The Narco-Terror nexus: The cases of Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa

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Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Artium in the Department of Political Studies and Governance

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

As illegal activities move beyond borders, countries are confronted with challenges deriving from trafficking and organized crime, financial crimes, identity theft, cybercrime, terrorism, and environmental crime (International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy, 2017). Particularly drug trafficking and terrorism are notable challenges for domestic and international security and stability. These challenges, although not new, have become global, multidimensional, and extremely intricate (Kloer, 2009:76). At present a burgeoning relationship between trafficking in narcotics and terrorism exists. The transnational nature and diversity of these crimes enable criminal networks to work alongside terrorist groups with catastrophic consequences (Martin, 2003:9). The interconnection and association between these two antithetical groups is generally referred to as 'narco-terrorism'. The study aims to investigate the nature and scope of narcotics trafficking and terrorism in Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa. The two countries and one region were chosen specifically as case studies because all three cases have been plagued for decades by terrorism, narcotics trafficking and violent conflict. These milieus were chosen specifically for their differing backgrounds which provides an element of authenticity to the study. This study reveals important insights into how governments can formulate policies to combat the dual-nature of the narco-terror nexus. As such, it will appeal to all political scientists and criminologists studying terrorism and drug trafficking, as well as to professionals at various national and international security services.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
AQIM	Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb
AU	African Union
AUC	United Self-Defenses of Colombia
BACRIM	Colombian Criminal Bands
DTO	Drug Trafficking Organization
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
ELN	National Liberation Army
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/Levant
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
ISAF	International Security assistance Force
TCO	Transnational Criminal Organization
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNTOC	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crimes
WACSI	West Africa Cooperative Security Initiative
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
ISWAP	Islamic State West Africa Province
ISGS	Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
JNIM	Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin
MUJAO	The Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa

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CHAPTER ONE

1. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD OF NARCO-TERRORISM

1.1 General introduction

The resolution of the Cold War shifted attention from traditional security threats, which focused primarily on the state, military strength, and protection from threats of external wars and attacks—to the potential dangers of transnational crime (Giraldo & Trinkunas, 2015:430). Crime transcending national borders confronts countries with challenges such as human and drug trafficking, transnational organised crime, financial crimes, cybercrime, terrorism, and types of environmental crime which targets the natural resources of a country. Drug trafficking and terrorism, especially, are severe threats for domestic and global stability and security. While neither of these perils are new, they have developed into multidimensional, global, and exceptionally complex threats (Kloer, 2009:76). Currently, there exists a strong relationship between trafficking in narcotics and terrorism. The transnational nature and diversity of these crimes enable criminal networks to work alongside terrorist groups with catastrophic consequences (Martin, 2003:9). The interconnection and association between these two antithetical groups is generally referred to as 'narco-terrorism'.

1.1.1 Demystifying narcoterrorism: a conceptual analysis

The term 'narco-terrorism' has been beleaguered by much debate. Initially used in 1983 by the former President of Peru, Fernando Belaúnde Terry, who used the term to detail the assault against Peru's counternarcotic agents, the expression quickly became a turn-of-phrase to recount parallel attacks executed by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), in Colombia. Pioneering narco-terror researcher Rachel Ehrenfeld (1990:13), defines narco-terrorism as "the use of drug trafficking to advance the objectives of certain governments and terrorist organisations". The addition of

"governments" in this definition can be considered a tad ambiguous. Notwithstanding the efforts of United Nations' (UN) terrorism experts, an international consensus on a uniform definition of 'terrorism' has not been consolidated. Nevertheless, many existing descriptions of terrorism include only non-state actors as prospective terrorists-partly-because humanitarian and international law−in conjunction with law of war frameworks, exists to direct the conduct of state actors (Van Schendel, 2005: 13). For the purposes of this study, terrorism will be described as "the sustained use of violence against symbolic or civilian targets by small groups for political purposes, such as inspiring fear, drawing widespread attention to a political grievance, and/or provoking a draconian or unsustainable response" (Kiras, 2018:187).

Since the early 1990s, the definition of 'narco-terrorism' has developed. Emma Björnehed (2016:153) points out that the definition of "narco-terrorism" is "almost dual in character", and "the emphasis placed on the drug aspect, or the terrorism aspect may vary considerably". She argues that it is a "problematic concept" — partly because it implies the "merger of the two phenomena" — that "can be argued to complicate rather than facilitate discussions on the two concepts that it embodies" (Björnehed, 2016:154). Disagreements on the exact definition of narco-terrorism persist within, for instance, the United States (US) government itself. The US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) defines narco-terrorism as:

> A subset of terrorism, in which terrorist groups, or associated individuals, participate directly or indirectly in the cultivation, manufacture, transportation, or distribution of controlled substances and the monies derived from these activities. Further, narco-terrorism may be characterised by the participation of groups or associated individuals in taxing, providing security for, or otherwise aiding or abetting drug trafficking endeavors to further, or fund, terrorist activities (Björnehed, 2016:156).

The US Department of Defense (DOD) employs a more limiting definition: "terrorism conducted to further the aims of drug traffickers. It may include assassinations, extortion, hijackings, bombings, and kidnappings directed against judges, prosecutors, elected officials, or law enforcement agents, and general disruption of a legitimate government to

divert attention from drug operations" (Björnehed, 2016:156). According to Tamara Makarenko (2004:3), the narco-terror nexus implies a security continuum in which, at the one end, traditional organised crime is placed and, at the other, terrorism. Somewhere in the middle, in a rather large grey area, the phenomena of organised crime and terrorism meet and merge, thus becoming indistinguishable from one another. A vast grey area exists between legal and illegal transactions. It is this grey area that has been utilised by illicit traders to their advantage (Naím, 2006:2).

Against this backdrop, the term 'narcoterrorism' denotes a wide range of situations. These include: violence perpetrated by drug traffickers (aimed at furthering and protecting their economic interests); state actors resorting to drug trafficking and terrorist tactics; terrorist organisations using drug trafficking (or activities directly or indirectly related to drug trafficking) to financially support their operations; drug traffickers and terrorist organisations cooperating for mutual gains; and drug trafficking organisations and terrorist organisations merging and carrying out activities related to both drug trafficking and terrorism.

1.2 When wicked worlds collide

Prior to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the US, terrorists were mostly funded by state sponsors who used this relationship to gain access to arms networks and certain territories (The Conversation, 2016). In light of increased scrutiny and greater international condemnation of state sponsorship of terrorism, terrorists have had to look, increasingly, at alternative sources of revenue (The Conversation, 2016). Don Winslow of 'The Daily Beast' (2017) newspaper, who has been reporting on trafficking in narcotics and terrorism respectively over the last decade, stresses a terrifying new trend: a merging of worlds. Winslow (2017) believes that although narcotics and terrorism had been loosely connected in the past (for example, suicide bombers taking tranquillizers before a suicide bombing; insurgent groups fighting under the influence of drugs), a new trend is starting to develop, i.e., an economic connection (Winslow, 2017).

Terrorism essentially requires financing: finances with which to pay operatives, purchase weapons, for housing, travel, surveillance and to plan operations. Narcotics are easy to acquire and market, with immense profits and the money is easily transferrable (Winslow, 2017). Because these two groups inhabit and operate in largely the same spaces, traffickers of narcotics and terrorists easily connect. Add to that, that both groups share common enemies such as intelligence services and law enforcement, the merging of these two worlds was almost unavoidable (The Conversation, 2016).

Terrorist groups and drug traffickers employ fairly similar methods concerning their operations. Firstly, both terrorists and traffickers need access to certain areas or spaces to plan operations or grow illicit crops. In order to gain and keep access, control needs to be exerted over the local inhabitants (Reel, 2016). To accomplish this, drug cartels have adopted classic terrorist strategies, such as the double-handed approach which combines public works and generosity (which is referred to as the 'open' hand) with torture, intimidation, and murder (which is referred to as the 'closed' hand—a fist) (Reel, 2016).

In much the same way terrorists have often garnered support from the locals by providing services in under-developed and under-served rural or inner-city communities that the central government either cannot or will not deliver. Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, a notorious Mexican drug cartel boss, has become a local hero and guaranteed local support and protection by building clinics, schools, churches, and playgrounds, as well as constructing water systems and having elaborate holiday celebrations. This constitutes a classic terrorist technique, which has now been adopted by narcotics traffickers (Reel, 2016). Publicity is another area where terrorism and drug trafficking overlap. When it comes to terrorism, the purpose is to strike fear into the populace and to provoke a response from the government (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016:111). Without publicity the terrorist act is inconsequential. Here, contemporary terrorists have taken a page out of the drug cartels' book by using social media. Drug cartels started using this method since early 2005 when a four-man team of gunmen attempted to kill a rival trafficker (Edgar Villareal) of Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman in the resort town of Acapulco, in Mexico. Villareal worked with the local police to help capture his would-be killers, then videotaped them as he forced them to confess their crimes and then executed

the four men with pistol shots. He then sent the tape to the media which went viral on the internet (Reel, 2016).

We see terrorist groups, specifically, The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/Levant (ISIS), also employ these methods (Winslow, 2015). Video clips assist in spreading propaganda which is another mutual goal of both traffickers and terrorists. In the videos, victims are forced to admit to 'crimes' to then 'justify' the subsequent execution. Terrorists use these videos to declare their aims and grievances, while cartels use them to declare their superiority over rival cartels. The propaganda finds a receptive audience on websites and social media (Sangiovanni, 2005).

This leads us to another overlap: recruitment. These videos, though sadistic and saddening, prove to be a successful tool of recruitment for, both traffickers and terrorists alike. Certain audiences, instead of being repulsed, find these videos attractive. On the other hand, survival also forms part of recruitment. In territories that are contested, local inhabitants are forced to take a side and often choose the side where they are the perpetrators of violent acts rather than the victims of it (Winslow, 2017). Power also plays a vital role when recruiting members, especially when particularly young, unemployed, and powerless men are enticed to join drug cartels or terrorist groups. An individual who sees himself or herself as having no future will pick the brief but thrilling life of a drug trafficker or terrorist, even with the knowledge that it will most likely end in death (Winslow, 2015).

1.3 Assessing the threat and significance

Transnational crime has become a multifaced and diverse phenomena, reaching macro-economic proportions. Illicit goods, which are sourced from one continent, easily find their way across another, and are then marketed in a third (UNODC, 2016:111). It goes without saying that cartels and terrorist organisations constitute a truly transnational problem today, posing a severe threat to the security of states, especially those already plagued by poverty and conflict. Particularly, narcotics traffickers are directly responsible for the escalation of violence in Central America, the Caribbean and West Africa, while the

merging of the worlds of insurgents and criminals (in Central Africa, the Sahel and South-East Asia) increases terrorism and, concomitantly, wreaks havoc on natural resources. The smuggling of migrants and modern slavery have proliferated in Eastern Europe, a situation also evident in South-East Asia and Latin America. In the main, authorities no longer have absolute authority over organised gangs; cybercrime increasingly threatens the security and vital infrastructure of states, while pirates (especially in the context of the Horn of Africa) hold ships from the richest states ransom. On their part, counterfeit goods are posing substantial challenges to licit trade (while also endangering lives). Money-laundering in rogue jurisdictions and uncontrolled economic sectors undermines the banking sector throughout the world (UNODC, 2016:114).

These crimes are fueling corruption, infiltrating business and politics, and hindering development. This, in turn, undermines governance by empowering those who operate outside the law (UNODC, 2016:114). In the past 20 years the global illicit economy has boomed, posing a severe danger to development, security, and justice, notwithstanding the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC), in 2000. More than two decades later, transnational crime has transformed to become an inescapable threat, globally. Driven by economic, geopolitical, and technological shifts, transnational criminal groups have become one of the biggest beneficiaries of globalisation. These groups take advantage of supply chains and technologies, the opening of new markets, and exploit the weak regulation of cyberspace and financial markets. Illicit markets have become 'supercharged' since the advent of innovative technologies, including information communications technology (ICT). These technological advancements have allowed illicit groups to improve operations and covert communications, increasing their adaptability to enforcement measures and expanding the size and diversity of both groups and markets (Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime, 2020:9).

In the latter part of 2020, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched a joint operation with Interpol, which disrupted trafficking networks used to supply terrorists across West Africa and the Sahel. The operation, dubbed 'KAFO II' took place between 30 November and 6 December 2020, and targeted trafficking hotspots at

land borders, airports, and seaports in: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Niger. Aside from arresting several suspected terrorists, officials confiscated a range of illicit supplies such as contraband drugs, ammunition, and explosives (UNODC, 2020).

Terrorism in turn presents a terrifying feat. Worldwide, 8302 terrorist attacks were documented in 2019. Afghanistan and Syria withstood the worst these acts of terror, suffering 1294 and 871 attacks, respectively (Statista, 2021). After the US declared a War on Terror in 2001, traditional means of funding terrorism was disabled, resulting in terrorist groups turning to organised criminal activities, such as narcotics trafficking as an alternative source of funding (Kloer, 2009:76). The 2020 Global Terrorism Index places Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa among the top 20 countries susceptible to acts of terrorism (Statista, 2021). The narco-terror nexus, together with the illicit economy makes for an interesting, albeit distressing, research topic.

This study may reveal important new insights into recommending how governments can formulate policies to combat the dual-nature of the narco-terror nexus. As such, it will appeal to all political scientists and criminologists studying terrorism and drug trafficking, as well as to professionals at various national and international security services. Non-academics, avid followers of the 'narcos' franchise, and news enthusiasts alike, will find this subject matter very stimulating, while simultaneously emphasising the importance of being alert to the degree of danger that the narco-terror nexus poses.

1.4 Research problem

The problem of terrorist groups and narcotics traffickers working in tandem is not a new one. For decades, Colombia has suffered a number of deadly 'terrorist' attacks at the hands of narcotic traffickers. Since 1934, Colombian Presidents such as Belisario Betancourt, Virgilio Barco and Cesar Gaviria fought against drug cartels such as "Los Extraditables" led by notorious drug lords Pablo Escobar Gaviria and Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha. With its arid tropical climate and lush land, Colombia is ideal for the sowing and reaping of the coca plant which is then synthesised into the powder cocaine drug. Thanks to a high demand of cocaine in the US and Europe, Colombian cocaine production

skyrocketed, and drug kingpins began to wield immense power. These kingpins, with the profits from the drug trade, could carry out whatever illicit activities that they wanted without any intervention from the Colombian government, simply because they had the cash reserves to do so (Tarazona, Sevillano & Reuter, 1990:5).

Recently, West Africa has been entangled in the illegal cocaine trade from Latin America to Europe. Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo make up the West African region (McCaskie & Fage, 2020). Selecting West Africa, a region, rather than one country on the African continent was a deliberate resolution. This particular region presents a remarkable viewpoint on the narco-terror nexus in that the entire region acts as a drug trafficking route and terrorist hub. This multi-country perspective on the convergence of drug trafficking and terrorism presents a unique vantage point and generates great research value. The involvement of West Africa in the international drug trade is, however, not a new occurrence (Ellis, 2009:174). Drugs, originating from South America, enter West Africa through Guinea-Bissau in the north and Ghana in the south. More recently, the Global Initiative (2019) reported that 789 kilograms of cocaine was seized in Safim, Guinea-Bissau following a tip-off to the police. Most of the time, the drugs are transported to Europe on commercial flights by drug mules. West African criminal networks distribute these drugs throughout Europe upon arrival (UNDOC, 2016:117).

Between 2010 and 2017, the biggest worldwide increase in cannabis consumption, was documented in Africa. The African continent is also responsible for eighty-eight percent of the global tramadol (an opioid pain medication) seizures in 2017. West Africa in particular is experiencing an increase in the use of non-medical opioids, with an estimated 1.9 percent of the adult population seeking treatment for disorders related to tramadol abuse. Heroin seizures have tripled by 31 percent since 2017, exceeding the worldwide average. West (and Southern) Africa are also manufacturing methamphetamines, bound for export to Asia (World Drug Report, 2020).

During the 2000-2018 period, the use of narcotics increased greatly in developing countries. Considering that adolescents are still in the process of cognitive development,

narcotics usage would be especially detrimental. Unfortunately, teenagers and adolescents make up the biggest share of narcotics users. An estimated 192 million people used cannabis in 2018, making it the most used substance globally. However, opioids continue to be the most dangerous. Over the last decade the total number of deaths caused by opioid usage disorders rose by 71 per cent, with a 92 per cent increase among women, compared to 63 per cent among men (World Drug Report, 2020). West Africa is becoming a major transit point for narcotics, with cocaine, cannabis and various opioids being smuggled from South America to Europe through the region. Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, The Gambia, Togo, Mali, Mauritania, and Nigeria are the central areas for narcotics trafficking in West Africa (Duncan, 2018).

In the last few years, West Africa and the Sahel became a breeding ground for predatory extremist groups−including Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansarul Islam, Boko Haram, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), and Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM). These groups, are currently active in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Niger, Mali, and other states in the Lake Chad Basin, causing destruction and exploiting security weaknesses by executing continued attacks against security-and civilian targets alike. Worryingly, expansions in Burkina Faso−which is rapidly evolving into the epicenter of extremist violence in the region−illustrates the southward advancement of terrorist activity, with conceivable consequences for West African coastal states such as Benin, Ghana, and Togo (Kwarkye, 2020).

More than any other place, Afghanistan constitutes the pre-eminent example of the intricate web of the merged worlds of drug traffickers and terrorists. Afghanistan, since the 2001 US-led invasion and the lifting of the Taliban opium ban, produces ninety-two percent of the overall global illicit opium production (UNDOC, 2016:120). The increase in opium production occurred in tandem with the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. The country has for the longest time maintained a loose relationship between terrorist organisations, violence, decentralised governance, and poverty that existed prior to the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). This relationship has coalesced into "a truly narco-terrorism driven system" (UNODC, 2016:120). The increase in opium cultivation, narcotics production and trafficking are providing fruitful grounds for increased corruption, lawlessness, instability, violence, and human suffering (UNODC, 2016:120).

The three main cases—each comprising poverty ridden regions afflicted by violent conflict— constitute the examples par excellence of efforts at the global level over the last. These regions' governments have been confronted with the harsh reality of choosing between their desire curb belligerents' resources and the need to "win the hearts and minds of their respective populations". As the world's foremost producer of cocaine, Colombia is often presented as the example par excellence of the conventional government view of drugs and insurgency. In the Colombian context, evidence of the expansion of belligerent groups owing to their participation in drug trafficking (e.g., the leftist group FARC) has been all too evident (Kenny, 2007:106).

Afghanistan has been the foremost producer of opiates worldwide from around the mid-1990s. Since the mid-2000s, Afghan opium production has reached unprecedented levels in the modern history of the drug trade. It is worth noting that there are striking similarities between the cases of Afghanistan and Colombia concerning the internal dynamics of the nexus of drugs and insurgency. However, when considering the size of the illicit economy, Afghanistan surpasses Colombia by some distance, especially in terms of the sheer number of people employed by it as well as a percentage of country's GDP (UNODC, 2016:116).

Over the last decade, Africa has become one of the most important locations in the struggle against terrorism and the fight against narcotics trafficking. West Africa in particular has come to epitomise the nexus of drugs and terrorism. The case of West Africa provides a stark reminder of the difficulties of state-building in a context where the illicit economy forms the dominant economic sector and where a multiplicity of actors ranging across different segments of society (e.g., insurgents, terrorists, tribes, government officials and representatives, and the rural population) all participate in the illicit economy (Flemming, 2004:6). Also, when one normally considers terrorism, the typical thought process involves Jihadists and Islamic terrorist groups. This might be the case for Afghanistan and parts of West Africa, but various regions in the world experience terrorism without the radical Islamic component. Colombia, for one, has been at the mercy of terrorists for decades, but these radical groups display no radical Islamic tendencies.

It is against this background that the study poses the central research question: In what way does the narco-terror nexus manifest itself in Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa? The study emphasizes the unique features of these three cases and interrogates the similarities and dissimilarities between them. The central research question is supported by two sub-questions, which ask: What is the new wars thesis, and can it be useful when expounding the narco-terror nexus? And What measures have been put in place to prevent the trafficking of narcotics, the spread of terrorism and the protection of civilians in these designated spaces?

1.5   Aim and objectives of the study

The study aims to investigate the nature and scope of narcotics trafficking and terrorism in Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa. In particular, the study will investigate the interaction, cooperation, and fusion of transnational organised crime- in the form of narcotics trafficking-and terrorism in the two countries, and one region. Furthermore, the study will examine the new wars thesis, and explore whether it can it be useful when expounding the narco-terror nexus. Additionally, the study aims to determine what measures have been put in place to stop, as well as prevent the trafficking of narcotics and the spread of terrorism, and how civilians in these spaces are safeguarded.

The study has the following specific objectives:

- To emphasize the multifaceted nexus between narcotics trafficking and terrorism in Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa.
- To ascertain the scope of the narco-terror nexus in Afghanistan.
- To ascertain the scope of the narco-terror nexus in Colombia.
- To ascertain the scope of the narco-terror nexus in West Africa.
- To provide an analysis of strategies, tactics and methods employed by terrorists, and narcotics traffickers in Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa.
- Investigate the new wars thesis, to determine whether it can be used to expound the narco-terror nexus.

- Explore the measures in place, if any, that prevent narcotics trafficking and terrorism, as well as measures put in place to protect civilians in these designated spaces.

1.6 Research Methodology

The research methodology chosen for this study is a trilateral-case study. For the purpose of this study, a qualitative approach is considered to be the most appropriate, as it allows the researcher to achieve a more in-depth understanding of the nature and dynamics of the narco-terror nexus. The qualitative approach stresses an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons behind them by describing, contextualising, and promoting understanding of these behaviours (Cook & Reichardt, 1979:10). This approach is further described as social research based on observations, which are analysed without the primary use of statistical data and relies on interpretive social science. The purpose of the qualitative method is to obtain a more complete picture of one specific situation, phenomenon, or event. Cresswell (1998:8) describes this approach as "open and emerging", an invaluable research method, as it considers previously done research on the subject matter and essentially influences the study's understanding and interpretation of events (Struwig & Stead, 2001:13).

The study will be conducted in a descriptive manner, based on the literature study and factual academic sources. The study also made use of the deductive, qualitative, and ideographic approaches. The deductive approach is concerned with deducing conclusions from premises (Babbie, 2010:58). Sneider and Larner (2009:16) state that deductive research explores an already known phenomenon or theory and explores whether a said theory is valid given a certain circumstance. The path of logic is followed more closely with the deductive approach, which is crucial when critically interpreting research.

