly disagree (Livingstone, 2004).

### **DTOs Methods, Tactics, Technics and Procedures on Using Violence**

DTOs through their groups, engage in activities that are identical or similar to a foreign terrorist organization. Here are some examples of this in connection with the DTO that reflects on the definition of terrorism (Fraser, 2008).

#### **i. Murder**

An intended murder is usually targeted on law enforcement or members of the local government and civilians who are involved in illegal drug trade. DTO also targets on police chiefs, mayors, and state officials of middle to senior rank and are often successful in executing them (Fraser, 2008). For example, on August 15, 2008, two police officers were injured in the attempted murder in Puebla, where gunmen shot more than eighty rounds. Some reports indicate that police officers are the bodyguards of the deputy state attorney (UNODC, 2010). In addition, at December 22, 2009, the body of Luis Francisco Cuellar, governor of Caqueta, was found a day after he was abducted from his home in Florencia, Caqueta. Police officials said the kidnapping and execution was carried out by the FARC. According to police officials, he was killed soon after the kidnapping. The kidnappers cut the governor's throat to avoid the law enforcement. In a statement broadcasted on the radio, acting governor Patricia Vega said, "I no longer have any doubt that the FARC has done it again." The FARC claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and murder of Cuellar in January 2010. The group said that they kidnapped him to "put him on trial for corruption" and blamed law enforcement for attempting to rescue him by force (UNODC, 2010).

#### **ii. Death Executions**

DTO uses the death penalty to create fear to their rivalries, the government and also the public. Some analysts argue that tactics like beheading is akin to terrorism and aims to intimidate the public so that they will pressure the government to support them (Diane, 2006). Between January 1 and June 1, 2011, there were 923 cases of intentional homicide in the city of Cali, which is an increase of 5% compared to 2010. The increase of violence in Cali in 2011 has partly been attributed to what has been described as an ongoing 'war' between groups drug Los Rastrojos and Los Urabeños. Los Rastrojos or 'beneficiaries' of the Cali Cartel and Los Urabeños have their roots in the Atlantic coast of Colombia. Los Rastrojos is accused of committing at least 80 murders in Cali in 2011 (Diane, 2006).

#### **iii. Kidnapping**

By July 2005, the FARC kidnapped approximately 2,500 civilians, excluding members of the military or government officials. Meanwhile kidnappings by paramilitaries were estimated around 500 between 1996 and 2004. The guerrilla organization usually demands a ransom, while paramilitaries generally use such practice as means of violence or coercion. Since 1970, the kidnappings in Colombia gradually increased until 2001. In 2000 alone, the number of kidnappings in Colombia increased to 3,572. This number has declined steadily in the following years, reaching 687 kidnappings in 2006. The latest statistics in 2009 (January-October) according to the

Colombian Police records showed it had fallen to 172 cases. Despite the relatively large decline in the number of kidnappings after 2001, the number of victims continues to be one of the highest in the world. In 2010, 282 kidnapping cases were reported. The increase cases of kidnappings in 2010 and 2011 were caused by criminal groups such as Los Rastrojos (Dammert & Malone, 2006).

**iv. Usage of Firearms**

According to Newell (2012), a principal agent in charge in the Phoenix Field Division Of The Bureau Of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), firearms that are often used by the DTOs' including the variants of the AK-47 and AR-15, sniper rifle caliber, and Belgium-made pistols that are known as "eyepolicia" or police killers (Ross & Esposito, 2008). On August 11, 2008, three men died when they were shot by a group of men armed with rifles while driving on the highway in Durango (Ross & Esposito, 2008). Meanwhile on August 18, 2008 in Ciudad Juarez, armed-masked men shot and killed two sisters. On the same day, three men and a woman died, while her husband was wounded, when a gunman armed with automatic rifles opened fire on a wedding party in Buenos Aires (Ross & Esposito, 2008). On August 24, 2008, a police officer in Culiacan, Sinaloa died after at least one gunman armed with assault rifles shot him several times (Ross & Esposito, 2008).

**v. Fear mongering**

DTO instills fear through violence like wildfire to the rest of South America and the Caribbean. Rich people there ride in bulletproof vehicles, wear protective clothing and hires bodyguards. Some people like to have a microchip inserted into their arms so that they can be detected if they were kidnapped by the DTO. Banners placed in public areas have become tools of intimidation and are often used to threaten individuals (Briceño-León, 2001).

**vi. Similarities with traditional terrorists**

Violence carried out by the DTOs is seen as a criminal act. Their works are similar to the acts done by traditional terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, the FARC, and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA). DTOs use beheading to their competitors and enemies. DTOs involved in insurgent style tactics against the military, law enforcements, and also the public just as the FARC in Colombia. DTOs have managed to kill government officials and officers of law enforcement, just like the IRA in the 1970s and 1980s. Most importantly, the goal of all of these groups is to intimidate the population and change the government's stand (Insightcrime, 2014).