In order to aptly address the central research question, the study investigates three cases where narcotics trafficking and terrorism activities have been prevalent, i.e., Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa. The case study approach was selected because it assists in connecting theory to practice, i.e., the new wars thesis to the narco-terror nexus. Case

studies consist of in-depth investigations of individuals, groups, or events to determine causation in order to find underlying issues. This could comprise of documents, factual records, discussions, direct annotations, participant-clarifications, and tangible artefacts. James Gerring (2007:17) is of the opinion that the point of adding a case study to qualitative research is "to get the story down for the possible benefit of policymakers, scholars, and other citizens". This study uses case study exploration, instead of numerical sample analysis, for the following reasons: First, case studies enable a more in-depth analysis of idiosyncratic and ordinary patterns of violent conflicts. Second, case studies connect theory to tangible occurrences, and demonstrates if academic research efficiently converts into policies. Third, case study exploration bypasses the snare of quantitative research, which identifies dubious numerical parallels between variables− for example−such as, scarcity and the outbreak of violent conflicts (Gerring, 2007:17).

This research will focus on the theoretical framework of the new wars thesis in order to appropriately address the first sub-question, which will be further discussed in chapter two. The study primarily makes use of secondary data, because due to the surreptitious nature of the subject matter, primary data would be too difficult to obtain. The secondary data used encompasses journalistic interpretations of events, documents published by the UNODC and related institutions, academic writings, and state-issued publications.

The two countries and one region were chosen specifically as case studies because all three cases have been plagued by terrorism, narcotics trafficking and violent conflict, for decades. Although the three cases have the aforementioned in common, they are vastly different in how this terrorism, violent conflict and drug trafficking presents itself. These spaces were chosen specifically for their diversity and divergent backgrounds, which lends an element of authenticity to the study. As such, the chapters will not follow a designated outline, but rather an outline that best suits that specific case.

1.7　Literature study

Narco-terror has the potential to become a large-scale threat- in respect to global scope, dispersion, and influence. As the world becomes more interconnected, so do

opportunities for illicit groups to transact with one another. This research assists in understanding the problem before we can set out to address it. It also helps to answer important questions and demonstrates the role that those various actors play in the growth of transnational security matters. The study also makes a meaningful contribution to future research, as a point of reference on how the narco-terror nexus manifests in Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa. To do this successfully, information specific to the topic was collected by means of books, academic literature, journals, and articles, as well as the internet to conceptualize and contextualize the trafficking of drugs and terrorist activities. Certain sources within the literature study are more dated than others. These sources were necessary to ascertain exactly when narcotics trafficking, and terrorism first started to converge. Below are a few of the sources consulted to accurately address the research questions.

Journal articles such as 'Flexible Hierarchies and Dynamics Disorder: The Drug Distribution System in Frankfurt and Milan' (Paoli, 2002), and 'Architecture of Drug Trafficking: Network Forms of Organization in the Columbian Cocaine Trade' (Kenny, 2007) gave a broader insight into drug trafficking in the Americas, in particular Colombia. The UNODC's paper 'Transnational Crime in the West African Region', and Paul Williams' 'The Global Implications of West African Organized Crime were used to gather background information on West Africa and the region's emerging narco-terrorist enterprises. Corbin Dishman's book 'The Leaderless Nexus: Where Crime and Terror Converge' (2005), Willem Van Schendel 'Spaces of Engagement: How Borderlands, Illicit Flows and Territorial States Interlock' (2005), and Anna Kloer's 'Human Trafficking is Al-Qaeda's New Business Model' (2009) provided material on how terrorist cells operate in Afghanistan and the impact that these networks have on the international system.

The central characteristics of the new wars thesis and its viewpoints is based on globalisation, warfare methods, state failure, global structures, actors, spatial context, civilian victimisation, and the root causes, motives, and objectives of conflicts. State failure, triggered by economic decline, criminalisation of the state, refugee movements, demographic pressures, loss of control over the legitimate usage of force, increase in private militaries and paramilitary groups, human rights violations −as well as macro-

societal factors, are all characteristics of new wars according to the literature. The study relies heavily on the works of Mary Kaldor's 'New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era' (1999), 'New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era' (2006), and 'In Defence of New Wars' (2013) to unpack and understand the new wars thesis. Contributing to the new wars thesis is Edward Newman's 'New Wars Debate: A Historical Perspective is needed' (2004), and Münkler's 'The New Wars' (2005), studied for the sake of the second sub-research question, and to fully appreciate the new wars thesis. From this brief overview, it is clear that there is a need for supplementary discussion of the narco-terror nexus, the measures in place to prevent it, and the new wars thesis.

1.8   Structure of the study

The research consists of six chapters, with explicit themes. The first chapter of the study introduces the research topic, while simultaneously offering the framework of analysis, including the study's aim, significance, the research problem, and the research methodology, followed by the literature review. Chapter two delves into the new wars thesis and ascertains its usefulness when expounding the narco-terror nexus.

Chapters three, four and five details the three case studies (Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa) employed to look at the nexus between narcotics trafficking and terrorism, and how this nexus manifests in these three different contexts. These chapters address the central research question. Lastly, chapter six consists of concluding remarks, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

Out with the old, in with the 'new': In defense of the new wars' thesis

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2.1   Introduction

Although "traditional threats such as terrorism and nuclear proliferation… continue to challenge the international community, we now face a new constellation of modern threats"

-Ban Ki-moon (2010)

Numerous scholars engaging with conflict analysis in recent years, proposed that the global system is experiencing a profound transformation molded by globalisation, the conclusion of the Cold War, the advent of new models of conflict, and the collaboration between non-state and state actors. Consequently, a new classification of conflict was prompted by this transformation, one that is quantitatively dissimilar from previous types of conflict. It is suggested that a new kind of organised violence has developed during the latter part of the twentieth century, most notably in East Europe and Africa (Snow, 1996:1). The designation 'new wars' was used to define this new type of violence, that "can be contrasted with earlier wars in terms of their goals, the methods of warfare and how they are financed" (Kaldor, 2006: 6).

Scholars who study violent conflict from the new wars' viewpoint, analyse several economic, social, and political components that assists them in identifying the shared tendencies of contemporary conflicts[1]. This, however, does not signify that all scholars

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[1]

Studying the nature of conflict necessitates studying the various factors which characterise conflict. Six central features of conflict analysis were identified by Newman (2009:174) that might be utilised when studying the various factors which characterise wars. The first central feature in analysing conflict are the war participants, which can range from non-state actors or nation states, terrorists, warlords, criminals, or private and public actors. Spatial context is the second feature, which can be an interstate, international or regional war setting. The third feature is the root cause of the conflict-the causes might vary from political identity, criminal activity, and ethnic diversity to state failure and income inequality. The fourth feature is the motive behind the actors or participants' actions. Motives include greed, territorial succession, political ideology, grievance, and government control, among others. Methods of violence such as military tactics and training, as well as the usage of technology make up the fifth feature.

describe, define, or explain their ideas regarding the nature of war in an identical manner. Nonetheless, these scholars did identify common patterns and shared tendencies which supported the new wars thesis. Most literature suggested that the amount of interstate conflict was declining (Snow, 1996:11), whilst intrastate conflicts were on the increase (Kaldor, 2006:2). New wars are thus described as internal conflicts (Newman, 2009: 174) or civil wars (Kalyvas, 2001: 99).

Samuel Huntington had, in 1993, already posited that; religious, ethnic, and other social factors would become more significant than ideology and other political factors. Ethnic cleansing, genocide, and large proportions of displaced civilians (Newman, 2009:3) are trademarks of new wars, whose casualties are primarily children and women. Furthermore, the division between private and public combatants, criminals, common gangsters, and warlords have become increasingly blurred, and a distinct trait of contemporary conflicts (Kaldor, 2006: 6).

It is necessary to differentiate between 'new wars' and the traditional concept of war. 'New wars' are likened with the so-called 'old wars', referring to the Clausewitzian understanding of war, which is predominantly between states. The main actors are thus the states, and these wars serve the states' interest (Kaldor, 2013:17). The monopolisation of violence is legitimised by states, by establishing standing armies. In exchange for providing protection and security, the state collects tax from its citizens to fund this standing army. With state interests and the monopoly of violence as the dominant legitimacy of war, a state can deny violence conducted by non-state actors (Kaldor, 2013:19). Logically, crimes are distinguished from wars because wars can only be waged by sovereign states (Kaldor, 2012:20). Because wars are difficult to be won by attrition, Clausewitz explains those battles are crucial to the victory of wars (Kaldor, 1999:24).

The sixth feature of conflict analysis is the human and social impact of conflict. These include, among others, the killing and/or terrorizing of noncombatants and civilians, as well as human displacement. Although Newman's six central features do not contain all of the variables included in conflict analysis, it does list the most pertinent factors that assist scholars in explaining and understanding the nature of war. This list is by no means the complete list of features. It does however include the most significant characteristics that support scholars' understanding on the nature of conflict.

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the new wars theory, engage with its principles, operationalise and conceptualise some of the key concepts associated with new wars, and to ascertain whether this theory could be useful as an analytical tool when studying the cases of narco-terror in Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa. In this chapter, as well as throughout this dissertation, it is important to note that the designation 'new wars' and the subsequent ideas on the changing nature of warfare, refers to a wide collection of literature and not to one distinct author.

2.2 Deconstructing the new wars thesis: A study in distinctions

According to the new wars theory, as it relates to international structures, the current global system is separated into two distinctive parts. These distinctive parts are referred to by a range of terms, namely "zones of conflict" (Jung 2003: 11) and "zones of peace", or "zone of turmoil" and "zone of peace", and "first tier" and "second tier" (Snow 1996: 11). Although these scholars make use of dissimilar terminology, the same meaning is implied. Zones of peace comprises of capitalist, developed countries and zones of conflict encompasses the rest of the world, which is more vulnerable to internal and external violence. Upon monitoring the transformation of Post-Cold War international structures, the two-zone principle became more apparent.

Scholars such as Snow (1996:1) and Kaldor (2006:4) have long since argued that the end of the Soviet Union −and thus the withdrawal of superpower backing−resulted in a power void and that this, accompanied by the disparaging of socialist ideas and the ease of access to surplus weapons, led to new types of war. Jung (2003:11) contends that the usefulness of conventional international relations theories is challenged by this new type of war and that the archetypal Westphalian model of order proves ineffective when used to describe the special contexts of new war. Newman (2004:175) elaborates on this by adding that "the spatial context of contemporary war is generally within, rather than between states". This notion is supported by several scholars (Kaldor, 2006: 2; Kalyvas, 2001: 99; Münkler, 2005: 14; Newman, 2004: 174; Snow, 1996: 1) who agree that the number of intrastate conflicts have increased, while the number of conflicts between states have decreased considerably in the last two decades.

Despite being associated with various transnational as well as regional processes, new wars are often referred to as localised conflict or civil wars. The intricacy of the spatial context of new wars distorts the division between global and local settings, and between aggression (transnational confrontation), and repression (internal violence). The spatial context of new wars is, moreover, not restricted to a specific war sector or battlefield. Because of this, Kaldor (2006:12) argues that Clausewitz's notion of "the real center of gravity of war" is no longer effective when analysing modern conflict, which can break out literally anywhere. War protagonists are no longer limited to a battlefield, but can be spread out throughout a state, with devastating consequences for both the country and its civilians (Kaldor, 2006:12).

Another feature of new wars is a weakening, fragile or failing state. Fragile states have various characteristics that include: the loss of the monopoly on the legitimate use of force, the inability to deliver public services, the loss of territorial control, erosion of decision-making by a legitimate authority, and the destruction of the ability to interact with, and be part of, the international community. Other characteristics are sharp economic decline, environmental deterioration, brain drain, group-based inequality, large-scale coerced population dislocation, institutionalised discrimination or persecution, extensive corruption and criminal behavior, inability to collect taxes or draw support from citizens and severe demographic tensions (Fiertz, 2020). Upon reviewing the plethora of economic, social, military, and political changes that occur within weakening states, scholars argued that these changes might lead to the "retreat of the state" or the "debordering of world states". Jung (2003:12) and Münkler (2005: 16) relates the forfeiture of the control over the means of violence to state failure. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) adds that once the "state's monopoly over the means of violence is lost… violence becomes a way of life with catastrophic consequences for civilians caught in the crossfire" (ICISS 2004: 4).

Furthermore, political factors−in particular the violation of human rights, the collapse of public services, the progression of identity politics, the outlawing of the state, and the upsurge of paramilitary groups-all features of contemporary violent conflicts that add to the general loss of credence in the capabilities of state institutions. Social factors such as

food and water shortages, demographic pressures, natural resources and land disputes, major population growth, coerced refugee displacement, and the scapegoating of religious or ethnic groups also contribute to state weakening. Also foreshadowing violent conflict, are the economic factors that contribute to the weakening of the state. These factors, among others, are globalisation, the waning of the gross domestic product (GDP), declining trade proceeds, establishment of black markets and hidden economies, unequal wealth distribution and growing debt (Newman, 2009: 175; Kaldor, 2006: 5)

According to the new war literature, economic factors are central to understanding contemporary conflict and globalization, specifically, is viewed as a vital element of the new wars' political economy. The definition of globalisation, much narco-like terrorism, is a heavily contested and convoluted matter. John Baylis, Steve Smith, & Patricia Owens (2016:3), describes globalisation as an:

> *"evolutionary, non-unilinear process that has multiple interrelated dimensions such as ecology, disease, demography, economics, technology, culture, politics, military, and society".*

Globalisation signifies a propensity towards the increasing velocity, intensity, extensity, and deepening impact of global interconnectedness. Globalisation denotes the advent of the world as a shared social space, the relative deterritorialisation of economic, social, and political activity, a shift in the scale of social organization, and the relative denationalisation of power (Baylis et al, 2016:3). Globalization is defined by Jung (2003:2) and Kaldor (2006:6) as "the intensification of global interconnectedness – political, economic, military and cultural – and the changing character of political authority".

Globalisation entails a conceptual shift in thinking about global politics, from a primarily state-centric viewpoint to the perspective of geocentric or global politics—the politics of worldwide social relations. This phenomenon can be conceptualised as a transformation or fundamental shift in the spatial scale of human coordination that expands the reach of power relations across continents and regions and connects distant communities. From the cultural to the economic, the sheer scope, scale, and acceleration of worldwide interconnectedness over the past thirty years, has become ever more apparent in every sphere (Baylis et al, 2016:3).

Globalisation, in the new wars' context, brings about three processes: First, it reinforces the deterioration process of state authority, which increases civilian vulnerability and worsens the provision of public goods and services (Kaldor, 2006:6). Globalisation, within this context, permits non-state actors to vie for monopoly over state resources and power. The line between public and private authority is thus blurred, allowing for the privatisation of violence, widespread corruption, and the criminalisation of the state in extreme cases (Newman 2004: 175).

Secondly, due to amplified opportunities for both legal and extralegal trans-border trade, globalisation produces economic incentives during civil wars (Newman 2004: 177) that actually fuel these violent conflicts. Because a number of contemporary conflicts have taken place in impoverished states that feature high levels of unemployment and inflation; criminality; and corruption, Münkler (2005: 14) believes that globalisation acts as a catalyst in the establishment of an "economy of robbery and plunder" and the advent of covetous paramilitary groups.

Thirdly, globalisation is closely linked with rapid technological advancement (GI-TOC, 2021:25). Global communications are made possible because of revolutions in information technology, which assist in raising awareness of violent conflicts across the world (ICISS, 2001:6). This has the positive consequence of aid and intergovernmental organisations such as the International Red Cross, the United Nations, Médecins San Frontiéres, and Human Rights Watch aiding conflict-ridden spaces. The increased involvement of military advisers, volunteers, armed troops, international journalists, and international agencies are another consequence of global communications technology (Kaldor, 2006: 5).

The influence of globalisation on modern violent conflicts is so robust that the description 'globalised war economy' is frequently used in conflict analysis. The description 'globalised war economy' suggests that "fighting units finance themselves through plunder and the black market, or through external assistance" (Newman 2004: 176). Modern conflict therefore reflects that the results of globalisation are "compatible with regional and local structures of violence" (Jung 2003:10). New war literature proposes that the context of state failure and globalisation incriminates a number of non-states, as

well as state actors, and advances the process of the privatisation of violence. The central protagonists in modern conflicts are no longer restricted to national militaries. Rather, they encompass a plethora of "insurgency groups, criminal gangs, diaspora groups, ethnic parties, international aid organisations, and mercenaries, as well as regular armies" (Newman, 2004: 175, Kalyvas, 2001: 102-3).

Münkler (2005: 14) remarks that the array of actors entangled in modern conflicts result in the widespread breakdown of discipline and morale of the armed forces, to such a degree that "soldiers become looters for whom the laws of war or any kind of military code of punishment no longer enter the picture". In this context of diverse and brutal new war participants, warlords occupy a distinct place. Warlords are usually armed combatants that use violent force in an effort to gain control over the illicit war economy, or over a specific territory or area (Kalyvas 2001: 105). The distinction made between warlords, common thugs, paramilitary groups, and legitimate arms bearers is frequently distorted in new wars (Kaldor 2006: 6). High unemployment rates, social and ethnic discord, globalisation's liberal economic forces, economic decline, mounting social vulnerabilities, and increased criminal opportunities-all aggravated by state failure, exacerbates the number and influence of rebel groups.

In new wars, the character manner of warfare is determined by the character of the chief protagonists. Guerilla warfare characterises new wars, contrasting starkly with past conflicts (Kaldor, 2006: 8). This type of warfare was created to circumvent the need for large collections of armed forces, typical of earlier wars. Additionally, guerrilla warfare is not restricted to a specific battlefield or area, rather it is widespread across a region and numerous non-state and state actors comprising of teenage lawbreakers, marginalised soldiers, and even children are involved (Kalyvas, 2001: 103).

This is vastly different from the traditional mode of warfare, in that transnational wars typically feature set battlefields where legitimate soldiers and professional militaries gather to fight. The usage of technology is another aspect that differs from the conventional mode of warfare, particularly the employment of cheap, extremely destructive weaponry by combatants. The nature of combatants reflects the type of weaponry used in contemporary conflicts (ICISS, 2004: 4; Snow, 1996: 81). Belligerents

depend on the proliferation of cheap and accessible weaponry, as well as the black market to illegally acquire their weapons, since they normally do not have access to legitimate channels. In the context of contemporary armed conflicts, it is worth noting that regulating the weapons trade is exceptionally challenging. Weapons often end up in the possession of child soldiers resulting in devastating consequences for victims of civil conflicts (ICISS, 2004: 4). Before we can analyse the victims of modern conflicts, it is pertinent to study the root causes or source and objectives of belligerent groups.

These characteristics of civil conflicts are undeniably intersected and understanding each and every one of them assists in understanding the contemporary conflicts as a whole. Several scholars have analysed the root causes of contemporary conflicts and reached differing conclusions. Some scholars claim that territorial disputes and geopolitics are among some of the most common sources of civil conflicts. Others claim that the economic and social environment in shadow states are the root causes of civil wars.

Snow (1996: 57), Newman (2004: 177) and Kaldor (2006: 6) believe that the root causes of modern wars can be clarified in terms of economic motives or identity politics, and highlights the importance of economic motives and submits that contemporary conflicts are instigated by the expansion of international trade and the increasing greed of rebel groups pursuing "enterprise in a strikingly violent manner." They reiterate that rebel groups on the rise find pilfering and pillaging very appealing and contends that challenging the ideology or political enemy is irrelevant when analysing modern violent conflict. Jung (2003:12) participates in this discussion by looking at natural resources and the role they play in the evolution of conflict and takes it further by arguing that greed-motivated uprisings are fuelled by the "resource curse." Jung (2003: 12) conveys the notion that "mafia-style economies and protracted internal warfare are often the result of international intervention."

This perspective is unconventional in that it challenges the traditional understanding concerning the benefits of international aid and suggests that humanitarian aid is liable for supporting the criminalised war economy. Nonetheless, one of the most thought-provoking and provocative studies of civil war, queries the analysis of civil conflicts in terms of motive, and draws an analogy between the origins of violent conflicts and violent

crimes. Collier and Hoeffler (2004: 563) point out that rebellion, just like murder, "needs both motive and opportunity." They critique the conflict analysis literature which explains civil conflicts in terms of economic and social and motives. They contend that research that includes the investigation of opportune circumstances for conflicts are more trustworthy because−although numerous societies experience intense grievances, a clear motivator for violent conflict−only the societies that display atypical money-making opportunities for rebel group, experience civil wars.

The opportunity-motive dichotomy connects with the analysis of the motivations of belligerent groups involved in new wars. To theorise about the intentions of belligerent groups in terms of a political agenda is a common fallacy. These groups use religious conflict, social inequality, racial hatred, and other political issues as a means to endorse their own agendas and to garner the support of targeted groups. New war literature demonstrates that "economic motives and greed are the primary underlying driving forces of violent conflict" (Keen, 1998: 11; Kalyvas, 2001: 102-103; Newman, 2004: 177; Kaldor, 2006: 7).

Kofi Anan, former Secretary General of the UN, expressed in 2001 that the looting of minerals, timber, diamonds, and drugs were the driving force in the majority of civil wars (Kalyvas 2001: 103). Twenty years on, and this statement has never been more accurate. Certain scholars distinguish between the long- and short-term goals of civil conflicts. The goals in the short-term center on capturing resources and developing both legal and illicit trade connections. Long-term goals center on the corrosion of legitimate state authority and the expansion of illegal economies and black markets from which violence and profits are interconnected (Münkler, 2005: 14). Thus, it is not unexpected that belligerent groups prefer continued violence, over a political or military victory. The environment of modern violent conflict demonstrates that putting an end to a civil conflict is difficult because the "point of war may be precisely the legitimacy which it confers on actions, that in peacetime would be punishable as crimes (Newman 2004: 177).

Because combatants' goal is to extend civil conflicts by continuing the violence, it is unsurprising that that violence is primarily directed towards civilians, instead of the military forces. A disturbing trend of contemporary civil conflicts, as identified by the ICISS (2004:

4), is that belligerent groups purposely target civilians and "in some wars today, ninety percent of those killed in conflict are noncombatants, compared with less than fifteen percent when the century began." Child soldiers, predation, and annihilation of religious, social, or ethnic groups, forced displacement, and the systematic use of sexual violence appears to have become an enforced brand of new wars. Newman (2004: 178), Münkler (2005: 14) and Kaldor (2006: 100) agree with this being the brand or trend in new wars. The violent conflicts suffered in Bosnia, Liberia, Rwanda, and Somalia demonstrate that belligerent groups were not engaged with fighting each other, instead these groups were murdering and terrorising civilians under the guise of military action (Snow, 1995:4). Since 1945, sixty-seven million people have been permanently displaced, and twenty-one million people have died because of the deliberate persecution of civilians. These statistics are extremely worrisome and demands the attention from policymakers and scholars alike.

2.3 Are new wars in fact 'new'?

As conveyed in the preceding section, the new wars thesis consists of a robust methodology which provides interesting, valid, and useful clarifications on the character of violent conflict. As such, the new wars thesis has, in recent years, garnered a great deal of attention in academic circles. Numerous scholars have posited that the archetype of violence was changing, and that the nature of modern conflicts was qualitatively dissimilar from the nature of earlier conflicts. This facet of the new wars' thesis received a significant amount of criticism, primarily from a historical standpoint. Historical narratives argue that the characteristics of new wars have in fact been present in earlier conflicts, too (Newman, 2004: 185). This compromises the legitimacy and efficacy of the new war thesis, as it is surmised to exaggerate the newness of the characteristics of modern wars. This begs the question: are new wars in fact 'new'?

With the advancement of the new wars' thesis, policymakers and scholars were encouraged to participate in the debate regarding the trends, dynamics, patterns, and nature of modern warfare. A number of modern violent conflicts have been deemed as new wars. Bosnia remains the quintessential illustration of this, along with other examples

from the last twenty years which include Burundi, Darfur, Afghanistan, Rwanda, Angola, Niger, Congo, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Liberia (Kaldor 2006: 1). Scholars and practitioners' understanding regarding the economic and social facets of war, the intricacies of conflict, and the inherent relationship between security and development, were enhanced by new wars literature. New wars literature offers a valid and detailed analysis of global structures in the post-Cold War milieu, the deterioration of nation states, the expansion of the global war economy, the persecution of civilians, the spatial context of conflict, the goals, and motives of the different combatants in conflict, and the wide-ranging impact of conflict on national, societal, and individual level (Kaldor 2006: 1).

The key issue with the new wars' thesis, however, is that a number of its discoveries and conclusions are not 'new'. Newman (2004: 185) asserts that "all the factors that characterise new wars have been present, to varying degrees, throughout the last 100 years". Furthermore, it is vital to make a distinction between deviations in the reality of conflicts, and deviations in scholars' perception and analysis of conflicts (Newman, 2004: 185). It would appear, however, that both scholars' perception of conflicts and the reality of conflicts have changed. Though, conflict analysis has experienced a significant qualitative transformation, owing to the fact that analysts, scholars, and practitioners now have greater access to data through the internet and the international media. Additionally, an improved empirical understanding on the intricacies and nature of wars has been developed, that looks at the underlying economic, developmental, and social factors which prompt the outbreak of war (Newman, 2004: 185)

2.3.1 The usefulness (or uselessness) of the new wars' thesis

Newman (2004: 186) believes that the new wars literature thesis "has done a great service in deepening understanding of civil war." This is chiefly because the new wars approach offers a functioning framework for the analysis of the economic, social, and political factors, which shapes the nature of modern civil conflicts. The key notion of the new wars thesis is that that "during the last decades of the twentieth century, a new type of organised violence has developed", aptly termed 'new wars' (Kaldor 2006: 1). The term "new" is used to distinguish modern wars from past wars. The argument asserts that new

wars are internal or civil wars and represents a decisive departure from traditional intrastate wars. Empirical evidence suggests that one of the key flaws of new wars literature is that it does not include historical data in its analysis, nor does it relate its findings to past examples of civil conflicts. Newman (2004: 179-180) points out that "all of the factors that characterise new wars have been present, to varying degrees, throughout the last 100 years" and that the "presence or absence of certain factors is best explained by the peculiarities of specific conflicts rather than linear historical changes." The Spanish and American civil wars confirm this assertion. Scholars find new wars literatures' claims of novelty problematic and argue that the novelty claims need to be revisited in order to improve the legitimacy of the new wars' thesis. The novelty claim, furthermore, proposes that the number of conflicts between states has declines, while intrastate conflicts have increased (Newman, 2004: 180).

This claim, too, is problematic since scholars codify and define civil war differently. Consequently "different analyses may present different results on conflict trends" (Newman, 2004: 180). For instance, the 2009 UCDP graph *Active Conflicts by Type* disproves the claim that a linear decline in the number of interstate conflicts, and an upsurge in the number of intrastate conflicts has transpired. This proposes that the quantitative instance of both intrastate and interstate conflicts have declined since 1992. Furthermore, the 2009 UCDP graph suggests that the number of all types of violent conflicts have varied significantly since the Cold War ended, and that these variations do not fit a linear pattern (Kaldor, 2013:108).

Having deliberated the historical significance of the new war thesis, it is appropriate to examine the reasons why certain post-Cold War conflicts, such as India, Sri Lanka, Chechnya, Nepal, and Indonesia do not fit in the new wars' framework. The new wars literature does not fully clarify the driving forces or causes behind these conflicts and illustrates how the thesis overlooks the specificity and nuances of individual incidents of civil conflicts. The new wars methodological issue must be addressed (Kaldor, 2013:108).

Regardless of its shortcomings, the new wars thesis challenges the manner in which scholars theorise and perceive violent conflict. The usefulness of the new wars thesis lies in the innovative analysis that it provides, instead of the assertion of the novelty of

contemporary conflict. The methodology of the new war thesis provides an analysis of the economic and social dynamics of civil war. In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina – the "archetypal example" of contemporary conflict – the new wars thesis provides compelling insights into the origins of warfare, the typology, the techniques of warfare, aims and methods of the warring parties, the impact of the globalised war economy, and the effect of civil war on humanity (Kaldor, 2006: 33).

Instead of echoing the cliché of ethnic war and theorising about civil conflict as an "inexplicable Kalpanesque all-against-all conflict, ingrained in old animosities that could hardly (ever) be ameliorated," we now contemplate the civil conflict in the former Yugoslavia as a failure of the global community to offer effective international and local policing that could perhaps have restrained the "intimidating, opportunistic thugs" who were "successful mainly because they were the biggest bullies on the block" (Kaldor, 2013:108).

In the cases of Afghanistan, Colombia and West Africa, the new war thesis offers an effective framework for analysing the expansion of the globalised war economy, the role of state deterioration, and the accessibility of natural resources in the duration and development of violent conflicts. The new war thesis suggests that these two countries and one region are characterised by widespread corruption, a failing economy, poor governance, high unemployment rates and proximity to natural resources, making them more susceptible to violent conflicts (Le Billon, 2005:9).

Furthermore, the "withdrawal of foreign sponsorship at the end of the Cold War" encourages belligerents in the zone of turmoil, to pursue "alternative sources of revenue" (Le Billon, 2005:9). Certainly, in Afghanistan and West Africa belligerents' profit from the extraction of natural resources and the drug trade. Likewise, in Colombia belligerents' profit from the drug trade and exports. Thus, the new war thesis delivers some thought-provoking insights into the consequences of state deterioration, the rise of the globalised war economy, and the exploitation of natural resources as a means to sustain the conflict in the zones of turmoil (Snow, 1996: 11).

Furthermore, the new wars thesis allows for a more nuanced understanding of the effect of violent conflicts on humanity. In the cases of Cambodia, Bosnia, and Rwanda, the new

wars debate describes the process of civilian victimisation and illustrates the harmful effect that conflicts have on individuals, the families, and the community. Deliberate civilian targeting, the use of sexual assault as a method of warfare, ethnic cleansing of entire groups, and other human rights violations charactise the Bosnian, Cambodian, and Rwandan cases (Kaldor, 2013:110).

Although these victimisation patterns are horrendous, they are however, not new. According to Newman (2004:184), "warfare in the 20th century did not move from an ethos of chivalry among uniformed soldiers to one of barbarity among warlords and militias". Both the Spanish and American civil wars were incredibly bloody and yielded a significant number of civilian deaths in proportion to the overall number of casualties.

Despite its lapses, the new war thesis' usefulness lies not in its ability to accurately identify trends on the nature of violent conflict, rather its utility lies in its capacity to compel policymakers and scholars to respond to the reality of civil conflict and to adjust the manner in which violent conflict is addressed.

In this context, it is worth noting that the new wars thesis is continuously evolving and developing. The implication of the term "new" is no longer exclusively associated with the novelty of the characteristics of the modern wars. Kaldor in 2009 said in an interview, that she uses the term 'new' to "draw attention to the need for new approaches in addressing contemporary conflicts". Thus, when querying the usefulness of the new wars thesis, one needs to fathom the policy implications of the new war hypothesis. This is important because it explores the fundamental nature of scholarship, as well as the fundamental nature of armed conflicts and the policies that endorse prevention and reconciliation.

2.4 New wars and the nexus

As discussed above, the new wars thesis plays an integral part in understanding contemporary violent conflict. This is true about to narco-terror nexus too. As the preceding sections indicate, the new wars thesis considers globalisation to be an integral part of its methodology. It is worth reiterating that globalisation provides a magnitude of opportunities for nefarious trans-border activity by acting as a 'force' that escalates intra-

border criminal activity, to trans-border criminal activity (Kaldor, 2013:107). This 'force' could be in the form of higher profit margins through cross-border smuggling, incentives of control over territorial spaces, recruiting more members for the organisation from across the world, etc. This convergence is enabled through shadow facilitators, technical assistance, and by injecting external support to intra-border non-state actors. This force is the precondition of narco-terrorism and new wars.

Globalisation, by nature, undermines the religious and traditional values in the societies it rapidly expands in. Local religions and indigenous cultures feel threatened by western secularism, sparking rebellion against global homogenisation within several religious groups. The spread of secularisation has given rise to a revival in all the world's major religions, including fundamentalist views. Jewish extremists in Israel have not only targeted Palestinian Arabs but have attacked Jewish citizens who they perceive as being too secular (Pedahzur & Perliger, 2011:2). Muslim extremist groups have responded to the exposure to Western ideas with the so-called global Jihad. In India, militant Hindus attempted to force out foreign religious influences from Muslims and Christians. In Japan, a sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway was launched by the Aum Shinrikyo cult who felt high levels of apprehension about the religious and cultural changes globalisation would bring. The consequences have been universal "as the globalisation of culture tends to promote fundamentalism or puritanism in almost all religions" (Pedahzur & Perliger, 2011:2). Zimmermann (2011:153) posits that terrorism driven by deviant globalisation may present in different ways, such as ideological, ethno-separatist, and religious-cultural.

Asongu and Nwachukwu (2017:1) point out that religious terrorist cults were not very apparent three decades ago, before the prolific spread of globalisation. As a corollary to the previous point, globalisation can yield sophisticated cross-country terrorist organisations that function as franchising networks who operate via religious globalisation and internationalisation, such as ISIS/L and Al-Qaeda. As discussed elsewhere in the chapter, globalisation has produced an international political economy that is heavily skewed, with industrialised economies using their wealth and power to practice influence over less developed countries (Asongu and Nwachukwu, 2017:1). Extremist groups may

believe that politico-economic policies are meant to keep developing countries poor, less industrialised, and the first link in production as is the case with most African countries (Mshomba, 2011:3). Socio-culturally, terrorist groups might harbor the perception that certain elements of globalisation such as deterritorialisation and cultural influence may be detrimental to their values and practices. Boko Haram (meaning 'western education is a sin'), in naming themselves revealed their position on the West and its influence and is one of the most prolific terrorist groups on the African continent (Mshomba, 2011:3). Many Muslims that have joined Boko Haram have done so because economic dislocations associated with globalisation in northern Nigeria have left them and their families marginalised, destitute and having lost their social and economic status (Pate, 2014:14). The growing reach of multinational corporations that emanated from globalisation was viewed as an absolute evil that had to be opposed with violence. There have been suggestions that the United States having attacks specifically targeted towards them, has been as a consequence of the cultural globalisation and deterritorialisation that accompanies greater interaction with the West (Lutz & Lutz, 2015:29).

Another new wars catalyst is fragile states, whose position only worsens with the ingress of globalisation. Countries suffering from ongoing conflicts fall prey to illicit networks who align themselves with anti-government movements and provide funding to anti-regime or terrorist groups to sustain or extend the conflict situations in which they prosper. The predatory nature of the "new wars" actors is combined with the financial support from outside, and consequently causes the prolonged conflicts in fragile states (Lutz & Lutz, 2015:29).

Fragile states also have the added advantage of being used as 'transit' states for terrorists and transnational traffickers, as is the case with West Africa (Baylis et al, 2011:43). These predatory 'new wars' actors have proven that they can use their illegal income to bribe government officials, can access the international illicit marketplace to underwrite their activities and obtain weapons and other provisions, can deliver social services like Hezbollah in Lebanon, and can control huge urban areas like the Brazilian Favelas (Baylis et al, 2011:43). Thereby doing so, as the new wars theory clarifies, these non-state actors come to possess the monopoly on violence and undermines the states' legitimacy. Where

the state can no longer provide employment, build houses, pave roads, or police the streets, corrupt officials thrive, and private armies and mini states fill the vacuum left behind by a retreating state (Baylis et al, 2011:43).

Local drug smuggling networks, although having some global reach, were primarily concerned with crimes that could be perpetrated locally. With the evolution of globalisation, this reach was extended. The logistical skills supplied by transnational logistical networks-a byproduct of globalisation-are crucial for local criminal networks to access the global market. These transnational logistical networks, otherwise known as 'shadow facilitators' or 'fixers' enable the nexus between local and transnational groups. Local networks gain the capacity to expand to the global market through these 'shadow facilitators', who have specific links to illegal supply chains. These mediators are the vital connection between the different worlds, by facilitating the transportation of illicit money flows, chemicals, weapons, and other materials. One of the most famous shadow facilitators was Viktor Bout who in 2008, was arrested in Thailand for attempting to sell weapons to Colombian rebel group, FARC (Schmidle, 2012:2).

This narco-terror nexus is typically driven by an exchange of information or the usage of already established trafficking or smuggling networks. Confirming what Kaldor's new wars theory suggests, these groups prefer operating in fragile states and create alliances in those regions (Dishman, 2005:245). Government officials become bribed figureheads and law enforcement is virtually non-existent (Vulliamy, 2008).

Tactical determinations are another driver of the narco-terror nexus, of which the FARC and Irish Republican Army (IRA) is a perfect illustration (Wang, 2012:6). The FARC, prior to their alliance with the IRA, were never known for their bomb-making or detonating skills. FARC affiliates were trained by highly skilled IRA engineers, their first bombing occurring in 2003 with President Uribe as the target. Throughout the next thirteen years, the FARC perpetrated twenty-five successful bomb attacks (Hosford, 2015:8).

Another example of a narco-terror convergence is the relationship between Los Zetas, a Mexican drug cartel and Hezbollah. Despite international law enforcement and geographic and linguistic barriers, these two organisations managed to have a fruitful affiliation by making use of using communications technology and international financing

services to conduct their business. Additional examples of this type of nexus include the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the Albanian mafia, as well as ISIS and the Italian mafia (Wang, 2012:6).

Tamera Makarenko had also in 2004 already confirmed a narcotic trafficking alliance between the FARC and AQIM through West Africa (Makarenko, 2004:129-45). Terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, and the Talban have been linked to Mexico's M-18, El Salvador's MS-13, and other transnational criminal trafficking networks in the Tri-Border Area[2] (TBA) (Lazante, 2009). These alliances occurred within the context of the transportation of terrorists through South and Central America to the United States (Lazante, 2009). Transnational criminal trafficking networks have a vast presence in these spaces and terrorist organisations rely on them for the successful movement of goods and people. As such, this security threat spans across three continents (Lazante, 2009).

2.5 Conclusion

Numerous scholars over the last two decades have challenged the traditional understanding of civil wars and armed conflicts. In particular, they argued that the nature of modern warfare was quantitatively different from that of earlier wars. This argument developed into the new wars' thesis, which contends that a new pattern of violence emerged following the end of the Cold War. This new pattern of violence is referred to as 'new wars' and is distinguishable from earlier wars in terms of actors, the spatial context, methods of warfare, the role of the state, and its victims. This chapter engaged with the new wars' thesis, studied its premises, and evaluated its usefulness. The new wars thesis offers a useful methodology for the analysis of the dynamics and nature, and economic and social facets of conflict. The shortcoming of the thesis, however, is that it pinpoints dubious tendencies in the shifting nature of violence. Certainly, the assertion that new wars are profoundly different from old wars is tricky, especially when contrasted with

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[2] The region where the Argentinian, Brazilian, and Paraguayan borders meet is known as the Tri-Border Area (Hudson, 2003:5).

historical data from earlier wars. Of course, the response from new wars literature to its critique is that the expression "new" in new wars is not exclusively employed to describe the new reality of war, rather it is used to emphasise the necessity to develop new methodologies for conflict analysis. Furthermore, the new wars argument has wide ranging implications for policy and academics. These implications must be addressed to effectively resolve, prevent, and predict violent conflicts on both a local and international level. Therefore, the usefulness of the new war thesis stems from its ability to influence policy and scholarship. Understanding the nature of conflict is crucial to the study of international relations and politics. One of the main objectives of policy makers is to be familiar with the nature of violent conflict, and to develop effective policies for conflict resolution, reconciliation, and prevention. One of the main objectives of scholarship is to explain, define, and predict violent conflict. Therefore, theorising about the causes, implications, patterns, trends, and dynamics of violent conflict has become a key purpose of policymakers and academics. The new wars thesis fulfills a number of these requirements. The analysis of modern conflict offered by new wars literature is innovative, interesting, and useful. It has improved politicians' and scholars' understanding of the subtleties of war, and the economic and social aspects of civil war, in particular.

CHAPTER THREE

Cocaine, cartels, and carnage: The Colombian narco-state

3.1   Introduction

> *''Erythroxylum coca is a peculiarly ordinary-looking shrub native to South America. […] And yet coca has started wars, prompted invasions, embarrassed politicians, toppled governments, filled prisons, created billionaires, and bankrupted countries, and both taken and possibly saved thousands of lives. And all this for one simple reason: because Erythroxylum coca […] is the Earth´s leading source of cocaine'' (Streatfeild, 2001: 1).*

Colombia was chosen as a so-called 'benchmark' case because the majority of the countries' experiences with narco-terror took place during the FARC, ELM and Medellin- and Cali-Cartels', glory days. In recent days Colombia has been experiencing deadly anti-government protests, following a tax reform proposal by the government (Aljazeera, 2021). It is important to analyse how the specific economic, political, and social arrangements in Colombia culminated in a narco-terror convergence. Thus, in the first section of this chapter, a brief overview of Colombian history will be presented, including the development of the Colombian cocaine trade. The second section will discuss the origins of the narco-terrorism link and elaborate on how the narco-terror nexus manifested in Colombia. And, lastly, the third section will touch on the measures put in place to stop and further prevent this nexus from developing again. As stated above, the Colombian case serves as a point of reference and foundational study of the narco-terror nexus—meaning that the cases discussed has already come to pass.

3.2   Colombia: the origins of a narco-state

Colombia, officially the Republic of Colombia, is a country in South America bordered by Panama on the northwest, Brazil and Venezuela on the east, and Ecuador and Peru on the south (McGreevey, Garavito, Kline, Parsons & Gilmore, 2021). This country, at the northern tip of South America was once the world's top producer of cocaine. The Andean region, where Colombia is situated, produces the largest amount of cocaine globally (UNODC, 2020:7). Like with most goods, the market for cocaine is heavily reliant on supply and demand, with the United States and Europe at the frontline in terms of cocaine usage (Statista, 2020).

With its arid tropical environment and lush land, Colombia is the perfect location for the cultivation of the coca plant, whose extract is synthesized into the powder cocaine drug. Due to the booming US cocaine demand in the 1970's and 1980's, coca cultivation skyrocketed, and Colombian drug kingpins started to exert immense power in the country. Free from the interference of the powerless Colombian government and flush with the profits from the cocaine trade, these kingpins had the cash reserves to do as they pleased—merge their operations into cartels that could control the whole supply chain of the cocaine trade in order to maximise profits, revenues, and logistical efficacy (Melo, 1996:63).

In Colombia's internal armed conflict, cocaine has not only been the primary driving force, but also the primary weapon of criminals by which public officials can be bribed, seeing as criminal organisations extract huge profits from the drug trade (Melo, 1996:63) The effect of cocaine cartels in Colombia on ordinary citizens have been far-reaching. The cartels strengthened the position of guerrilla groups (e.g., FARC and ELN) and other illegal armed groups. Cocaine cartels have also had a debilitating effect on the core values of the society, insomuch that recent generations have been exposed to illegal subcultures teaching them how to gain easy money from involvement in the drug trade. For the youth, it appears to be the case that killing, kidnapping, or extortion provides a far more lucrative proposition than through toiling hard in a 'regular' job (Melo, 1996:63).

Traffickers originally started out with modest goals, trafficking small amounts of cocaine hidden in suitcases to the US in the mid-1970s. At the time, processing of cocaine

occurred at around $1500 per kilogram in jungle labs, which could subsequently be sold on American streets for amounts as high as $50,000 per kilogram (WGBH, 2018). What started as a small cocaine smuggling business thrived into an enormous multi-national cocaine empire. The drug trade evolved into a sophisticated, logistically elegant enterprise. Traffickers acquired substantial capital that allowed them to employ engineers to build technologically advanced smuggling equipment such as high-tech submarines and small aircrafts that could secretly transport large quantities of cocaine to its consumers. Parts of Colombia consist of dense jungle, where traffickers fashioned roads that are just one meter wide, making them difficult to see from the air. These routes are used to smuggle large bundles of cocaine into neighbouring Ecuador and Panama, where it is easier to traffic to Europe and the US (WGBH, 2018).

3.3 The Colombian narco-terror origin story:The M-19 occurrence

During the early 1970's, Colombia was a key marijuana supplier, but the rise of the cocaine industry later that decade created wealthy 'Narcos' (drug traffickers or dealers) and made left-wing terror organisations truly grasp how incredibly lucrative the drug trafficking industry was. The first organisation to take advantage of the rising cocaine industry was the M-19 (the 19th of April Movement), who saw the newly rich Narcos as targets for extortion and kidnapping to supplement their income— which until then came from states such as Cuba and Libya (Duzán, 1994:4).

The sister of Jorge Ochoa, a Medellín cartel member was kidnapped in 1981, by the M-19. Responding to this the Medellín cartel commissioned a death squad, named "Muerte a Secuestradores" (Death to Kidnappers), resulting in the death of several M-19 members and the eventual release of Ochoa's sister in 1982. During this conflict with the Medellín cartel, the M-19 was in business with major Colombian trafficker Jaime Guillot-Lara and senior Cuban officials. Guillot-Lara's drug shipments received protection from the Cubans in return for delivering weapons to their M-19 counterparts (Ehrenfeld, 1990:31–36). The M-19 and the Medellín cartel's relationship improved considerably following negotiations mediated by Panama's Manuel Noriega and the release of Ochoa's sister (Kempe, 1990:192–193).

In November 1985, the M-19 seized Colombia's Palace of Justice, an event political analysts believe was orchestrated by the Medellín cartel in order to prevent traffickers from being extradited to the United States. The Supreme Court was scheduled to deliberate on extradition laws on the day the attack happened. In exchange for releasing hostages, the M-19 demanded that there be a ruling made against extradition despite the fact that their group were not wanted in the US (Hudson, 1995:100-103).