**DTO Impact Analysis to National Security**

**i. Political Security**

Drugshas changed the political scenario in the Latin American region because of the impact in terms of recruitment of corruption that threatens the transparency and integrity in the appointment of politicians. According to the DEA (2004), this situation can be seen from the cases of corruption in the country of Panama in 1992 when President Noreil Ortega received bribes amounting to RM18 million for trafficking drugs to the United States that ultimately led to his arrest. He was extradited to the United States and was imprisoned for 40 years. In 1991, former Bolivian officer, Toro Rici, was extradited from Bolivia to the United States to stand trial in Miami Federal Court on cocaine charges (Stares, 2008). The latest case we is the attacks and violence involving members of the Mexican police which led to the resignation of Mexico police chief last February due to the pressure of death threats on every policeman if he does not step down. Before that, a police chief in Acapulco, Mexico has been arrested for corruption on drugs. Investigation showed that 20% of police enforcement under his leadership are involved with drug-related corruption. This shows the government and political machinery has been impregnated by the cartel that bought them so that no illegal activity would be affected (Lacey, 2008).

As a result, the United States active involvement in the War on Drugs has affected the sovereignty of the region. Cameron Thies (2005) said that the United States has pressured countries of the region to set up their own special military unit to fight off drug cartels due to the corrupted law enforcements in the region. The United States sent over countless assistance

including a special force unit dubbed as Green Berets to train local Special Forces. However this is deemed to violate the rights of local communities because of the Special Forces carrying out Militarization of Laws. This raises political protest from the public because of the violation of human rights happen in the effort to curb the drug war. Besides that the United States conducted air surveillance and violated the sovereign rights of the countries and its people in the region, even though it was done with good intentions.

According to Mares (2001) of the Department of Drugs Enforcement Agency (DEA), United States declared Mexico as a narco-democracy because of the similar capabilities of both drug and state actors since 1986. 16,000 people were shot dead in twenty years of drug related cases. There are a total of 150 cartel in Mexico associated with a 30 cartel in the United States. The United States has called the cartel as Narcoterrorist (Miró, 2003). Based on such stern warning, could it be possible that the United States in the future will take more military actions to attack a country known to distribute drugs? In fact the region is the largest drug manufacturer than other regions. All this will probably give increase chaos and imposes threats to the security of the entire region.

## **ii. Economic Security**

Drugs imposed a tremendous effect on the regional's economy, whether in terms of positive and negative. In terms of gross profit indeed lead to drug-producing countries such as Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and transit countries like Mexico. For example, Peru's drug exports represent 30% of total merchandise exports, while 20% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) comes from the Bolivian drugs, which creates 20% of employment (Arquilla & Rondfeldt, 2001). Drug has given good results to Colombia, contributing £13 billion. In 1994, \$30 billion of drug profits were donated to Mexico, which is 20% of GDP and provide employments to 360,000 people. All these statistics prove how much interests are gained in the alleged drug production. If production increased 10%, then the effect will increase 2% of GNP and reduces 6% of unemployment (Manuel Roig-Franzia, 2007).

However, countries in the Latin American region face the side worst effects. Drug traffickers are keen to involve in real estate such as hotels and residences in the city and buying estates in the rural areas. This widens the economy gap among the people because they cannot cope with the competition that caused investors to move to the suburbs. Farming can no longer fulfill the demands of supply for agricultural products because the lands are bought by drug cartels. This causes a decline in agriculture products and people have to depend on imported food (Marosi, 2008). Money laundering activities affect businesses. Many companies were forced to shut down because drug cartels started to involved in local businesses and offers more discounts compared to other companies (Strategic Forecasting, 2008).

According to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (2005), governments in the region also spend a lot of money to solve this problem. For example, the Colombian government allocates 2% of the annual budget for combating drugs. Mexico had also set up a special army of 20,000 and all the burden of the countries which the majority is a poor country that requires an annual budget for development and human subjects. According to Harriott (2006), most countries in the region are rich but because of the high share of spending on defense cause it does not trigger activities that can improve the security of the human population.

## **iii. Health Safety**

In reality, Coca leaf is not a traditional food. It contains toxins and that is why it is taken in small amounts but after the purification process, it is extremely dangerous to health, especially when it's misused. (Dillehay; et al. 2010) It will result in the user being daring and active and able to commit crimes without fear because it is a stimulant. The effect of excessive consumption will also lead to death. Grillo (2011) stated that is estimated at almost 3% of the population in the region is on drugs and of course this added on the health cost of the region. The effects from sharing needles also cause AIDS to spread and destroy the families' economy in the region. Families will lose sources of incomes if the parents are unable to work and this led to prolonged misery to the family institution.

In Latin America, the government initiated to destroy coca planting through two types of drugs called Tebuturon and Sulfuric Acid which was sprayed from the air. This method has destroyed the coca trees and shrubs. However, it also eliminates other floras and faunas which resulted in ecological balance. Besides, it also affects the rivers, which are the main source of drinking water and water for agriculture and daily use where it is polluted with toxic chemicals,. This drastic action is not effective to eradicate illegal drug trade. A survey showed that if 90% of coca farms destroyed, the remaining 10% are still able to cover the costs of planting and give profit (Seelke, 2010).

## Conclusion

Drugs are dangerous to humans because of its effects on humans are real and proven. Drug traffickers are also serious committed in what they do, while showing how they can manage their way in expanding the crime. A corrupted state will only worsen the human development of the nation. Government allocation on health, economy, and education for the sake of human development will be wasted on combating drug trafficking instead. The region will continue to live in hardship and the desire of the united nations (un) to provide seven basic needs to ensure human safety will not be felt by the people. All safety effects of the political, economic and health will impact on human security. If the people do not stand against drugs, their country will continue on tumbling which will later on affect the region's security.

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