In the mid and late 1980's, Pablo Escobar, leader of the Medellín cartel, and the M-19 frequently found themselves on shared tactical ground. Escobar, in terms of leftist rhetoric distanced himself, but identified with the M-19's nationalistic views. M-19 members confirmed that Escobar provided money, safe harbor, general assistance, and other resources to the organisation (Salazar, 2001:102-105). Carlos Lehder, another Medellín cartel member, was also known to have cooperated with the M-19. The M-19 had also allegedly gotten paid by the Medellín kingpins to murder Attorney General Carlos Mauro Hoyos in 1988 (MacDonald, 1988:74-75).

3.4   The major role players

3.4.1 The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)

The FARC, founded in 1964, was Colombia's foremost revolutionary insurgency group and had been battling a nearly four decade long civil war with the government with the aim of establishing an anti-West, Communist state. The group started using terrorist tactics in the 1990's, following right-wing paramilitary forces attack against them (Lake, 2015:7). The FARC became progressively more involved in drug trafficking to raise money for its campaign, establishing a sizeable army and acquiring the latest equipment thanks to their profits from trafficking and other illicit activities. This provided the group with enough resources to increase their political and military challenge to the Colombian State (Lake, 2015:7). The group employed various tactics such as confronting security forces directly in rural areas, sustained terrorist cells in cities, and planting explosives at strategic infrastructure locations such as pipelines and oil installations. The majority of

abductions committed in Colombia in the last twenty-five years were perpetrated by the FARC (Pecault, 2001:3).

3.4.2 National Liberation Army (ELN)

The National Liberation Army (ELN), founded by urban academics in 1965, is a Marxist insurgent group inspired by Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Fidel Castro. The ELN is Colombia's second largest leftist guerrilla group had an estimated four-thousand armed soldiers, whose core activities included bombings, hijackings, extortion, and guerilla war (Global Security, 2016:2). The Cuban financial crisis and the collapse of the Soviet Union forced the ELN to reform its financial income strategies to include the drug trade and creating connections with criminal gangs. Both Europe and the United States have the ELN on their lists of terrorist organisations. The ELN's military capabilities were quite modest, yet the group carried out hundreds of abductions for ransom—targeting the foreign members of staff from large companies, particularly in the oil industry. Energy infrastructures were the frequent targets of attacks, leading to the impairment of the electrical distribution system and pipelines. Revenue from their illicit practices permitted the ELN to accomplish a substantial peak in their military capabilities (Global Security, 2016:2).

3.4.3 Criminal Bands (BACRIM)

Criminal organisations in Colombia are referred to as the BACRIM, who, to the Colombian government, represented a major threat to the country's security. These organisations, the successors of former demobilised paramilitary combatants, combine their control of cocaine cultivation and trafficking with extreme ferocity (Céspedes, 2021:3). Paramilitary combatant groups were initially established as a self-defense mechanism funded by landowners to fight against guerilla groups. However, their activities evolved to include the massacre or assassinations of left-wing activists who spoke out against them. Furthermore, these groups had over seventy-five thousand coca farmers from across Colombia working for them. Additionally, these groups devoted two-thirds of its military to

operating drug laboratories, and transporting or safeguarding their narcotics products (Céspedes, 2021:3). AUC combatants, too, financed themselves through the drug trade. The United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia - AUC) have committed several terrorist acts comprising of the forced displacement of entire villages, kidnapping of political figures, and the massacre of hundreds of civilians (Céspedes, 2021:4).

3.4.4 Drug Cartels

Two major cartels, named for the cities they were headquartered in, emerged in the 1980's: The Cali and Medellin cartels. The Cali cartel, the older of the two, was a vast enterprise with subsidiaries in real estate, banking, and even an airline (Gomis, 2015:15). Their competitor, the Medellin cartel, was led by Pablo Escobar, a man whose name became synonymous with Colombian narco-terrorism. The Cali cartel preferred to view themselves as a legitimate enterprise with a managerial structure complete with a vice-president and divisions, similar to that of Fortune 500 companies. The Cali cartel was referred to as "Los Caballeros" ("The gentlemen") by the Colombian police, earning them great respect throughout the country. In contrast, the Medellin cartel was termed "Los Hampones" ("The hoodlums") because of their brash style and penchant for using violence and terror as a means to control the drug trade (Gomis, 1995:23).

3.5   Malignance manifested: The Colombian narco-terror nexus

3.5.1 The FARC, the Paramilitaries, and the Traffickers

The FARC, preceding the cocaine boom, procured funding from extortion, kidnapping, and to some degree, support from the state. Even though the FARC originally did not encourage coca cultivation in its territory, it did also did not discourage it, fearing loss of support from farmers and laborers earning an income from it. In exchange for protection from authorities, the FARC charged traffickers ten percent on coca products, resulting in an initial mutually beneficial relationship with the narcos, including the Medellín cartel

(Melo, 1998:80). The FARC, similar to the M-19, utilised its trafficking connections to procure weapons. Jamaican authorities in December of 1988 apprehended a shipping vessel that contained ten mortars with six hundred mortar rounds, one thousand assault rifles, and two hundred and fifty machine guns, intended for the FARC. Following an interrogation, the smugglers revealed that the weapons had been paid for by Colombian cocaine merchants who was collaborating with the terrorist group (Griffith, 1997:155).

However, relations between the FARC and Narcos began souring in the latter part of the 1980's when Gonzalo Rodríguez-Gacha—a Medellín cartel kingpin—bought up large amounts of land in central and northern Colombia, forcing FARC farmers off the land (Semana, 2000:39-40). The FARC subjected Rodríguez-Gacha, who was reportedly Colombia's biggest private landowner, to "revolutionary taxes" and property requisitions. Rodríguez-Gacha had employed several "sicarios" (gunmen), and provided capital and resources to small, private paramilitaries that were established by legitimate farmers and landowners, to fight against the FARC (Semana, 2000:39-40). These paramilitaries not only provided Rodríguez-Gacha's trafficking operations with protection but became an increasingly effective weapon for the political ultraright. Adopting a violent, anti-communist agenda and reinforced by drug money, the paramilitaries conducted a terrorist movement against FARC sympathisers and carried out assassinations against leftist politicians (Clawson & Rensselaer, 1998:185-190).

With the advent of a new decade, a rough geographical division emerged in the FARC's relations with the Narcos. The paramilitaries held power in central and northern Colombia, while the FARC maintained their strength in the vast Colombian countryside in the south. A Colombian specialist on terrorism emphasised this regional dichotomy by pointing out that Rodríguez-Gacha had "allied himself with the army" against the FARC in the strategic Middle Magdalena region (in central Colombia), while his partners in the Medellín cartel "simultaneously" gave arms to the FARC to "protect airstrips and drug processing plants in the southwestern plains from the army" (Jaramillo, 1995:100).

3.5.2 Involvement of the FARC and the AUC in Trafficking

Although admitting to taxing the narcotics trade, the FARC vehemently denied any involvement in trafficking. The AUC too has conceded to imposing drug taxes, and although they have come close to admitting their involvement with trafficking, they maintain that trafficking epitomizes illegality and was conducted by rogue commanders whom they reprimanded and have reformed (Wilson, 2002:1). Despite the repeated denials by both groups, numerous sources have confirmed that the FARC and AUC have on several occasions throughout the years undoubtedly crossed the drug trafficking line. The Colombian National Police seized a massive AUC-run narcotics lab in the Middle Magdalena area in May 1999. They recovered one ton of cocaine, and it was one of the biggest blows against paramilitary drug trafficking according to then-national police chief Rosso José Serrano (El Tiempo, 1999:1). In the same month, the financial chief of the FARC Josué Prieto, disclosed the group's plans to purchase assault rifles using $3 million from cocaine profits (The Economist, 1999:31). Senior officials from the US DEA testified before US Congress in 2000 and 2001 regarding the FARC's involvement with cocaine production, identifying at least one paramilitary unit that was shipping cocaine into the US (Rebasa & Chalk, 1999:59). In 2000, farmers from the Caquetá area in Colombia, revealed to journalists that the FARC has issued orders for them to cultivate and sell coca to a FARC-controlled monopoly. Farmers in AUC-controlled areas were also forced to transact with a similar paramilitary monopoly (El Tiempo, 1991:1)

The Geopolitical Drug Observer (Grisham, 2014:27), an independent French think tank studying the global narcotics trade, reported in 2001 that the FARC in southern Colombia were no longer satisfied to only tax coca products. "Chichipatos" (trafficker middlemen), who purchase coca paste and cocaine from cultivators and then vend them to cocaine processing laboratories had their role taken over by the FARC. The Geopolitical Drug Observer stated that "the FARC seemed to have reached a point of no return on the road to criminalising their organisation" (Grisham, 2014:27). The *Semana* (2000:1), Colombia's leading weekly news magazine published an investigation into the FARC's sixteenth front, whose drug activities operated primarily in the Guainía area on the country's eastern border. The investigation utilised testimony from local residents, intelligence reports from

the Colombian government, and sources close to the terrorist group. Between 1996 and 1998, the group had grossed close to $15 million, largely from drug trafficking. The sixteenth front oversaw a range of narcotics activities. For example, farmers were obligated to report the number of hectares planted and the harvest dates. Coca paste was taken to collection sites where the FARC tested the drug for quality and recorded the amounts delivered. The FARC controlled tons of cocaine, a portion of which was traded to Brazilian trafficker Luis Fernando da Costa who supplied arms to the group *(Semana, 2000:1).*

Cartels became increasingly violent. Escobar was the main proponent of this methodology, even engaging in terrorism to target politicians who had offended him publicly. Lara Bonilla, a Colombian justice minister and strong supporter of extraditing kingpins such as Escobar to the United States for prosecution, was one such politician. Bonilla was also responsible for expelling Escobar from the New Liberal Party (Clawson & Rensselaer, 1998:185-190). Loathing that his political aspirations had been challenged, Escobar organised Bonilla's assassination. Assassins were of such a necessity to Escobar that he established a special school in Medellin to train assassin squads, named "sicarios" (Clawson & Rensselaer, 1998:185-190).

Some of Escobar's other orchestrated acts of terror include commissioning Colombian revolutionary group, the M-19 to attack the Palace of Justice in Bogota to force the Supreme Court Justices to repeal extradition laws. Eleven justices were killed during the attack. In 1989 Escobar had an Avianca airliner bombed that resulted in the death of two American citizens (Davids, 2002:4). Former US presidents Reagan and Bush (senior) were kept updated on the Colombian situation by the CIA, who had erroneously pursued the Cali-and not the Medellin cartel as the bigger threat to security. As Escobar's grotesque brand of terrorism intensified, however, the focus shifted and the US government amplified pressure on the Colombian government to dispel Escobar and the Medellin cartel (Davids, 2002:4).

In the End, Escobar's war of attrition against the Colombian government culminated in his death after a Colombian commando squad, aided by the United States, used advanced spyware technology to track his location following a phone call with his son.

Escobar was gunned down after attempting to escape from his safe house. Carlos Lehder, another Medellin trafficker and self-proclaimed follower of Che Guevara and Marxism, frequently partook in narcoterrorism activities. Lehder was fervently anti-American and believed that cocaine was a way to disrupt American society and ultimately, the United States government. According to the CIA's accounts to President Reagan, Lehder underpinned the M-19 rebel group to stage a socialist revolution in Colombia and establish links between Lehder and Fidel Castro (Scott, 1992 :96). With this link established, President Reagan became increasingly set on utilising an anti-terrorist and anti-communist ideology to demolish the Medellin cartel. However, as the kingpins of the Medellin cartel were either imprisoned or killed, the Cali cartel quickly monopolised on the void in the market, becoming more prominent in the early 1990's (Davids, 2002:4).

As the 1990's proceeded, the line between traffickers and guerillas became increasingly blurred as the FARC became more actively embroiled in the cocaine business, utilising profits to strengthen its influence and power in the already beleaguered nation. With the dismantling of the major cartels into smaller splinter groups, the FARC became increasingly more powerful in the drug business (Chepesiuk, 1999: 203). The FARC was employed by these new splinter groups to guard secret airstrips, coca fields and laboratories. As the FARC's influence and power grew, the group began to impose tax on narcotics shipments being transported through their Switzerland-sized area of southern Colombia. Disturbingly, the FARC branched into actively cultivating cocaine, building processing and distribution facilities, and supervising the cultivation of coca fields (Chepesiuk, 1999: 203).

Attempts by the Colombian government to fumigate and spray FARC-controlled coca fields in 1996, resulted in fumigation workers being attacked by FARC guerillas. The American State Department deemed the FARC "the most dangerous international terrorist group based in the Western Hemisphere" at the time, because of the group's notable ability to merge drug and terror operations. The State Department referenced the damage that the FARC had caused not only to Colombian civilians and the Colombian government, but also to US citizens through kidnappings and killings. Since 1990,

seventy-three American citizens have been kidnapped in Colombia, fifty by narco-terrorists, and twelve have been murdered (Hutchinson, 2002:5).

3.6   The Colombian narco-terror nexus expands

The 1990's brought changes to the dynamics of the drug trade in Colombia that created the perfect conditions for right wing militaries and the FARC to earn large amounts of capital from cocaine trafficking. This was especially vital for the FARC, following the escalation of Cuba's economic troubles, and the collapse of the Soviet Union which debilitated any aid that would have come from those governments (Pécaut, 2001:101).The Medellín cocaine empire was severely disrupted after a government attacked resulted in the death of both Rodríguez-Gacha and Escobar, who at the time was in control of eighty percent of the narcotics business. The gap left by the Medellín cartel was swiftly occupied by the rival Cali cartel—whose ascendency was fleeting, owing to a crackdown by President Ernesto Samper on Cali drug lords. It was alleged that President Samper had accepted money from the Cali cartel when he was still a presidential candidate and had to, albeit unwillingly, prove his innocence by jailing many of the cartel members (Safford & Palacios, 2002: 357).

The fall of the Cali and Medellín cartels did little to curtail the overall cocaine flows to the United States. It did, however, lead to a more diffused trafficking system consisting of several smaller networks that heavily relied on FARC and paramilitary protection due to their own lack of resources. With the propagation of trafficking networks, the ELN, a Colombian left-wing terrorist organisation whose expertise lay in extorting money from oil businesses, supplemented its income by taxing the narcotics business (Pécaut, 2001:101). The stricter stance against coca cultivation in Bolivia, and the clampdown of Peru's air bridge resulted in Colombia catapulting into first place among coca cultivators in the Andean region. Between 1995 and 2000, Colombian coca production more than doubled, with the FARC especially gaining greater access to narcotics monies. The majority of the coca cultivation took place in southern Colombia, in areas such as Putumayo, Caquetá, and Guaviare—all FARC strongholds (Safford & Palacios, 2002: 357).

Colombia also expanded into heroin production in the 1990's, quickly capturing a large share of the United States' east coast market. The opium for heroin production was primarily cultivated in the southwestern region, and by the mid-1990's a clear correlation could be drawn between FARC-controlled or paramilitary-controlled areas, and poppy cultivation (Pécaut, 2001:101). It was estimated in 1998 that the chief source of income for both left-and right-wing terrorist groups within Colombia, came from narcotics-linked profits—reportedly earning $311 million from extortion, $236 million from kidnapping, and a total of $551 million directly from drug related activities (Rebasa & Chalk, 1999:21-33).

3.7   Resolving the nexus: Plan Colombia

Plan Colombia was a dedicated effort by the United States to aid the Colombian government in its pursuit for peace and stability within its borders. The plan consisted of various mechanisms to support the Colombian government in strengthening its democratic institutions, safeguarding human rights, advancing economic development, securing effective control over its territory, and to provide sufficient support towards increasing Colombia's counter-narcotics capabilities. Furthermore, the plan intended to aid the expansion and consolidation of the Colombian government's presence, reinforcing the rule of law, making governance more accountable, transparent, and participatory—and to provide sustainable economic and social development to improve the lives of the most vulnerable citizens (Plan Colombia, 2001:54).

To achieve this, the plan was separated into two categories. The first category which was the military component, included contributions from foreign states, particularly the US to boost the Colombian military's capabilities to combat insurgency. The second category was the social component, aimed at increasing the legitimacy of the Colombian government within the populace by means of public investment (Plan Colombia, 2001:56). An excerpt from the Plan Colombia document reads:

"It is a strategy to deal with the historical challenge of establishing and securing a society where the Colombian State can exercise its true authority and fulfil its essential obligations" (Plan Colombia, 2001:56).

Plan Colombia had ten core strategies, which were:

(i) Economic strategy to support the Colombian government's abilities to collect tax revenues, in order for the state to have a feasible counterbalancing economic force to drug trading.

(ii) Fiscal and financial strategy that through agreements with the IMF sought adjustment and austerity.

(iii) Peace strategy to counter human rights violations, corruption, and drug trafficking.

(iv) National defense strategy to modernise and restructure the Colombian police and armed forces.

(v) Judicial and human rights strategy to overcome the humanitarian crisis and defeat impunity.

(vi) Counter narcotics strategy to halt the movement of drug money to armed organisations and insurgent groups.

(vii) Social participation strategy to develop community involvement in anti-corruption efforts, create accountability in local government, and apply pressure on armed groups to stop internal displacement, kidnapping, and violence.

(viii) Human development strategy to pledge access to health and education.

(ix) International oriented strategy to allot accountability in the fight against illicit narcotics.

(x) The plan incorporated an alternate development strategy that pursued the conservation of jungle areas, to end the hazardous expansion of illicit crops across Colombia's vast natural parks and the Amazon basin.

The plan is credited with saving Colombia from the brink of deteriorating into a failed state. However, the plan was also widely criticized for the negative environmental impact it caused (Plan Colombia, 2001:56).

3.7.1 Efficacy of Plan Colombia

Several successes were achieved through Plan Colombia, including the restructuring of Colombia's legal and political systems, as well as strengthening the country's economy.

The country had, furthermore, professionalised its Armed Forces, dismantled several narco-terrorist organisations, and conclude a peace deal with the FARC.

3.7.1.1 Transformations in Colombia's legal and political apparatus

After more than one hundred years of following the inquisitorial/written system, Colombia utilising Plan Colombia resources, put into practice an accusatorial/oral system, characterised by conversation and debate between the concerned parties. The country transformed from a Mixed Justice System with components from both the inquisitorial and accusatorial systems, to an exclusively accusatorial system. The transition process from the previous system to the new system was financed and supported by the United States Government (USG) via their Department of Justice, and with the capital allocated to Colombia annually within the context of Plan Colombia. In 2014 the Attorney General's Office had received more than $150 million, in addition to assistance and technical support (Restrepo, 2016:7).

3.7.1.2 Socio-economic developments

Over the last fifteen years, and as its security situation improved, Colombia made incredible economic advancements—becoming the third-largest economy in Latin America in 2014. Incredibly, the Colombian GDP grew from $99.88 billion in 2000, to $377.7 billion in 2014 (Restrepo, 2016:9). The country also witnessed major poverty reductions, with their Gini-coefficient[3] narrowing from 58,7 to 53,3 in the last fifteen years. The percentage of the population living beneath the national poverty line decreased from sixty-four percent in 1999 to twenty-eight percent in 2014. Extreme poverty declined even more sharply from twenty-three percent in 2000 to eight percent in 2014 (Restrepo, 2016:9).

3.7.1.3 The professionalisation of the Colombian military

$10 billion was invested towards the improvement of stability and security in Colombia, by the United States in 2016. Seventy-one percent of the Plan Colombia investment went

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[3] The leading indicator of economic inequality.

to drug interdiction, illicit crop eradication, aerial mobility, intelligence, maintenance centres, and training and development of the Armed Forces (Isacson, 2016).

Noticeably, the majority of the Plan Colombia funds were directed towards increasing state capacity, specifically the Colombian security infrastructure (Isacson, 2016). The military underwent tremendous improvements, largely due to the monetary support from Washington, which enabled the United States to better train and equip Colombian forces. For example, between 2000 and 2008, Colombia's Army Aviation Brigade acquired $844 million from the US government, permitting it to triple its aircraft fleet to over 100 helicopters (Restrepo, 2016:9). Washington allocated an additional $104 million to the Colombian military allowing them to increase their number of ground forces. The number of professional soldiers in Colombia expanded from twenty thousand in 1998, to eighty-three thousand in 2014, thanks to the training and resources received from the United States (Restrepo, 2016:9).

3.7.1.4   The Colombian peace process and the defeat of narco-terrorist groups

In 2012, the Santos administration introduced a negotiation process that aimed to achieve a peace accord with the FARC, following fifty years of armed conflict. The peace agreement negotiations were based on human rights, territorial integrity, democracy, and political participation among others. The peace accord was officially signed in 2016 by the Colombian government and the FARC (Restrepo, 2016:9).

3.7.2 Negative Consequences of Plan Colombia

There were several negative side-effects to Plan Colombia. In the last fifteen years, coca crops have been growing more than ever. Additionally, illegal mining began to thrive and became a significant source of income for the BACRIM, ELN, and the FARC. Equally, new Colombian Criminal Bands (BACRIM) emerged even during the time Plan Colombia was being implemented. The goal of a reduction in cultivating, processing, and distributing illicit drugs by attacking coca cultivation proved to be unfeasible. Colombia had, in 2014,

already reclaimed its top spot for the world's most prolific coca cultivating country (Restrepo, 2016:9). Despite the combined efforts of the Colombian and American governments to curtail traffickers, Colombia remains the source for almost ninety percent of the cocaine flow to the United States (Restrepo, 2016:9). Plan Colombia had aimed to eradicate cocaine production by half in 2015, a goal which was clearly not achieved. The eradication process included the aerial fumigation of over one-and-a-half million hectares of coca farmland, evoking criticism because of the use of the controversial herbicide glyphosate since the substance is toxic and may be harmful to both civilians and the environment. Coca crops is expected to continue increasing and grew especially quickly in two Colombian national natural Parks: Nukak and La Macarena. The presence of coca also rose in indigenous reservations and the Afro-Colombian Community Councils (Isacson, 2016).

With all the focus was on other security issues, illicit mining began to flourish and became a vital income source for criminal groups, a likelihood that was not considered when Plan Colombia was devised. This was largely because authorities associated these groups with extortion, trafficking and kidnapping as their central sources of income. Illicit mining escalated post-2007, after the commodity price increase (Bagley, 2012:8). Colombia also observed the rise of new criminal bands, despite successfully tackling key non-state actors like the FARC. BACRIM are syndicates associated with former paramilitary groups such as the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), who are grave risk to security and indicate a new generation of Colombian narco-traffickers. The BACRIM tend to be more subtle and skillful in pursuing their goals, making them less susceptible to law enforcement and state repression (Bagley, 2012:8).

The American response to the Colombian situation was to mainly inject capital, with the hopes that if the Colombian government were funded and armed properly, they could defeat the cartels and the FARC. In 2002, $1.3 billion was approved by the United States government for Plan Colombia. Plan Colombia experienced some limited success given that the Department of Justice prosecuted three members of the FARC's 16th Front, including Tomas Molina, their commander. The trio were charged with conspiracy to transport and distribute cocaine in the United States. This was the first time that affiliates

of a recognised terrorist organisation had been prosecuted on drug trafficking charges (Hutchinson, 2002). The Colombian situation warrants continued monitoring and action on the part of the Colombian government and its partners. It is worth mentioning that only a small part of the Plan Colombia budget went towards aiding civilians, and the rest was used to wage war.

3.8   Conclusion

Prior to the US intervention in the late 1990's, Colombia teetered on the brink of becoming a failed state, having been embroiled in conflict with paramilitary groups, drug cartels, and left-and right-wing rebel groups. These groups controlled extensive Colombian territory, and propagated terror wherever they traveled. The Colombian population was held hostage by wide-scale kidnappings, extortion schemes, bombings, and assassinations. The Colombian conflict also spread instability and violence to neighbouring Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela (Gomis, 2015:9). This chapter engaged with the Colombian narco-terror nexus, studied its origins, the key role players, and evaluated how the Colombian narco-terror nexus manifested.

The Andean region of Latin America has witnessed the petrifying consequences of the narco-terror nexus. Profits from illegal narcotics trafficking remains a valuable mode of funding for terrorist groups globally, and nowhere has this element been more evident than in Colombia, where capital from the cocaine manufacturing industry significantly endorsed the terrorism in that region (Leader & Wiencek, 2000:49-54). In Colombia, the narco-terror nexus is the consequence of the relationship between guerrilla organisations, paramilitaries groups and drug cartels, as a strategy to undermine order and engage in specific illicit activities, while mutually ensuring their survival. The instability derived from the interface between these distinct tendencies, namely the advancement of armed challenges to the state's authority and the expansion of the covert criminal drug economy, contributed to, and intensified the conflict in Colombia. This was reflected in the pervasive and increased influence of narcotics networks and their infiltration of vital societal institutions. The Colombian conflict had at its epicenter the drug trade, which destroys fragile ecosystems, depresses the investment climate, corrupts society, twists the

economy, reverses the advances of land distribution, and provides vast resources to fund all armed groups (Gomis, 2015:9).

Narco-terrorism in Colombia presented in two distinctive ways: the first is terrorist groups such as the FARC, ELN and AUC resorting to the drug trade for profits to finance their political goals; and second, BACRIM or cartels involved in the drug trade that employ terrorist tactics against rival cartels, government officials who oppose them, and the general population to instill fear. Colombian narco-terrorist groups used terror and fear as their core war tactic. The FARC, The ELN and BACRIM are organised as military forces, weaponised and outfitted with extensive intelligence resources paid for by the ill-gotten profits from the drug trade. For decades the Colombian population suffered under the threat of massacres, forced displacements, human rights violations, and kidnappings. These terrorist groups also controlled large territories which were used to extort civilians and cultivate coca. The narco-terror nexus threatened not only the security and well-being of Colombia, but also that of the neighbouring Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela. Some of the spillover effects resulted in illegal immigration, ecological damage, economic distortions, money laundering, kidnapping, extra-judicial killings, illegal arms trafficking, displaced populations, and the corruption of government officials, policemen, military, judges, and other judicial officers (Rebasa & Chalk, 1999:21-33).

Right-wing extremist groups such as the AUC had no qualms with partaking in illegal economic activities and forming connections with criminal networks, unlike their leftist equivalents. The post-Cold War communist failure forced them however, to evolve into political and criminal hybrid organisations that moved beyond tax collection to greater profits and power. For the AUC and the FARC, their affiliation with the so-called 'narcos' was a fluid one, comprising of both coordination and competition—with devastating consequences (Leader & Wiencek, 2000:49-54). In the following years, the AUC and FARC became directly involved in narcotics trafficking—from coca plant cultivation and production, to the transportation of the final product. The final product was then sold to traffickers in return for money and weapons. The trafficking syndicates would then continue the narcotics supply cycle with sales and distribution in Europe and the United States (Leader & Wiencek, 2000:49-54).

Colombia was one of the most beleaguered states during the 1990's (Pecault, 2001). Guerrillas, drug cartels, and criminal bands aggravated the violence Colombia was experiencing, furthering the country's fragile state status. Statistics show that during this period, more than eighty percent of the global kidnappings took place in Colombia and that the displacement of civilians surpassed that of the Kosovo crisis (Pecault, 2001). During this time, the frequency of abductions was also the highest globally. Colombian terrorism presented in the form of indiscriminate abduction of individuals for financial motives in order to procure resources to finance the conflict. The FARC has used the Colombian populace to establish a law to exchange jailed guerrilla militants for soldiers kept as prisoners of war. The adjourning years of the conflict were accompanied by increased human rights violations, the indiscriminate use of arms, and threats to civilians who refused to pay extortion money. Examples of such violations include large-scale kidnappings, selective massacres and assassinations, disregard of Afro-American and indigenous lands, and attacks against the country's infrastructure that impact thousands of lives (Snyder & Durán, 2009).

As pointed out by the new wars' thesis, illicit profits fuels conflicts. This is evident when observing the Colombian narco-terror nexus. As stated earlier in the chapter, it was estimated in 1998 that the chief source of income for both left-and right-wing terrorist groups within Colombia, came from narcotics-linked profits (Rebasa & Chalk, 1999:21-33). The scope of the FARC's accounts, for instance, clarifies why the group was capable of paying its new recruits three times what the Colombian army paid its new soldiers (Suárez, 2000:585). By 1995, it was estimated that the FARC had seven thousand active soldiers organized into sixty fronts—and by 2000, it consisted of more than seventy fronts, with fifteen to twenty thousand soldiers. While the group held no major cities, it operated throughout the country and controlled approximately one-third of the nation's territory (Leader & Wiencek, 2000:50).

According to the Colombian Defense Ministry, the AUC at its founding was four thousand five-hundred strong—by 2001, their numbers had increased to eight thousand. Where paramilitaries had previously been nothing more than hired guns for the rich ultraright and Narcos, they emerged as a political-military force in their own right. The AUC along with

the ELN and FARC were added onto on the United States government's list of Foreign Terrorist Organisations in September 2001 (The Economist, 2001:12).

As specified by the new wars' thesis, the growth of criminal violence, weakening state authority, and lawlessness are all indicators of a fragile state—which give rise to violent conflicts, and even more violent non-state actors (Kaldor, 2006:7). As illustrated by the Colombian case, narcotics and arms trafficking become normalised, and greed is magnified by desires for profit (Rotberg, 2007:1). When considering the theoretical foundation of this study, it becomes evident that Colombia-during this time-was the epitome of a new war, with the former Santos administration enduring fifty years of armed conflict. Human rights violations, violence targeting civilians, the retreating state, and the Colombian government's loss of monopoly over the use of violence also support this supposition. Thousands of Colombian citizens were displaced, and many more injured and killed. Narco terrorist groups were one of the drivers of instability, along with the development of organised violence, enacted by illicit self-resistance forces (Gomis, 2015).

CHAPTER FOUR

WAR AMONG THE POPPIES: AFGHANISTAN'S NARCO-JIHAD

"A multitude of actors are deeply involved in Afghanistan's opium poppy production, including the Taliban, all levels of the Afghan government, law enforcement, unofficial power brokers, and tribal elites."- Vanda Feldab-Brown

4.1   Introduction

Afghanistan, officially the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, has a long history of internal strife among belligerent factions and domination by foreign conquerors. Darius I of Babylonia first conquered the land circa 500 B.C., followed by Alexander the Great of Macedonia who took control of the territory in 329 B.C. (WGBH, 2020). The greatest of these conquerors was Mahmud Ghazni who during the 11th century created an empire from Iran to India. The territory was taken over again during the 13th century by Genghis Khan, but it was not until the 1700's that the territory was united as a single country and by 1870 (after various Arab invasions) that the country became Islamic. Britain during the 19th century endeavored to annex Afghanistan in order to protect its Indian empire from Russia, which led to a series of British-Afghan Wars (1838-42, 1878-80, 1919-21). Afghanistan's current borders were created during the 19th century, amid a rivalry between tsarist Russia and imperial Britain that Rudyard Kipling[4] termed the "Great Game" (BBC, 2021). Situated at the center of south-central Asia, Afghanistan is positioned among key trading pathways linking South and East Asia to the Middle East and Europe. As such, contemporary Afghanistan was frequently used as a pawn amid clashes over economic influence and political doctrine. Afghanistan suffered the ruinous

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[4] Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was an English journalist and novelist.

effects of civil war in the last quarter of the 20th century, greatly exacerbated by a military invasion and occupation by the USSR[5] from 1979 until 1989 (BBC, 2021).

Currently Afghanistan's infrastructure and economy are in shambles and many of its citizens are refugees. The Taliban[6], previously ousted by a US-led invasion in 2001, has made a comeback; looking to reinforce its former strictly imposed Islamic rule (BBC, 2021). The Afghan government continues to struggle extending its authority beyond the capital and to forge national unity. Post-2001, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation-led foreign troops have mainly held the responsibility of maintaining security in Afghanistan and following the formal end of its combat mission in the country, an upsurge in Taliban activity ensued. Numerous festering problems and regional tensions are converging in Afghanistan today. Not only are narcotics and terrorism significant as two of the most principal drivers among this collection of problems, but it also represents the core issue where the most important actors involved in the conflict, have a personal stake (BBC, 2021).

The following chapter endeavors to analyse the interface of Afghanistan's narco-economy with its terrorism-or jihad[7]. The chapter is outlined in the following manner: First, a summary of Afghanistan's opium economy and descent into a heroin cultivation hub is delivered. Second, the various role players involved in the narcotics and terrorism nexus is outlined. The third section assesses Afghanistan's narco-terror nexus. This is followed by strategies and policies put in place to combat and prevent the nexus. And lastly, a conclusion to the chapter.

4.2   Poppy for profit: The Afghan opium trade

The Afghan opium trade has influenced the country's governmental, financial, and societal fabric since the 1980s, and has evolved into an industry that spans national and transnational borders. The opium trade endures as a critical destabilising element in

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[5] Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1922-1991)
[6]   The Taliban, currently led by Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada, are an Islamic fundamentalist political movement in Afghanistan.
[7] To make use of the concept "narco-jihad", is to admit the ostensibly absurd comparison of using violence for the sake of religious piety, driven by proceeds from illicit narcotics.

Afghanistan's development and is a serious international and regional security risk (Rashid, 2001:120). Although opium has been harvested in Afghanistan for centuries, Afghan opium's rise to worldwide notability, only spans the last three decades (Ward & Byrd, 2004:2). Traditionally, the region encompassing the 'Golden Triangle' of Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos, have been the main manufacturers of the opium that supply the demand of addicts worldwide. Studies by the US Bureau of Narcotics indicate that by the latter part of the 1950s, the Golden Triangle region was cultivating about fifty percent of the world's overall opium production (McCoy, 2003:282).

An extreme drought in 1978, and determinations by law enforcement, coupled with military and political unrests in Southeast Asian opium manufacturing states, prompted poppy cultivation in Afghanistan (Haq, 1996:948). As opium cultivation in other Asian countries diminished, coupled with an increase in opium demand in the West and in adjacent countries, opium proved to be the ideal crop, having the potential provide high profits for both farmers and itinerant laborers. Although Afghanistan has always constituted a largely agrarian society, dependence on opium production as the primary means of livelihood was a new development (Ward & Byrd, 2004:2). Trading in narcotics is complex, with several interior and exterior forces contributing and indeed promoting the rise in opium production in Afghanistan. The opium poppy is capable of spawning huge incomes; consequently, the trade was spread by many insurgent groups and civic officials to promote their personal interests. Furthermore, ordinary crofters partook in the trade to buy food and other supplies for their families, while various criminal groups exploited the chaos to make a profit (Haq, 1996:951).

After the 1979 Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, the United States, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China, and others began directed vast resources (e.g., money, weaponry, and other supplies) to various mujahedeen (holy warriors) factions. In picking these holy warriors, Pakistan's Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) played a crucial role. In particular, throughout the span of the ten-year conflict, the ISI was the foremost agency involved in providing logistical support for the Afghan resistance forces. McCoy (2003:465) argues that: "Although the drug pandemic of the 1980s had complex causes, the growth in global heroin supply, could be traced, in large part, to two key

aspects of U.S. policy—the failure of DEA prohibition in the war on drugs and CIA protection for drug lord allies in its covert wars." In terms of economic impact, the Soviet occupation had a ruinous effect on Afghanistan. Six million Afghans were displaced, most of whom sought sanctuary in Iran and Pakistan. Rural areas became uninhabited, and farms were left neglected. Considering that Afghanistan is an agricultural country, food shortages soon ensued. The diminishing of basic service delivery, such as sanitation and health care, followed. In addition, Soviet 'saturation' bombing demolished crucial irrigation systems that accelerated Afghanistan's economic downfall (McCoy, 2003:465).

Instability, coupled with the absence of governance, resulting from the Soviet-Afghan war created fruitful grounds for Afghanistan becoming one of the world's chief manufacturers of opium. The best-selling author of *Ghost Wars*, Steven Coll, came to the following conclusion regarding the magnitude of Afghanistan's opium problem as it existed in the early 1990s: "From fertile Helmand in the south to the gorge valleys of the northeast, Afghanistan flowered each spring with one of the world's largest crops of opium poppies. Untroubled by government and funded by smugglers and organised crime networks rooted in Pakistan, Afghan poppy farmers supplied heroin labs nestled in cities and along the lawless Afghanistan-Pakistan border. By 1992 hundreds of tons of refined heroin flowed from these labs, east through Karachi's port or north through the new overland routes of the Russian mafia, destined for European cities" (Coll, 2004:233).

When faced with no viable alternative livelihood, opium cultivation becomes a method of survival for Afghanistan's poverty-stricken citizens, seeing as opium offers the farmer a profitable crop greatly sought-after in foreign markets. Furthermore, the fact that farmers are remunerated well in advance for their prospective harvest, coupled with the ease of transporting their products, provide additional incentives for poverty-stricken farmers to cultivate opium (Ward & Byrd, 2004:26–27). In addition to the increase in cultivation in the post-9/11 era, laboratories equipped to transmute raw opium into morphine and heroin have sprung up all over Afghanistan's border regions (Townsend, 2005:14–18). From the early 1990s to date, Afghan opium−the bulk of which is transmuted into heroin in these border regions− has been the major source of supply to European and Russian markets. Afghan opiates also serve the increasing appetite for drugs within Afghanistan itself, as

well as its more immediate neighbours, namely Central Asia, Pakistan, and Iran. With reference to Afghanistan's neighbours, it is worth noting that local and regional consumption have been on the increase over the years, especially in the era after the Soviet Union (Townsend, 2005:14–18).

4.3   The principal protagonists

Vanda Feldab-Brown (2018:26) points out that "a multitude of actors are deeply involved in Afghanistan's opium poppy production, including the Taliban, all levels of the Afghan government, law enforcement, unofficial power brokers, and tribal elites." Afghanis hold primary responsibility for opium production within Afghanistan, cultivating and processing it into low-grade heroin, after which the product is trafficked it to Afghanistan's neighbouring countries. The opium is then handed off to the respective ethnic nationals of each country (Tajiks, Uzbeks, etc.), which then traffics the product into Western Europe and Russia through Central Asia, Iran and Pakistan. China is also a primary destination of heroin from Afghanistan – in fact, even though China's main heroin supplier is Burma, it has recently become a major consumer of opiates stemming from Afghanistan (Vanda Feldab-Brown, 2018:26).

The effects of Afghanistan's narco-economy are sweeping. Afghanistan produces in excess of ninety percent of Europe's heroin, while perpetuating addiction and HIV/AIDS[8] endemics in Pakistan and Iran. There are more than 4 million drug users in Iran. The World Bank reports that "the estimated opium GDP of Afghanistan is between $2.6 and $2.7 billion, which amounts to twenty-seven percent of the country's total GDP (both licit and illicit)". It is estimated that the illicit economy is much larger than the World Banks' approximation and is believed to make up at least half of Afghanistan's GDP economy (Vanda Feldab-Brown, 2018:26). Thus, given opium's market value of over $4,500 per hectare, compared to only $266 for wheat, many farmers feel that they are left with no choice but to get involved in opium cultivation to provide for their families. At the same

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[8] Intravenous drug use increases the risk of contracting or passing infections, as certain diseases can be spread through blood and other bodily fluids. For example, HIV and Hepatitis B (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021:1).

time, seeing as organisations, warlords and landowners stand to gain so much financially from opium cultivation, many farmers experience intense pressure or are compelled to get involved in the illicit economy (Vanda Feldab-Brown, 2018:26).

For those higher up in the criminal food chain, the economic situation looks much rosier. Notwithstanding the fact that some 2.9 million Afghanis make their living in the drug trade as farmers, the latter receive no more than twenty percent of the profit – landowners, warlords, traffickers, public officials, and insurgent groups (e.g., the Taliban) receive the bulk of the profit. Furthermore, as Mansfield (2019:339) notes, "these actors commonly levy harsh taxes and impose exploitative sharecropping and land tenure agreements upon the impoverished opium farmers". The credit system that has emerged around opium cultivation creates further injustices, seeing as it encourages farmers to borrow money from landholders using their expected crop yields as collateral. This, ultimately, creates a debt trap in cases of a lower-than-expected crop yield (Mansfield, 2019:339).

The majority of the revenue from the illicit trade is made at international traffic, and consumer-country distribution stages, surpassing the profits made in Afghanistan (from the illicit drug trade). It is not uncommon for landowners where poppy farming occur to increase rents on land in order to extract more profits. According to researchers David Mansfield (2019:341), researchers active in the poppy regions of Nangarhar, "in areas where poppy is concentrated, the rentable value of land is inflated to such a point that farmers cultivating legal crops would not be able to meet their rent." The exorbitant rent of poppy areas in effect force farmers leasing land, to grow poppy to afford the rent. The property-owner setting these exorbitant rents, must then also be blamed for the utilisation of his land for poppy harvesting by renters, and thus ought to also be subject to serious legal consequences. Despite the high profitability, not all farmers opt to grow poppies. In fact, eradication uncertainties, the mistreatment of poppy farmers, and the laborious cultivation process, are effective deterrents for some farmers.

However, as noted previously, despite the desire to abstain from cultivating opium, many farmers are coerced, either through exploitative sharecropping agreements, or by insurgent organisations under threat of violence. Because opium poppy cultivation is highly labour-intensive, employment and involvement come in both on-farm and off-farm

opportunities. This includes job opportunities in farming, itinerant labourers during harvesting, and vendors or merchants, among several others (UNODC, 2017).

Afghanistan experiences multiple and robust spill over effects because of the opium economy. Revenue from this economy sustains several key sectors of the country's legitimate domestic income, such as services (hotels and restaurants), construction and trade. Vanda Feldab-Brown (2018:26) suggests that in actuality the narco-economy is almost one half of Afghanistan's overall domestic income. This proportion of economic dependency on an illegal narcotics trade has not been seen in the history of modern drug trade post World War Two (UNODC, 2017).

4.4 Resurgence of Insurgence: The narco-terror nexus in Afghanistan

The connection between narcotics and terrorism has never been more widely publicised than in Afghanistan. Since the 9/11 attacks on the US, Afghanistan has been repeatedly used as a case study to demonstrate the link between narcotics and terrorism.

Following the 2001 invasion and the subsequent abolition of the Taliban opium ban, Afghani opium production soared from seventy to ninety-two percent of the overall worldwide opium production currently (Lacouture, 2018:32). This escalation occurred alongside the declining security situation triggered by the NATO and United States invasion of the country. The connection between decentralised governance, violence, poverty, and terrorist organisations merged to become a narco-terrorism propelled system. A historic lack of a centralised and legitimate government, continued conflict, coupled with civil discord, and embargoes against Afghanistan are the main drivers behind this marked increase in opium production. These factors have all been exacerbated by the coalition invasion, resulting in a marriage of convenience between the opium industry and insurgents (UNODC, 2007).

From 2001-2009 policies to combat narcotics in Afghanistan became increasingly strict. The strategies did not, however, result in a decline in the farming of poppies in a sustainable way, nor did it succeed in inhibiting the Taliban's revenue from narcotics. Instead, these strategies reinforced the link between the Taliban and local farmers by

estranging them from the local representatives and the Afghan government. This resulted in counterinsurgency strategies suffering, including the depletion of intelligence from local communities on the Taliban and other Jihadists (UNODC, 2007).

Simultaneously, efforts to promote alternative livelihoods were too narrowly focused, chronically under-resourced, and almost entirely focused on relative price ratios of legal crops to opium, largely overlooking the numerous and complicated motivations of opium poppy growing. Following decades of cultivation and the collapse of legal economic prospects, opium production has become deeply embedded in the socio-economic fabric of Afghan society, and it now underpins much of Afghanistan's power and economic interactions. The opium economy is a complicated web of actors that exists at all societal levels. Because alternative livelihoods fail to provide enough revenue for poppy farmers, they are more likely to oppose opium poppy prohibitions, which boosts the Taliban's political capital by ensuring the farmers' poppy fields are protected (Martin & Symansky, 2006:11).

More than a third of Afghanistan's narcotics is trafficked through Pakistan (in addition to routes via Iran, Central Asia and Russia) resulting in weakening state control on the border, but also cementing relationships among drug traffickers throughout the greater Pakistan and Afghanistan region, the Taliban, insurgents and other criminal groups. This interface of crime, drugs and insurgents threaten NATO supply routes and brings resistance to continuing military operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan's tribal areas. A significant challenge is posed by this nexus because the networks of the narcotics trade who support the conflict are not limited or restricted inside the Afghanistan-Pakistan region (Lacouture, 2018:17). Narcotics trafficking in Afghanistan has significant implications for both global and regional security that far exceed the issue of drug sales as a source of revenue for Afghan citizens and conflict. Although a significant portion of Afghanistan's revenues does come from the illicit drug trade, the issue has far-reaching consequences that go beyond economics.

The drug trade funds, compounds, and perpetuates the political instability and insurgency in Afghanistan, dating back to the period of the Soviet occupancy more than forty years ago. The drug trade in Afghanistan, similar to the Colombian situation, exacerbates the

insecurity caused by years of domestic conflict. Afghanistan's situation is however more severe. A substantially higher proportion of national revenue in Afghanistan can be tied to the drug trade, than in Colombia. In Colombia at the pinnacle of its drug trade, a maximum of ten percent of the country's GDP could be attributed to narcotics—in Afghanistan one-third of the GDP is attributed to drug production. Afghanistan, moreover, is unique in that an estimated sixty percent of its economy is based on illicit trafficking (Lacouture, 2018:17).

As indicated earlier in this chapter, Afghanistan is no stranger to narcotics production or insurgency, it is only recently however that this symbiotic relationship between these two evils have flourished. During the Soviet invasion in 1979 the Mujahidin resorted to opium production and trafficking in order to acquire weapons that could effectively combat Soviet troops and gunships. In a post-Soviet Afghanistan, many Mujahidin warlords and leaders went on to become political actors and leaders in the narcotics industry (Corr, 2017). In 1992, following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and discord among Mujahidin groups- The Taliban gained control of Afghanistan. The Taliban not only allowed opium production, but encouraged it as means of funding their regime, notwithstanding the ideological abhorrence of narcotics consumption. Under the Taliban regime, notes AbuKhalil (2002: 56), "the government had a fairly strong hold on the industry and went so far as to institutionalise taxation of drug-trafficking issuing receipts for the funds that the regime received". These funds served the purpose of keeping the regime in power, allowing it to stave off its opponents in the form of the Northern Alliance, essentially a "loose band of tribes that has fought the Taliban for control of the country ever since the Soviet Union withdrew from its military campaign in 1989" (AbuKhalil, 2002: 56). In 2000, the Taliban's two-faced personality was on display when they collected taxes from narco-traffickers while also issuing a fatwa, or religious decree, prohibiting the growth of poppy (a seed whose extract is used to make opium) (AbuKhalil, 2002: 56).

Some assume that the goal of this campaign was to restrict opium output in order to reduce supply and drive up prices, hence increasing profits for the Taliban. Others argue that this was a legitimate effort by the Taliban to address the opium problem, and that signs of success were beginning to emerge in Taliban-controlled areas in terms of ending

opium cultivation and production (Asad, 2003:55). While the edict was religious in origin, it was the intention to change a poor world opinion of the leadership and the country that prompted the change, not the non-Islamic nature of drug trafficking. Ironically, since the coalition invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, opium production has reached record heights. This has resulted in a reinvigorated Taliban presence and has contributed to the security situation in Afghanistan deteriorating even further (WGHB, 2020).

Furthermore, as the (former) Karzai administration and Western powers drew closer to each other, so too did drug lords and insurgent groups. While working alongside the Afghan government, NATO and the US were confronted with the reality of having to battle two distinct wars, i.e., the war on drugs and the war on terror. In the face of attempts from the US, Britain and the Afghan government to develop a versatile counternarcotic policy, insurgents and drug lords were uniting in an effort to undermine the Karzai government while at the same time funding their campaigns by way of the opium trade (Corr, 2017).

The present strategic conceptualisation of two wars in Afghanistan fails to appreciate that the country is on the way to becoming a "narco-terrorist state". The link between insurgency and the opium trade is observable. The southern Helmand province, coincidently also Afghanistan's principal poppy growing province, has seen almost sixty-two percent of coalition casualties executed by insurgents (Corr, 2017). Furthermore, the Taliban earns roughly seventy percent of its revenue through protection money and opium sales (part of which comes from "taxes levied on opium farmers"). In exchange for protection, the Taliban receives weaponry and money from drug traffickers. An excessive dependence on crop repression practices produced a large recruitment pool of disgruntled farmers, also contributing to the insurgency. The Taliban, for example, paid the men two hundred dollars per month to join their group, an astounding sum when contrasted to Afghan police officer's monthly salary of seventy dollars. The Taliban raises money by taxing every part of the narcotics trade. Poppy harvests are taxed at a rate of about twelve percent. The heroin production labs are then taxed at a rate of seventy dollars for each kilogram of heroin produced. In the final stage, the Taliban grants traffickers an authorisation letter− worth two hundred-and-fifty dollars per kilogram of heroin− to present at Taliban checkpoints across the country (Corr, 2017).

The dearth of highly trained and armed governmental drug enforcement agents, as well as corruption among border and public officials, all contribute to the narco-terror nexus. In the same manner that Afghanistan's economic failures have legitimised the drug industry, so too did it's political and security failures (aggravated by the drug trade), legitimise insurgency. Insurgents and drug merchants rely on a continual supply of capable Afghans in both the political and security arenas. As previously stated, drug interdiction and eradication tactics that neglect addressing the factors that push farmers to cultivate opium, are driving them to seek assistance and protection from insurgents. Furthermore, many farmers have little choice in what they grow, as groups like the Taliban force them to plant illicit crops by threatening their families. As a result, any policy aimed at combating insurgency, should also make provisions to combat drug trafficking, given the striking degree to which insurgency and the drug industry have come to gain from each other (Lacoutre, 2018:14).

4.5 COIN (ing) a new strategy: Winning the battles, losing the war

The Afghanistan War was an international conflict, triggered in 2001 by the ''9/11'' attacks, and comprised of three stages. The first stage entailed ousting the Taliban, which lasted two months. The toppling of the Taliban transposed the focus to the democratisation and rebuilding of Afghanistan, and the enactment of the ostensible "Marshall Plan", through which the US government promised considerable financial support to the Afghan people.

This–second stage–lasting from 2002 until 2008, was plagued by funding disparities. The US congress allotted three billion dollars in development and humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. Efforts geared to developing the country was woefully underfunded, whilst over fifty percent of funding went towards equipment and training for the Afghan army. The remaining funds was a fraction of what experts considered to be sufficient to develop Afghanistan–a country consistently ranking at the extremities of worldwide development indexes. The aid project was also beset with confusion as to whom was responsible for taking the lead in agricultural initiatives, education programs, and other developmental support projects (Tanner, 2009:32).

In 2009 the third stage saw a return of archetypical counterinsurgency strategies, when then-President Barack Obama amplified the US military occupancy in Afghanistan (Griff, 2020:1). A populace protection strategy was enacted by the amplified troops, which would defend the Afghan people from the Taliban and support initiatives to reintroduce former insurgents back into society. This strategy was accompanied by a timetable indicating the foreign troops' withdrawal commitment, and the handover of security authority to Afghan forces in 2011. This strategy was hugely unsuccessful as both insurgent onslaughts and civilian deaths soared. Afghan forces were also substantially ill-equipped to stave off the Taliban (Griff, 2020:1).

The US constituted the biggest military force in Afghanistan, and consequently endured the most losses. One thousand US soldiers were killed in the first half of 2010, while Canada and Britain lost one hundred-and-fifty and three hundred, respectively during the same time period. As casualties increased, so too did calls to bring an end to the conflict (Griff, 2020:1). The primary goal of the US' counterinsurgency (abbreviated to COIN) strategy in Afghanistan, was to provide protection to the Afghan people in order to gain their implicit, as well as active support in the US' fight against insurgency. Former US Military General David Petraeus stated that this population-focused strategy centered on ''winning the hearts and minds'' of the Afghan people (Mujahid, 2016:46). The COIN strategy consisted of seven key principals to apply supreme pressure on their enemies:

i)   Demonstrating the willingness and capability to employ force precisely and appropriately.
ii)   Infiltration of and reporting on insurgent operations.
iii) Providing vital social and economic services.
iv)   Partnering with Afghan security forces to direct and implement operations.
v)   Promoting public security and safety.
vi)   Advising and influencing operations.
vii) Removing insurgents from the public by implementing a rigorous detainee procedure (Pirnie & O'Connell, 2008:134).

This strategy demarcates various stages ranging from holding territory, to dealing with insurgent threats, and building. The build-stage involved establishing a secure and safe environment and transferring key responsibilities for security to local security forces. This approach was employed in Afghanistan from 2006 onwards.

The majority of the COIN strategy that was actually implemented, focused heavily on strengthening the Afghan military forces. However, it did not achieve the expected outcome. The Afghan National Army, like the rest of Afghan society, has historical tribal fractures between Hazara, Pashtuns, Uzbeks, and Tajiks- to name a few. These fractures impeded internal unity from the start. Western forces did not have the historical or cultural capabilities to properly train or foster professionalism between members of the Afghan army. A key aspect of counterinsurgency is to understand the operational environment. Because there was a lack of understanding concerning the historical fractures within Afghanistan, a system of governance that would survive these historic legacies and ongoing insecurities could not be effectively forged. This was proven to be true, when, in a matter of days after the US withdrew from Afghanistan, the Taliban reclaimed its position. 'Winning hearts and minds' only served to introduce Western foreign troops' objectives and fight insurgents, rather than to cultivate domestic organisations. Some scholars believe the 'winning hearts and minds' strategy was used to garner legitimacy and efficacy for the US' unequal warfare. That the 'humane' facet of this strategy was only concocted to ease civilian objections. Counternarcotics policies went much the same as the counterinsurgency strategies. Much of the plans lacked the forethought or considerations for the Afghan environment and was poorly implemented with devastating results. In 2002 the international assistance mission in Afghanistan tasked Great Britain with initiating a counternarcotic strategy. This directive was the result of the ''lead nations'' concept, where specific states were responsible for the reconstruction of specific sectors in Afghanistan. The primary purpose of the counternarcotics strategy was to halt poppy cultivation, eradicate existing crops, and provide an alternative income or livelihood for farmers involved in this process. Britain, aware of the political issues associated with removing the livelihoods of rural residents, introduced a remunerated eradication program at first. With US$71.75 million dedicated to the program, they undertook to pay farmers US$350 per jerib—unit of area—that they eradicated themselves. The program had to be

aborted, however, following corruption from the onset (Charles, 2004). By 2004, increased interdiction was undertaken, with the aim to target large processing and trafficking laboratories. The effort was almost instantly manipulated by local Afghan strongmen to stamp out tribal, ethnic, and drug competition, as well as their political rivals. Interdiction efforts, instead of targeting high-level offenders with significant political influence, were conducted against small-scale traders who unlike their elite counterparts, were unable to bride nor intimidate interdiction teams. This resulted in a considerable vertical merger of the narcotics trade in Afghanistan (Charles, 2004).

Another side effect of how the interdiction was executed, was that it created an opportunity for the Taliban to reintegrate back into the narcotics trade. The Taliban, having recovered in Pakistan, was needed once again to protect traffickers that were being targeted by interdiction (Gall, 2016:1). In 2004 and 2005, certain US government officials called for a more effective poppy eradication strategy that included aerial spraying. This was after the alarming proliferation of poppy cultivation. Manual eradication was thus executed between 2004 and 2009, leading to violent social protests and strikes (UNODC, 2017). Despite high hopes from Afghan farming communities, alternative livelihoods never quite materialised. The general pauperisation of the population had devastating consequences. Many farmers, unable to pay their debts, had to flee their homes, while others had to sell their daughters as brides. Aside from integrating displaced farmers into their group, the Taliban also protected farmers' opium fields. The antangonised poppy farmers became a central support base for the Taliban (Felbab-Brown, 2021:4).

Eradication, like its predecessor interdiction, was beleaguered by widespread corruption, powerful elites bribing or coercing workers to not have their poppy fields demolished, or these political elites bribing workers officials to destroy the fields of their political opponents. Temporary poppy repression often involved a blend of buyoffs of powerful Malik's (tribal chiefs), assurances of substitute incomes, and warnings of poppy eradication and incarceration of violators (Mansfield, 2019:380). Farmers near capitals cities were sometimes able to subsist with poppy bans by shifting to dairy production, or farming vegetables, and finding employment in construction cash-for-work programs.

Farmers who lived far from capital cities frequently endured great financial deprivation. Because their income frequently fell by a large percentage, and nothing of the promised substitute livelihood programs ever properly materialised fast enough or in a lasting manner, their political agitation and outright support for the Taliban progressively grew (Mansfield, 2019:381-395).

Thus, the poppy bans and eradication strategies did nothing bankrupt to the Taliban. In reality, the group were strengthened physically by steering economic refugees to the group flowing eradication. Eradication also alienated the local populace from the local tribal elites and the government who agreed to eradication, producing important opportunities for the Taliban to mobilise. Critically, eradication undercut the local peoples' motivation to provide intelligence to counterinsurgents on the Taliban, while motivating them to provide intelligence to the Taliban. The foundation of the Taliban's political capital was in its ability to protect the farmers' fields against eradication. The Obama administration, acknowledging the counterproductive effects of eradication, defunded the eradication program in 2009 (Felbab-Brown, 2021:4).

Following this, the interdiction of Taliban-connected rural expansion and drug trafficking became the central components of the Obama administration's counternarcotics policy. However, much of this strategy failed in terms of implementation and design. The sole counternarcotics directive of the ISAF forces became targeting Taliban-connected traffickers. Their mandate was to diminish the flow of drugs, precursor agents, money, improvised explosive devices (IED) parts, and other weaponry. The objective was disrupting the Taliban's physical resources and finances, while also dismantling the group's logistical networks. Despite hundreds of interdiction raids, large seizures of IED's and opium, the effect on the Taliban's resource flows were always temporary. In the meantime, poppy cultivation simply shifted to areas that the Afghan government and ISAF patrolled less frequently (Felbab-Brown, 2021:4).

With the advent of the Trump administration in 2017, the US attempted interdiction against Taliban-connected drug traffickers once more. This time, however, their efforts concentrated on increased bombings of drug depots, labs, and trafficking trucks. Similar to their predecessors, this interdiction campaign also aimed to strip the Taliban's financing

and weaken them. Likewise, for the same reasons, and despite hitting hundreds of suspected drug targets, this interdiction did not incapacitate nor alter the dynamics of the Taliban's operations (Mansfield, 2019:7). Because of the opacity and complexity of Afghanistan's economic, political, and contracting environment, many of these international programs passed to corrupt, discriminatory, and problematic powerbrokers, creating further antipathy among the inhabitants, and deepening Afghanistan's widespread lack of accountability and corruption. In some cases, new tribal conflicts and community tensions were spurred. With the majority of counternarcotics policy by foreign contributors, non-state actors, and even the Afghan government focusing on the supply-side of drug policy, demand reduction strategies are completely neglected and frequently misguided. The balance between the alleviation of short-term economic deprivation, long-term development, and state-building never came to pass (Felbab-Brown, 2021:4).

4.6   Conclusion

The foregoing chapter discussed the narco-terror nexus in Afghanistan, focusing specifically on the state's narcotics economy, the different role players involved in the nexus, and the measures put in place to combat and prevent this nexus.

To finance their personal purposes, drug lords; tribal chiefs; civic officers; and insurgents work in tandem to undercut the Afghan government. The relationship between narcotics and insurgency is one of perfect symbiosis that benefits from the prolonged Afghan instability (Lacouture, 2008:2). Insurgent donations and taxations of the narcotics trade, corruption of civic and tribal leaders, combined with widespread poverty−consolidated to become a "truly narco-terrorism-driven system" (Lacouture, 2008:7).

The situation in Afghanistan also correlates with what Mary Kaldor and other scholars described as new wars. They reference that, new wars transpire in circumstances where a country's revenue deteriorates because of delinquency, bribery, and ineptitude (Kaldor, 2013:106). This is Afghanistan personified, where the governmental power has been severely affected by poor governance and incompetence. This, as the new wars thesis indicates, is the prerequisite for violence to become privatised, while the legitimacy of the

government gradually decays (Kaldor, 2013:106). This is evident in the authoritative actions displayed by insurgents who laid hold of Afghanistan's southern, poppy producing, provinces. Furthermore, ethnic and tribal tensions often lead to clashes, proving legitimacy to the new wars thesis' assertion that identity politics is a "predatory social condition" that could potentially lead to conflict. In fact, many of the insurgent groups in Afghanistan organise along religious and ethnic configurations (Kaldor, 2013:120).

Conflict and illicit narcotics are two of the key causes of fatalities globally, and Afghanistan is central to both. The absence of a stable government, coupled with the normalisation of insurgent violence, engendered a virtual state of disorder, which thrives on poppy cultivation. The symbiotic nature of the narcotics trade and insurgency proliferates the harmful effects of terrorist tactics and narcotics dependency which, consequently, makes any constructive development programs unsustainable (Corr, 2017). Two decades dominated by war, strife, and insurgency has Afghanistan teetering between failed and collapsed state status. Unable to deliver infrastructure, fiscal prosperity, and especially security to its citizens, Afghanistan became the perfect domain for narco-terrorism (Lacoutre, 2018:5). Unfortunately, most of the counternarcotics and counterinsurgency policies adopted since the 2000s were unsuccessful and failed to decrease poppy cultivation or curtail the Taliban. This failure had disastrous effects on state and peacebuilding, as well as economic reform. Afghanistan continues to struggle with intensifying insecurity, with the Taliban vying to become a dominant actor in the Afghan government (Felbab-Brown, 2021:4).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WILD WILD WEST (AFRICA): THE WEST AFRICAN NARCO-TERROR NEXUS

5.1   Introduction

West Africa is a designated geographic region within the African continent. The nations of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo make up the West African region (McCaskie & Fage, 2020). Similar to most post-colonial African states, West African countries struggle with corruption, poverty, and wide-spread inequality. West African post-colonial history is characterised by transitions over three consecutive periods: a post-independence period of elevated nationalism; the military period, which was characterised by intense socio-economic and political instability; and, conclusively, starting from the early 1990s, a democratisation period characterised by continual swings between anguished realities and fevered hopes (Obadare, 2017:1). Owing to negligible border security, pervasive corruption, sub-standard resource management, and regional geographic location, West Africa is particularly vulnerable to transnational criminal organisations (TCOs).

The following chapter presents an analysis on the narco-terror nexus in the West African region. The first section will detail narcotics trafficking in the region, paying specific attention to the trafficking of heroin, cocaine, and Amphetamine-type stimulants[9] (ATS's). Each of these drugs connects West Africa to the worldwide narcotics market through Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North and South America. The second section seeks to discuss the West African narco-terror nexus. Lastly, the third section explores the measures put in place to combat and prevent narco-terror in this region. This section is

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[9] ATS's are a collection of substances that consist of synthetic stimulants, such as methamphetamine, amphetamine, methcathinone, and ecstacy-group substances— for example, methylene-dioxy-meth-amphetamine and its equivalents) (UNODC, 2012:6).

followed by a conclusion to the chapter. West Africa, like Afghanistan, serves as a contemporary and impending case study. That is to say that the occurrences of narcotics trafficking, and terrorism are current and still evolving.

5.2 Traffic and transit: The narcotics trade in West Africa

"The war on drugs has failed in West Africa and around the world" -Kofi Annan.

The West Africa Commission on Drugs (2014:3) reveals that the region has developed into an international hub for the trafficking of illegal narcotics from South America and Asia to clients in the Middle East, North America, and Europe. The narcotics vary from cocaine and heroin, to ATS's. Although illegal narcotics trafficking is not an uncommon phenomenon, cocaine and heroin trafficking-specifically-has experienced and exponential increase in the last decade (Africa Economic Development Institute, 2015).

West Africa is particularly attractive, and thus vulnerable to transnational criminal organisations[10] (TCOs) for a multitude of reasons. Chief among these are porous borders, corrupt government officials, and its geographical position between the European and South American continents (US Congress, Senate, 2009). Guinea-Bissau, frequently cited as the African continent's first narco-state, is the quintessential example of this. Widespread corruption allowed Drug Trafficking Organisations[11] (DTOs) and TCOs to operate unimpeded without fearing repercussion from local government officials, who often colluded with these organisations (Smoltczyk, 2015:8). Rampant corruption is often the result of a lack of checks and balances within government institutions, particularly in the case of Guinea-Bissau where the President frequently veto's Parliament, while not having full command over the states' military apparatus. Militaries in this region are known

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[10] TOCs describe individuals or organisations that operates transnationally, with the explicit purpose of procuring commercial or monetary gains, influence, and power. These gains are usually procured through illegal means, secured through violence and corruption—while being protected by transnational organisational structures and the manipulation of transnational communication and commercial mechanisms (Washington, DC: The White House, 2011:2).

[11] DTOs are multifaceted organisations with distinct control and command structures, which manufactures, transports, and distributes huge quantities of illegal narcotics (National Drug Intelligence Center, 2010).

to overthrow state leaders when the military elite observes that the presidency has acquired too much power, or no longer priortises their interests (Van Riper, 2014:20). Additionally, weakened judicial systems, declining law enforcement, and the suppressive counternarcotics policies in the Middle East and Asia, make West African illicit trade routes all the more. These trade routes connect previous colonial powers with former colonies, and capitalises on the familiarity of language, culture, and already existing business relations. An example of such an occurrence is former Portuguese colonies Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau. Traffickers exploit the standing cultural and linguistic connections to facilitate the transit of narcotics between Portugal and Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau (UNODC, 2016:28).

The West African coastline is longer than both of the US continental shorelines. This extensive coastline, along with its associated islands are essentially unmonitored by West African law enforcement organisations. The geographical advantages, coupled with restricted law enforcement capabilities, enables South American drug cartels to transport narcotics via shipping containers to a halfway mark between South American and European markets. For example, Recife, Brazil is seven hundred miles closer to Dakar, Senegal than it is to Paris, France. Narcotics are trafficked to the halfway mark (West Africa) and then transits to Europe and other consumer markets from there (Brown, 2013:21). This places West Africa in a locale that is comparatively easy to traffic narcotics consignments for intermediate staging before it is transported to its final location. Once the narcotics shipments are within a particular country, it is then divided into smaller shipments to be transported via ground-based or air-based transport (UNODC, 2013:12).

The so-called 'southern route', is the route most used for transiting cocaine, passing through Nigeria, Gambia, Guinea, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Togo, Senegal, and Benin (Europol, 2013:45). Cocaine is also smuggled along what law enforcement officials describe as 'Highway 10', referring to the trafficking route along the latitude of 10° North alongside the region (Hawley, 2015:7). Heroin from Afghanistan is trafficked through Pakistan, and eventually transported to West Africa, where it is then transited to Europe and other markets. ATS on the other hand, is both manufactured and transited through West Africa to key consumers residing in Thailand, Japan, South Korea, and Japan

(UNODC, 2012:8). Asia is the largest market for ATS, with seizures in Japan indicating that almost ten percent of the ATS came from Africa (UNODC, 2014). Nigeria is chief amongst ATS and illicit methamphetamine production, with Nigerian officials seizing a methamphetamine laboratory in Lagos which had the production capacity of twenty-five to fifty kilograms of methamphetamine per manufacturing cycle (UNODC, 2012:11). In Guinea, chemicals, and manufacturing equipment for the production of Methylenedioxy methamphetamine, commonly referred to as 'ecstasy'—a psychoactive narcotic— was seized. The quantity of chemicals seized could potentially produce ecstasy to the value of $100 million dollars (UNODC, 2012:11). Law enforcement officials disrupted the establishment of an ATS production laboratory in Liberia, whose target market was Japan and the US (UNODC, 2012:11).

The pliability of trafficking methods and routes in West Africa, have granted local criminal organisations a good reputation with European and South American DTOs and TCOs (Europol, 2011:20 & US DEA, 2012:14-26). These include Russian organised crime groups and motorcycle gangs among others (Europol, 2011:20). Evidence gathered by the UNODC (2012:12) postulates that even drug cartels based in Mexico are trying to get a foothold in the growing West African ATS trade (UNODC, 2012:12). Upon launching the business relationship between local criminal organisations and these DTOs and TCOs, they are then made privy to local information on safe houses, smuggling routes, and other skills necessary to move enormous quantities of narcotics through West Africa to their destined markets (Ellis, 2009:173).

Growing narcotics production, distribution, and consumption in the region has had severe adverse effects on the locals and contributed to an increase in drug dependence and health issues such as hepatitis C and HIV. The economies of the countries in this region suffer tremendously as the illicit economy often dwarfs the states' legal sources of income. Thus, encouraging more citizens to become involved in the illicit economy. To provide context, Malian officials seized seven-hundred-and-fifty kilograms of cocaine, whose worth was three times the amount that the Malian government had spent on its defense budget the previous year (West Africa Commission on Drugs, 2015:12).

5.3   Extremist threats and trends in West Africa

West Africa is a region confronted by a multitude of interconnected and complex humanitarian and security issues, such as famine and violent conflicts. With the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019, these issues were magnified. The most difficult of these issues were, arguably, the insecure environment resulting from the actions of armed and violent terrorist groups (Edu-Afful, 2020:1). The West African region is home to a number of extremist groups that expand into safe zones, launch lethal attacks, and increase insecurity throughout West Africa and the Sahel (UNSC, 2021). Existing literature illustrates how old and new challenges merged to make the Sahel and West Africa favourable for terrorism. These challenges include porous borders; economic underdevelopment; inability to deliver public services; the spread of Islam's lethal Sunni-Shia (Saudi-Iranian) conflict into West Africa, terrorists' marauding of natural resources; farmer-herder conflict brought on by climate change; and the consequences from Libya and other vanguard states in the GWOT (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2019:15).

These challenges intersect and converge in the expansive West Africa-Sahel vastness, with the most affected spaces extending from Mali in the west, the Lake Chad Basin in the east, and Burkina Faso in the center. The Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram persistently exploit these challenges in the Lake Chad Basin to proliferate insecurity in this area. Several countries have experienced the spillover effects of the groups' sustained terror activities that started in 2017, with disastrous consequences. Almost ten million people are experiencing food insecurity, nearly three million have been displaced, eleven million require urgent aid, and just over five hundred thousand children are in distress due to severe malnutrition (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2019:15).

In the last few years, West Africa and the Sahel became a breeding ground for predatory extremist groups−including Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansarul Islam, Boko Haram, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), and Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM). These groups, are currently active in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Niger,

Mali, and other states in the Lake Chad Basin, causing destruction and exploiting security weaknesses by executing continued attacks against security-and civilian targets alike. Worryingly, expansions in Burkina Faso−which is rapidly evolving into the epicenter of extremist violence in the region−illustrates the southward advancement of terrorist activity, with conceivable consequences for West African coastal states such as Benin, Ghana, and Togo (West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, 2019).

As the leaders of this region grapple to eradicate COVID-19, they also have to withstand the continued and intensifying dangers of terrorist violence. Additionally, several states within the region also had to deviate funds reserved for combatting insecurity, to address challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. To terrorist groups like the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda active in the region, the present uncertainty and anxiety pertaining to the countries' response to the COVID-19 pandemic offers a chance to influence and mobilise, additional supporters, while still presenting a sustained threat to their survival (Edu-Afful, 2020:1). The pandemic has not quelled these groups' urge to subvert governments, challenge state authority, or attack security forces. Employing data compiled in 2020, Edu-Afful (2020:1) points out that extremist activities continued unabated despite the pandemic. Regional extremist groups Macina Liberation Front (FLM), the ISGS, the JNIM, Ansar ul Islam, and Boko Haram were unrelenting as they executed numerous high-profile assaults in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Chad. The Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin sustained attacks from ISWAP and Boko Haram in March and April of 2020, killing more than one hundred soldiers from Côte d'Ivoire and Chad (Edu-Afful, 2020:1).

Terrorists in this region are notorious for using IED's, kidnapping young children, recruiting youths, suicide bombings, looting farms, and ambushing villages and towns. The main source of income for the majority of the rural populace derives from subsistence farming, which negatively impacts the livelihoods of numerous households when attacked or looted by extremists. In Mali, the increasing poverty and weak governance is exploited by the AQIM, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), the ISGS, Al Mourabitoun, Ansarul, and Ansar al-Dine to disrupt the country. Additionally, Mali has to contend with amplified human insecurity due to climate change, as well as the

terrorism-fueling downfall of neighbouring Libya in 2011, after the collapse of the Gadhafi government (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2019:17). Radical Islamists and ethnic Tuareg rebels returning from combat in Libya, have been destabilising northern Mali since Libya's collapse (Aning, Okyere, & Abdallah, 2012). These occurrences−and the region's security crisis in general− unnerved Western cohorts such as France, who responded by dispatching resources and troops into the region (CNN, 2021). French soldiers work in tandem with the Group of Five-Sahel Joint Force[12], and the Multinational Joint Task Force[13], collaborating on military undertakings such as Operation Barkhane[14] and the European Union's Takuba[15] Task Force (CNN, 2021).

As seen in Mali, Sahelian terrorist activities, too, have the disquieting tendency to inevitably spill over to Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso suffered a humanitarian crisis following terrorist destabilising operations along its borders with Mali and Niger. Over two million people, the majority being children, required emergency humanitarian aid in January 2020. In 2019 the number of peoples who were forcibly displaced climbed sharply from eighty-seven thousand, to four hundred and eighty-seven thousand, almost half were children. This situation was further exacerbated by the fact that Burkina Faso had granted twenty-seven thousand Malian refugees' sanctuary (UNICEF, 2020:2). The humanitarian crisis was further aggravated by violence perpetrated by Boko Haram, who impeded entrance to agricultural and land resources, worsening this disaster already characterised by environmental degradation, poverty, and food insecurity (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2019:17). A 2020 UNICEF (2020:2) report describes how the instability and violence in Burkina Faso took a devastating humanitarian toll. At

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[12] The Group of Five-Sahel Joint Force comprised of Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Mali (CNN, 2021).

[13] The Multinational Joint Task Force comprises of Cameroon, Chad, Benin, Nigeria, and Niger (CNN, 2021).

[14] In 2013, France initiated a military intervention with a mandate for counter-terror operations throughout the Sahel region. This followed in the wake of al-Qaeda-linked militants taking control of the northern Malian desert in 2012. This intervention developed into the present-day Operation Barkhane. Nearly 4,005-hundred French personnel work together with the G5 Sahel joint counter-terrorism force, aiming to train five thousand troops, as well as peacekeepers installed in the United Nations Minusma stabilisation mission in Mali (CNN, 2021).

[15] The Takuba Task Force comprises of eight European nations, which assist and advise the Malian Armed Forces in their counter-terrorism efforts in the Sahel. The Takuba Task Force also coordinates with other international partners, such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) (CNN, 2021).

the latter part of 2020, three hundred-and-thirty thousand children required psychological support; two thousand schools were closed−impacting a further three hundred-and-thirty thousand learners, and nine thousand educators. Furthermore, sixty-nine healthcare facilities closed, while seventy-one others were operating under restrictions, impacting eight-hundred and seventeen thousand people. Additionally, one hundred forty-seven thousand children suffered from severe malnutrition, including eighty-six thousand children in Burkina Faso's so-called 'crisis-regions' (UNICEF, 2020:5).

Despite collaborative military attacks by the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin states against extremist on several fronts, the groups persisted in aggravating instability within the region. The region's security declined further when militants linked to Boko Haram kidnapped nearly three hundred Nigerian schoolboys in the latter part of 2020 (Abba & Sotunde, 2020:1). Continued assaults on civilians by ISWAP and AQIM near the country's border with Mali and Burkina Faso resulted in numerous fatalities (UNSC, 2021). Currently, as the latest data from 2021 suggests, five million people have been displaced in north-western Nigeria. The number increased from 2019 by one million four-hundred thousand (UNSC, 2021). Currently, as the latest data from 2021 suggests, five million people have been displaced in north-western Nigeria. The number increased from 2019 by one million four-hundred thousand (UNSC, 2021).

The temporary cancellation of peacebuilding programs in The Gambia, Liberia, and Guinea-Bissau due to COVID-19 has presented extremists groups with radicalisation opportunities. The unaddressed grievances from the local population are exploited by these groups, who, in many instances, will address some of the issues the local populace is upset about. COVID-19 and the accompanying digitisation of daily activities such as school, has also been helpful to fuel recruitment for extremist groups. Prolonged time in cyberspace generated opportunities for jihadist recruitment proxies to captivate and radicalise their youthful audience (Edu-Afful, 2020:1).

5.4   Trafficking and terror: A junction

Numerous research papers and hearings regarding the convergence of West African narcotics trafficking and terrorism, has been presented to the US Congress. The connection between Latin American cartels, terrorist organisations, and West African

trafficking syndicates have drawn particular interest (Rollins & Wyler, 2013:14). Terrorist groups have divergent objectives when collaborating with organised crime groups. They might, for example, be searching for trafficking routes, or expert knowledge in counterfeiting or explosive-making (Rollins & Wyler, 2013:14). West Africa is home to several TCOs, DTOs, and terrorist organisations, as discussed in the preceding section. Although many of these groups frequently overlap with organised criminal groups, few have the scope of Hezbollah in the region. This section will address the overlap between narcotics trafficking and certain terrorist groups, while giving special attention to Hezbollah in particular.

Hezbollah, meaning 'Party of God', is a Lebanese politico-militant group, believed to be Iran's principal political partner. The group has been active in West Africa since the 1980's. The Lebanese diaspora is widespread, the consequence of escaping oppressive regimes and wars throughout the years. West Africa is currently home to more than 250 000 Lebanese inhabitants (The Economist, 2021). Hezbollah often leverages the diaspora when partaking in narcotics and terror activities. Although its primary undertakings transpire in the Middle East, the group operates criminal and terrorist networks the world over, preferring countries where government is weak, and TCOs are commonplace− in order to exploit preexisting smuggling routes. West Africa and the South American tri-border area−discussed in chapter three− are perfect examples of this (Alamuddin, 2021:1).

Since the 1980s, Hezbollah has been involved in various criminal enterprises and a chief perpetrator of narco-terrorism in West Africa. The region is specifically used for the transshipment and stowing of narcotics, with the group frequently engaging in profitable relationships with local criminal organisations as well as TCOs. West Africa consists of several well-established narcotics trafficking routes, which terror groups take full advantage of. Heroin destined for Europe, to the value of $10 million, was seized from a container ship in Nigeria in 2010 (BBC, 2010:1). In the same year, Nigerian law enforcement impounded thirteen shipping containers categorized as 'construction materials. In reality, the containers contained smuggled weaponry that originated in Iran, intended for local Nigerian Hezbollah members (Tsukerman, 2018:6).

Besides cocaine and heroin, Hezbollah is purportedly also trafficking captagon[16] tablets from war-torn Syria, utilising transit states to hide the drugs' provenance. Once again attempting to capitalise on the Lebanese diaspora in West Africa, Hezbollah trafficked 450 000 captagon tablets to Nigeria, which was confiscated at a Lagos port through a joint Nigerian-Saudi operation. Captagon tablets have also been found hidden in cocoa shipments originating from West Africa (Alamuddin, 2021:1).

Hezbollah also uses Guinea-Bissau, Togo, Guinea, and Sierra Leone to launder money, and to proliferate the spread of narcotics, weapons, and organised crime. Scholars estimate that Hezbollah generates almost $1 billion annually (Alamuddin, 2021:1). The group also provided Algerian-based separatist group 'Polisario Front' with weapons to fight against Moroccan security officials (Koundouno, 2018:1). Hezbollah is also linked to AQIM on trafficking operations. Despite sectarian dissimilarities, al-Qaeda and Iran have cooperated with one another at various points in time. It is pertinent to note, however, that the collaboration between al-Qaeda and Iran exists on a purely tactical level, and that strains between the two will likely persist (Phillips & Robinson, 2021:10).

Hezbollah is however not the only terrorist group embroiled in the clandestine world of the narcotics business. It was reported in 2017 that Boko Haram was involved with smuggling cocaine and heroin through West Africa, and evidence provided by the US DEA reports describes how Mexican drug cartels have established underground narcotics labs in Nigeria in an attempt to get a foothold in the country's growing drug manufacturing and distribution market. Nigeria is a continental giant, with its population equaling that of the rest of the West African region combined, making the effects of narcoterrorism all the more frightening (Le Cam, 2016:1).

The instability in Mali provided AQIM with the opportunity to gain access to narcotics trafficking in the region. AQIM, according to Algerian intelligence agencies, profits millions of dollars per year from narcotics trafficking.The group reportedly provides protection to DTOs on their smuggling routes, and charges 'transit taxes' to TCOs operating in its area of operations (Le Cam, 2016:1). The trafficking of pharmaceutical drugs, as seen in the

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[16] A highly addictive narcotic substance related to the amphetamine grouping (Alamuddin, 2021:1)

cases of Hezbollah, is a growing and very lucrative business. Terrorist groups in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali have been linked to the trafficking of Rivotril−a pharmaceutical grade narcotic (Le Cam, 2016:1).

In 2017, 600 000 tablets of the pharmaceutical drug, tramadol, was seized at the Cameroon-Nigerian border. The UNODC's West-and Central African representative, Pierre Lapaque, cautioned that narcotics trafficking should not "get any further out of control", as it weakens security and proliferates instability in the region. Lapaque further elaborates by adding that "tramadol is regularly found in the pockets of suspects arrested for terrorism in the Sahel, or who have committed suicidal attacks". The abuse of tramadol−trafficked through Asia−is fast becoming a health crisis in the Sahel. This is particularly true of unstable and insecure Mali and northern Niger (BBC, 2017:1).

5.5   Evasive maneuvers: Combatting narco-terror in West Africa

Over the last two decades West Africa has had several international intervention and interdiction programs launched in the region. However, many of them were short-lived or failed to consider the regional intricacies, resulting in either the program being halted or scrapped. For the purpose of this section, the research will primarily focus on ECOWAS, as the regional body is principally responsible for establishing and implementing policy−though special mention will be given to the US' West Africa Cooperative Security Initiative (WACSI) since this initiative is still operational. ECOWAS reinforces the relationship between c West African states. Founded in 1975, ECOWAS' primary goal was to encourage economic integration and collaboration in the region, with the purpose of raising the West African populace's standard of living, advancing relations between member states, promoting economic growth, and contribute to the progression of the African continent (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2015). ECOWAS is the UNODC's most significant cohort in the region, with the two organisations developing collaborative action plans to combat the impact of DTOs and TCOs in the area.

West African counterterrorism and counternarcotic policies have been hampered by ambiguity, lack of implementation, corruption, and a lack of political will. Because of this,

many extremists go unchecked and the narcotics flow from Latin America, the Middle East and Asia remain unmitigated. This is largely due to the region's chief representative, ECOWAS, failing to execute much of its own mandate and strategic security plans. The region does, however, have several international partners that are assisting in this regard. One such partner is the US, who put forth their West Africa Cooperative Security Initiative (WACSI: 2015:1) to assist the West African region with combatting terrorism and narcotics trafficking. The WACSI comprises of five principles that frame how the US would collaborate with the AU and ECOWAS to target DTOs and extremists in West Africa. The five principles center on the following: establishing accountable government institutions; creating policy and legal frameworks to combat transnational organised crime; strengthening security operations; reinforcing justice operations and addressing the consequences and causes of transnational organised crime. WACSI, by means of these five principles, aims to work with ECOWAS to establish state institutions with checks and balances against corruption and good governance practices, whilst simultaneously rooting out drug traffickers and terrorists (WACSI, 2015:1).

In 2019 ECOWAS adopted the 2020-2024 Action Plan. The plan consisted of eight key focus areas, and authorised ECOWAS to coordinate counterterrorist efforts, promote inter-community discourse, and prevent extremism (Kwarkye, 2021:3). The 2020-2024 Action Plan was provided with a budget of US$2.3 billion, and conferred on ECOWAS leadership, which had previously only been awarded to the African Union, United Nations, and the Group of Five Sahel (G5 Sahel) (Kwarkye, 2021:3). Notwithstanding that the action plan was adopted almost two years ago, little headway has been made. Despite member states expressing their support for the action plan, ECOWAS is faced with several challenges. Chief among them is ascertaining whether its member states are truly in support of a regional counterterrorism approach (Kwarkye, 2021:3).

Bearing in mind that the ''Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan'' adopted by ECOWAS in 2013 was never activated, coupled with the lack of enthusiasm from member states, casts serious doubt on the prospects for success of the latest Action Plan. Implementation of the Action Plan is obstructed by numerous issues. First and foremost, the majority of the regional states afflicted by extremism, already have existent

counterterrorism initiatives in place. The G5 Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force are the preferred initiatives for combatting terrorism for many of these states, who believe that ECOWAS is not well-equipped to tackle emergent threats in a timeous manner (Kwarkye, 2021:3).

Insufficient resources are an all too familiar challenge that the regional body must also contend with. The funds allocated to the Action Plan are yet to materialise, with officials reportedly being told that ''differences among member states over the mechanisms for financing the plan'', were to blame. Some states elected to allocate funds to initiatives more consistent with their national counterterrorism operations, in lieu of giving funds to the Action Plan (Kwarkye, 2021:3). The West African Economic and Monetary Union reportedly expended its allocation directly to it member countries. Although having pledged US$400 million to the Action Plan, Ghana and Nigeria have yet to make their contributions. This might be indicative of the member states' economic challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and declining oil prices, but it may also reflect the implicit lack of trust in ECOWAS as an effective regional counterterrorism and counternarcotic apparatus (Kwarkye, 2021:3).

The problematic focus and objectives of the Action Plan further exacerbates these issues. One of the primary objectives, for instance, is to eliminate terrorism from the region within the following five years. Considering that Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, and Niger are currently besieged by extremists, and that all fifteen ECOWAS countries are under threat from spillover terrorist activities, this is an exceedingly ambitious objective. Counterterrorism is a multifaceted, long-term venture that necessitates substantial investment of time and capital. Insecurity and violence in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel has persisted−sometimes worsened−despite the multitudes of counterterrorist initiatives by national governments and their international cohorts. ECOWAS leaders, during its (virtual) 58th Ordinary Session on the 23rd of January 2021, condemned ''the continued terrorist attacks in frontline countries despite the intense efforts deployed by these countries'' (Kwarkye, 2021:3).

Cynicism towards the Action Plan is further fueled by the lack of emphasis placed on tackling the origins and sources of terrorism. The Plan is further limited by the fact that

almost eighty percent of its budget is assigned to three sectors, namely intelligence and information sharing; border security and management; and equipment and training for security forces. This prioritisation of resources, while very necessary, has the perilous consequence of permitting the circumstances which encourage terrorism to prosper, to go unaddressed. By prioritising intelligence and security training, the Action Plan only addresses the symptoms and not the root causes of terrorism (Kwarkye, 2021:5). ECOWAS, along with coordinating initiatives and pooling resources, ought to operate as a conduit to improve the implementation and delivery of existing counterterrorism and counternarcotic initiatives. Sharing experiences and knowledge related to these initiatives are of paramount importance, as this contributes to scholarship and leads to the adoption of good practices. Emphasis is thus placed on the importance of tackling developmental and governance challenges, which prop up terrorism (Kwarkye, 2021:5).

5.6   Conclusion

Over the last three decades, the West African region has been grappling with the growing illicit narcotics trade, the proliferation of extremism, insecurity and the accompanying instability that has led to humanitarian crises and the widespread loss of life throughout the region. The foregoing chapter discussed the narcotics trade, extremism and the measures put in place to combat these challenges, in West Africa. The region is particularly vulnerable to extremist groups, DTOs and TCOs due to its extended coastlines, weak law enforcement structures, widespread corruption, poverty, and favourable geographic location (Brown, 2013:21). Heroin, cocaine, methamphetamines, and (the expanding) pharmaceutical drugs, are the preferred contraband being transited through the region onto European and Asian markets. The nexus of narcotics trafficking, and extremism has placed considerable pressure on West African states that are already contending with existing challenges such as rising youth unemployment rates, corruption, and crime. To many of the inhabitants of this region, trafficking narcotics is a viable income choice, especially considering the lack of legitimate work opportunities (West Africa Commission on Drugs, 2014:3).

Corruption in West Africa is widespread and an attractive quality for drug cartels and extremist groups alike. Notable cartels involved in the region originate from Spain, Colombia, Italy, Venezuela, Morocco, Lebanon, and Mexico. TCOs and DTOs often refer to West Africa as a "strategic warehouse" that grants access and safety to its criminal counterparts (Cockayne & Williams, 2009:4). Cockayne and Williams (2009:10) is of the opinion that West Africa's colonial history is in part to blame for the endemic corruption, because of the partisan and predatory nature of state institutions during that time. Generally speaking, West African leaders do not often prioritise its citizen's interests above their tribal, personal, or familial interests. Thus, government institutions frequently resemble criminal organisations because individual needs are placed above the needs of the populace for personal gain (Cockayne & Williams, 2009:12).

The West African situation is best understood as expounded by the new wars' thesis. Poverty, widespread unemployment, predatory and violent groups, the retreating state, and endemic corruption all exacerbate the already precarious situation in the region. As the new wars thesis also suggests, historical connections or grievances of ethnic or religious nature, tends to invigorate conflict as seen with ethnic Tuaregs during the Malian uprising and Hezbollah's exploitation of the Lebanese diaspora. The new wars thesis also describes how predatory leaders become complicit in illicit activities when the powerful elites place their own personal interests above those of the citizens (Kaldor 2006: 6). Corruption is however not exclusive to political elites. Often, poverty-stricken individuals are approached to be look-outs or to move contraband short-distance. The preferred targets of DTOs and TCOs remain those in power such as parliamentary members, the military, and judicial members. This is largely why the five principles of the WACSI focuses on building government structures that employ checks and balances, encourages judicial and legal practices that are transparent and fair, and works towards expelling corrupt officials whose involvement in the narcotics trade and criminal associations further exacerbates the already precarious socio-political environment of the region (WACSI, 2015:1).

Executive director of the UNODC, Yuri Fedotov, notes that drug cartels and DTOs exploit this regional weakness in West Africa, as the region not only presents the quickest, but

most cost-efficient avenue for trafficking illicit narcotics to Europe (UNODC, 2016:16). Although geographical location is one of the primary reasons DTOs, TCOs and extremist groups find West Africa appealing, so too is the fact that some West African states are at the brink of collapsing. Burkina Faso, Mali, and Liberia are prime examples of weak, fragile, or failing states. Once again, the new wars thesis assists in understanding the underlying issues of certain illicit and violent occurrences. In these states on the verge of collapse, government institutions are no longer able to operate effectively, law enforcement and legal procedures are disregarded, and instability and corruption are commonplace. All these are extremely favourable to criminal and terror networks (Aning & Pokoo, 2017:5).

The global COVID-19 pandemic compounded all of these challenges, worsening terror activities in the Sahel and neighbouring countries. States were also forced to deviate funds reserved for security challenges, to the fight against the corona virus. Peace-and state building efforts have also been temporarily halted, and as such, instability and insecurity increased in the region. The fight against COVID-19 has garnered plenty opportunities for extremists' groups to recruit and radicalise quarantined youth. The pandemic also highlighted the inefficiencies of government responses and infrastructure, particularly those related to hygiene, sanitation, and water infrastructures. In Burkina Faso extremist groups addressed some of these governmental gaps, by providing resources and some social services to local residents. This serves to legitimise the groups and their activities (Edu-Afful, 2020:1). COVID-19 highlighted the socio-economic weaknesses and antecedent inequalities of many West African countries. It has also amplified the underscoring push-and-pull factors that expose these states to terrorist activities. Social distancing and restricted movements also contributed to prevailing tensions between certain groups, weakening pre-covid peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, the insecurity surrounding the pandemic did not prevent terrorist activities, with the Boko Haram leadership publicly encouraging their supporters to mount attacks (Edu-Afful, 2020:1).

Despite the increasing number of initiatives, mechanisms, and policies developed at regional, national, and international levels−the majority lack common objectives and a cohesive strategic outline to employ. ECOWAS, the most important actor in the region

has had substantial challenges implementing much of its own strategies and action plans. Chief among these is the lack of trust in the regional body, as well as the fact that many of its member states believe that ECOWAS is not well-equipped to tackle emergent threats in a timeous manner. The distrust in ECOWAS, the regional body's lack of follow-through when it comes to implementing its strategies, and the lack of clear objectives in its newest Action Plan, will only aggravate the region's already perilous state. To be successful in its endeavours, these issues must be addressed, and member states need to−despite their reservations−provide their support to the organisation that represents their interests (Kwarkye, 2021:3).

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This final chapter intends to congregate the different findings of this research. The first section will− briefly−reiterate the research questions, the aims, and objectives, as well as the theoretical approach utilised. The second section will evaluate whether the primary research question was addressed appropriately. The third section of this chapter will discuss recommendations for future research on this particular topic.

The study investigated the nature and scope of narcotics trafficking and terrorism in Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa. In particular, the study investigated the interaction, cooperation, and fusion of transnational organised crime-in the form of narcotics trafficking-and terrorism in the two countries, and one region. Furthermore, the study examined the new wars thesis, and explored whether it could be useful when expounding the narco-terror nexus. Additionally, the study aimed to determine what measures were put in place to stop, as well as prevent the trafficking of narcotics and the spread of terrorism, and how civilians in these spaces are safeguarded.

What is the new wars thesis, and can it be useful when expounding the narco-terror nexus?

The theoretical foundation utilised in this study was the new wars thesis, discussed in chapter two of this research dissertation. The designation 'new wars' was used to define a new type of violence, that "can be contrasted with earlier wars in terms of their goals, the methods of warfare and how they are financed" (Kaldor, 2006: 6). The purpose of chapter two was to evaluate the new wars theory, engage with its principles, and operationalise and conceptualise some of the key concepts associated with new wars. Most importantly, this research needed to ascertain whether this theory could be useful as an analytical tool when studying the cases of narco-terror in Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa.

It has been determined that yes, the new wars thesis is very much useful as an analytical tool when studying the cases of narco-terror in Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa. Not only that, but the new wars thesis also has important implications for policy and

scholarship, because it advances the understanding of the dynamics of civil conflict and the economic and social variables of violent conflicts. Pertaining to scholarship, the new wars thesis has major implications for the selection of methodology of conflict analysis studies, the provision of new understandings into the security discourse, the usage of a historical narrative in conflict analysis, the integration of concepts such as ''socio-economic inequality, divided societies, human rights abuse, poverty, migration, economic disruptions, diaspora communities, and international commodity markets", and the call for the establishment of a multidisciplinary method to conflict analysis (Newman 2004: 186). Significant implications also await policymakers. The new wars thesis demands for a change of focus when it comes to non-traditional security threats, the reduction of poverty, policy design, effective local and international policing, post conflict peacebuilding, and international law.

The thesis, in terms of methodology, offers a solid empirical framework for examining the ''network of qualitative variables'' which shape modern violent conflicts. Additionally, because the new wars thesis challenged the traditional understanding of security−thus deepening and broadening scholars' comprehension of violent conflicts−new insights regarding the security discourse could be realised. Instead of concentrating exclusively on military threats, weapons, and national territory, the new wars thesis considered the economic and social facets of civil conflicts. The resulting implication for scholarship is that research cannot be restricted to the military dimensions of war. Thus, a significant implication of the new wars debate is that scholars cannot afford to limit their research to the military aspects of war. Instead, eminent dangers to human security such as infectious diseases, extreme poverty and starvation, violent crimes and other human rights violations, oppression by the state, and environmental disasters need to be explored to enrich their research quality. The new wars thesis also draws attention to the need for scholars to address the notion of horizontal inequalities. Because civil conflicts typically involve the clash between different social groups, it is essential to search for the motivation behind the conflict, in the differences between the clashing groups. Thus, it is crucial to explore the horizontal inequalities between these warring groups. Horizontal inequalities−unlike vertical inequalities−prioritises the dissimilarities between individuals and permits scholars to attain insights into the dimensions and nature of conflicts (Stewart

2000: 245). Most countries do not generate statistics on horizontal inequalities, as they are more interested in vertical inequalities, or because publishing data on horizontal inequalities might lead to social disturbances. Nonetheless, it is vital for scholars to amass data on horizontal inequalities, as this is "essential for identification of potential problems and possible solutions" (Østby, 2008:14).

Understanding the nature and subtleties of civil conflicts is vital for policy analysis. So too for the resolution, prevention, and prediction of armed conflicts. Academic research should relate to global policymakers and practitioners from the legal, intervention, and security fields. Confronting contemporary security threats such as the instabilities in Haiti, the civil conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Chad; Afghanistan and Darfur, necessitates developing comprehensive knowledge on the nature of violent conflict, and creating policies for political reform, poverty reduction, and economic stability. New wars literature demonstrates to policymakers that modern conflicts "does not resemble a Hobbesian state of nature" (Mueller 2000: 62). That is to say, that although reports from modern civil conflicts in Guatemala, Sudan, Yugoslavia, and Rwanda conjures images of war-of-all-against-all, the reality is that war is not the result of ethnic enmity or murderous hatred (Keen 2000: 6). Instead, as suggested by new wars literature, violent conflicts are often dictated by power-hungry warlords, armed thugs, corrupt governments, and paramilitary groups. The literature also suggests that ethnicity and religion are fundamentally used an organisation principle in organised violence.

During civil conflicts, the political identity of the victims, or perpetrators are not the main reason for the intensification of violence. Mueller (2000: 62) claims that political identity proves simply "to be simply the characteristic around which the perpetrators and the politicians who recruited and encouraged them, happened to array themselves." Therefore, one of the major implications of the new wars thesis is to enhance policy analysis, and to prompt policymakers to contemplate civil conflicts in terms of grievances and greed (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Understanding that civil conflicts are not the result of centuries of ethnic loathing, permits policymakers to create effective strategies for conflict resolution and prevention. Improved understanding of modern warfare, triggered by the new wars' thesis, brought about important implications for peacebuilding and

peacekeeping as well. At the start of the twenty-first century, the global community established the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, coining the term ''Responsibility to Protect''. This was the manifestation of the recognition that the "security of the community and the individual, not only the state, must be priorities for national and international policies" (ICRtoP, 2010). The international community, therefore, committed to fortify its abilities to combat civilian victimisation- an increasingly popular trademark of modern violent conflicts. Furthermore, new wars literature bettered the understanding of the role women play in civil conflicts.

Resolution 1325 of the United Nations formally recognised that women should play a more prominent role in conflict resolution and prevention, as women bear the brunt of most contemporary violent conflicts. Since the implementation of Resolution 1325 in 2001, India welcomed its first all-female peacekeeping unit, and Liberia made African history by electing the first female president. Another implication of the new war thesis is that policymakers must aim to make violent conflict less lucrative. The new war literature specifies that achieving financial power is an increasingly conspicuous and notorious goal of combatants involved in modern violent conflicts. Arguably, the conclusion of the Cold War and the triumph of capitalism over communism elevated economic self-interest to "a position of ideological hegemony" and created "a fertile climate for the world's most genuinely aggressive entrepreneurs" (Keen, 2000: 4).

> In what way does the narco-terror nexus manifest itself in Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa?

The central research question posited how the narco-terror nexus manifested in Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa. Colombia was chosen as a so-called 'benchmark' case because the majority of the countries' experiences with narco-terror took place during the FARC, ELN and Medellin-and Cali-Cartels', glory days. Afghanistan and West Africa served as contemporary and impending cases, respectively. This is because both cases are current and evolving.

Narco-terrorism in Colombia manifested in two distinct ways. The first was drug cartels−so-called 'Narcos'−who trafficked cocaine for profit and employed terrorist tactics in order to protect their businesses from rival cartels, the government, and any individual

or group who opposed them (Pécaut, 2001:101). The second way that narcotics and terrorism overlapped and manifested as narco-terror was when terrorist and insurgent groups such as the FARC, the UAC, and the ELM who were opposed to the government at the time, would use narcotics to fund their 'liberation' or 'revolutionary' struggle. This typically manifested in the groups cultivating and manufacturing the coca plant or taxing farmers for growing coca and using the proceeds to buy weaponry and other equipment deemed important by the groups (Global Security, 2016:2).

Prior to the US intervention, Colombia teetered on the brink of becoming a failed state, having been embroiled in conflict with paramilitary groups, drug cartels, and left-and right-wing rebel groups. These groups controlled extensive Colombian territory, and propagated terror wherever they traveled. The Colombian population was held hostage by wide-scale kidnappings, extortion schemes, bombings, and assassinations. The Colombian conflict also spread instability and violence to neighbouring Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela. Through Plan Colombia the Colombian and US governments aimed to bring an end to the Colombian drug trade, stopping guerilla and paramilitary groups, and eradicating coca grown for cocaine production. Colombia has had a long and difficult history with armed guerilla terrorist groups, drug cartels and extreme violence that threatened the very fabric of the country. The Colombian government, along with its regional and international counterparts have fought long and hard to secure peace and stability for its citizens and neighbouring countries. The American DEA agency and the Colombian government succeeded in ousting the Cali and Medellin cartels, assassinating, or incarcerating their leaders and members (Solano-Flórez, 2018).

Following decades of political unrest and violent terrorist attacks, the Colombian government and the FARC finally put an end to a fifty-two-year war in 2016. In addition, the government negotiated with another armed guerrilla group, the ELN, who too had perpetrated violence in Colombia for decades. These events led to former Colombian President Santos being bestowed the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 (Solano-Flórez, 2018).

In 2020 Colombia experienced its worst year-on-year change in the history of the Fragile States Index (FSI), ending their trend of almost continual improvement since the Index was first inducted. Over twenty-seven thousand Colombians have been displaced due to

the uprisings this year (Al Jazeera, 2021). The peace accord between the Colombian government and the FARC, signed in 2016, appear increasingly precarious, with the former rebel group, the Colombian public and the government losing faith in the process. Coca cultivation has rebounded, FARC membership is on the increase, and social leaders have been the target of increasing attacks (Fiertz, 2020). Although there were breakdowns in the implementation of the peace accord under the previous Santos administration, the agreement has quickly deteriorated under President Duque, who has been openly antagonistic towards it. The subsequent erosion of the peace accord has primarily been felt in five provinces in north and southwest Colombia (Fiertz, 2020).

Several former FARC members pronounced themselves as "dissidents" at the beginning of the peace deal process and took up arms yet again. A month after the peace accord was signed, numerous FARC members from the former Eastern Bloc began to rebuild their operation, returning to their territory in the Amazon and eastern plains which is situated along important trafficking routes to Brazil and Venezuela (Al Jazeera, 2021).

Large numbers of former FARC members left the peace process in subsequent years, numbering around three thousand in mid-2019, with a presence in thirty-two Colombian districts. Attempting to unify the rebels under one command, FARC's second-in-command-Iván Márquez- joined the "dissidents". His attempt failed however, as most of the members had largely abandoned their leftist ideology and the group had evolved into an organisation similar to traditional organized crime groups. Taking advantage of the Venezuelan collapse, the FARC's demobilisation, and the failure of the Colombian government, the ELN expanded its numbers from one thousand four hundred in 2017, to four thousand currently—morphing into a Colombian-Venezuelan revolutionary army hybrid (Al Jazeera, 2021).

Increased coca cultivation has been fueled by and has fueled the expansion of armed groups. According to statistics from the UN, coca cultivation declined greatly between 2012 and 2013. However, cultivation picked up in the ensuing years, snowballing to over two hundred and fifty percent between 2013 and 2018, which was the last year data on this was obtainable. Similarly, cocaine production experienced a notable decline in 2013, and then a rapid increase, reaching record highs (Acosta, 2020:1). Nearly eighty percent

of cultivation has been concentrated in Antioquia, Cauca, Nariño, Norte de Santander, and Putumayo. A key part of the peace accord was the coca substitution program (PNIS), which experienced initial success in slowing cultivation, with almost one hundred thousand families enrolled. Despite its early success, almost ninety thousand families have not received their full payment as promised by the program, and a further forty thousand have not received any form of payment. Moreover, the limited support for the program has been cut back by President Duque, to increase emphasis on forced eradication, in spite of this approach having a thirty-five percent replanting rate. Attempts to assist farmers in moving away from coca cultivation ignited retaliatory violence, that see armed groups competing to establish control over the regions and revenue streams left vacant following FARC's demobilisation (Meernik, 2019:325).

Human rights defenders, community activists, union organisers, and indigenous leaders have often been the targets of this violence. Between 2016 and 2019, almost nine hundred social leaders have been killed according to the Institute for Development and Peace Studies. The majority of these deaths occurred in the regions that the FARC had monopolised prior to the peace accord. Their demobilisation had left a security void that the Colombian government failed to fill. The five provinces where coca cultivation is the highest, is also the same provinces where the violence is the most acute. In 2019, during the leadup to local municipal elections, Colombia saw the highest rate of politicians murdered since 2015, after armed groups began expanding their targets to state representatives. Both the international community and the Colombian government are guilty of insufficiently funding the peace process, as well as having their focus distracted from the already fragile peace deal because they wanted to believe that the peace accord was the conclusion of the peace process, rather than the commencement of a new one. This meant that the improvements and gains achieved, were not institutionalized nor sustained (Fiertz, 2020).

Several ex-FARC members became convinced that the government would not honour its promises after President Duque, who was openly hostile towards several crucial elements of the peace deal, took office. The collapse of Venezuela gave rise to large ungoverned spaces and an abundance of potential recruits aiming to organize outside the control of

state authority. Thousands of former rebels returned to these lawless zones, either as the resurgent ELN or as a part of the FARC's successor groups. Violence, record cocaine production, and criminal entrepreneurship is progressively taking hold in various part of the country. There is however still time to salvage the peace process and curb the revitalisation of armed groups that have terrorised Colombia for decades. A dedicated effort by the Colombian government and its regional and international cohorts can place the country back on the path of peace that it was just so recently on (Fiertz, 2020).

Rebel group ELN, ex-members of the FARC guerrillas who reject a 2016 peace deal and criminal gangs formed by right-wing former paramilitaries are all involved in trafficking. "The Mexicans are the principal buyers of the supply of coca produced in Colombia," Rafael Guarin, presidential adviser for security told Reuters on Wednesday, referring to cocaine's base ingredient. "Fundamentally, the Mexicans take charge of the buying, trafficking and sale in the United States." The cartels field "emissaries and negotiators and also individuals who verify the quality of the narcotics," Guarin said, adding that drugs are moved through Venezuela, via the Pacific or northern Ecuador to reach the United States (Acosta, 2020:1).

The Sinaloa Cartel is the most active, Guarin said, and has alliances with the ELN, former FARC members and the Clan del Golfo crime gang. The Zetas have connections to the Los Pelusos crime gang, which controls trafficking along Colombia's border with Venezuela, while Jalisco Nueva Generacion buys from a group in Buenaventura on the Pacific. The Beltran Leyva cartel works with a gang in the southwestern province of Putumayo that also has connections to the Sinaloa cartel. Colombia had some 154,000 hectares (380,000 acres) of coca last year, according to the United Nations. It faces unrelenting pressure from the United States to reduce production, with President Ivan Duque pledging to eradicate some 130,000 hectares this year. "It's a very pragmatic relationship for the cartels, which buy from whoever will sell," Guarin said (Acosta, 2020:1).

In Afghanistan, the Narco-terror nexus manifested a little differently. Unlike Colombia, where the key players involved in narcotics trafficking could be easily identified, and were restricted to cartels, freedom fighting insurgent groups, and gangs− "a multitude of actors

are deeply involved in Afghanistan's opium poppy production, including the Taliban, all levels of the Afghan government, law enforcement, unofficial power brokers, and tribal elites" (Feldab-Brown, 2018:26). However, the key role player continues to be, and has always been, the Taliban. After being ousted by the US coalition forces in the early 2000s, the Taliban gradually made its comeback, slowly but surely reinserting itself back into rural Afghan communities. This was made possible by botched policies from the foreign forces that failed to implement its strategies appropriately, and alienated the local poppy farmers (Mansfield, 2019:301). The group made its profits by trafficking heroin, taxing farmers, and charging 'protection fees' to poppy cultivators whose farms were in danger from interdiction or manual spraying (Corr, 2017).

Throughout the last two decades the group continued to expand, capture territories, and re-established its presence as Afghanistan's largest insurgent group. Regardless of the Taliban's peace talks with the US, armed conflict persisted, injuring 3 822 civilians, and killing 2 177 during the period of 1 January until 30 September 2021. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reports that although these figures signified a thirty percent decline in civilian casualties compared to 2019 during the same period−the number of civilian casualties was almost the same. According to UNAMA the Taliban was accountable for forty-five percent of this aforementioned number (Amnesty International, 2021). Following the US withdrawal from Afghanistan at the end of August 2021, the Taliban succeeded in capturing the nation's capital, Kabul. The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan has had deadly consequences, undoing years of peace-and state building with thousands of internally displaced people (Al Jazeera, 2021). As stated above, the Afghanistan situation is still ongoing and evolving at a rapid pace.

West Africa too is a current and evolving case. The region has developed into an international hub for the trafficking of illegal narcotics from South America and Asia to clients in the Middle East, North America, and Europe. The narcotics vary from cocaine and heroin, to ATS's. Although illegal narcotics trafficking is not an uncommon phenomenon, cocaine and heroin trafficking-specifically-has experienced and exponential increase in the last decade (Africa Economic Development Institute, 2015). West Africa is particularly attractive, and thus vulnerable to TCOs for a multitude of

reasons. Chief among these are porous borders, corrupt government officials, and its geographical position between the European and South American continents.

Narco-terrorism in this region manifested in much the same way as in Afghanistan, with a multitude of actors involved in narcotics trafficking and extremism proliferating at an alarming rate (Edu-Afful, 2020:1). Terrorist groups collaborate with TCOs in a mutually beneficial relationship. Evidence suggests that the region, besides being a transit and trafficking hub, also has a growing drug manufacturing enterprise, and is branching out from just trafficking cocaine and heroin, to pharmaceutical grade drugs, such as tramadol. The group with the largest scope and influence in the region is Hezbollah who has been active in Africa since the 1980s (Alamuddin, 2021:1). The group leverages its ties to the Middle East and Lebanese diaspora to run its narco-terror enterprise. Boko Haram and AQIM have also been linked to trafficking narcotics and charging protection fees to TCOs and DTOs on their smuggling routes (Le Cam, 2016:1). The insecurity in the region was not curbed during the COVID-19 pandemic. On the contrary, extremists' groups had more opportunity to undermine weakened governments, recruit new supporters, and launch deadly attacks (Edu-Afful, 2020:1).Ultimately, beside access to localised smuggling routes and information pertaining to local markets, the main incentive for the narco-terror nexus is tangible resources.

6.2   Recommendations

It is important to make use of the new wars thesis when developing policies to address modern violent conflicts. Often, policy analysis lacks an emphasis on non-state actors, such as rebel and paramilitary groups, since the majority of the global community share a bias toward national militaries and legitimate actors (Jones & Cater, 2001: 238). It is essential for policymakers to "draw a number of analytic distinctions that establish a rough typology of the highly diverse types of militias" (Jones & Cater, 2001: 238). Such typology provides the basis for the creation of effective policies which prevents armed conflict and restricts the formation of militias. Practitioners in the security and humanitarian intervention fields are prompted to consider civil conflicts in terms of insurgencies and guerilla wars, thanks to the new wars' thesis (Fearon & Laitin, 2003: 75).

Narcotics trafficking and terrorism cannot be fought separately. As seen in chapter three, four, and five−the majority of counterterrorism and anti-narcotics strategies are focused on strong-arming extremist groups, and much of the budgetary expenditure goes towards weaponry and *physical* combat mechanisms. Although these are extremely important in the interim to stave off extremist groups, the threat will continue indefinitely if the underlying issues are not addressed. Issues such as inequality, ethnic; religious; racial, or tribal tensions, widespread poverty, corruption, and unemployment need to be tackled in order for extremist groups to not have a base of support. Terrorist groups usually recruit from the disenfranchised, the oppressed, and the disadvantaged. If these socio-economic issues are addressed, the political aspect will inadvertently be addressed as well. Thus, more realistic policies need to be developed. The goal should be to achieve long-term socio-economic and political development. Opium and cocaine bans and forced eradication do not restrict poppy or coca cultivation. In fact, it only succeeds in alienating the farming communities and causing exponential growth in the long run. As seen in Afghanistan, if the proposed alternative livelihood programs are not implemented effectively, farmers are more than likely to return to their original poppy 'cash' crops. Until small farming communities have sustainable and feasible alternatives for income, bans and eradication plans should not be implemented so strictly. The majority of counternarcotic policies focus on the supply side of drugs. More attention needs to be given to rehabilitation services, and other practices that assist drug users in redressing their habits. Especially in consumer countries. It would be much easier to curb the supply if the demand was not so high-no pun intended.

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