BEYOND THE ORGANIZED CRIME: THE REFORMULATION OF THE INSURGENCY CONCEPT AND ITS IMPACT ON THE SOUTH AMERICA’S STRATEGIC SURROUNDINGS

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The organized crime in Latin America and the reformulation of the concept of insurgency

In terms of security, Latin America shows a scenario that presents itself as a contradiction, depending on the eyes which analyze it. Based on a traditional point of view, of Westphalian roots, in which the security questions are centered on interstate dialectics and express themselves as military codes, the hemisphere reality is truly exceptional. Nonetheless, the situation is much less pleasing when we analyze it through non-conventional terms.

From that traditional point of view, the installation and consolidation of democratic regimes all over the region allowed the majority of the everlasting territorial disputes, concrete casus belli, to be solved through diplomatic ways. Along this process, many Security and Trust Construction Measures (CSBM, initials in Spanish) of different types made contributions to the transformation of old trustless bilateral relations in cooperation ties and common integration initiatives.

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In this context, it is important to point out the progress registered in South America, region that describes itself as a Peace Zone, in reference to a geographic area where the state members share the same values (including democracy, among others) and compromise them not to compete in terms of *realpolitik* ². This position was officially adopted on the mid-2002, at the Second Presidential Meeting of the region, organized in Guayaquil, respecting the principles of the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OEA, initials in Spanish), taking as predecessors multilateral protocols celebrated by the Andean Community of Nations (CAN, initials in Spanish) and the Common Market of the Conesur (MERCOSUR, initials in Spanish).

It’s fair to highlight that this scenario was dramatically changed by the crisis that happened in March 1st 2008, when Colombia put in practice the joint military operation “Fénix” against a camping of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC, initials in Spanish) located in Angostura, a place of the Ecuadorian north, close to the common boundary. This incident started a difficult stage of the relations between Colombia, Ecuador and mainly Venezuela that lasted for about two years. From Casa de Nariño, the Bolivarian regime was accused many times of collaboration with the FARC, while Venezuela accused Colombia of a warmonger act when the latter authorized the USA to use some of its military bases.

Even though it shows great gravity, the mentioned crisis had a positive consequence: the constitution of the South American Defense Council (CDS, initials in Spanish), the first institution of multilateral security created in the region throughout its history. At a meeting celebrated in Lima the May 2011, the council rectified the progress made in Guayaquil almost a decade before, confirming the Peace Zone nature to South America.

Against the positions sustained by orthodox realist perspectives that emphasize the balance of power, this situation is not changed by the notable growth of the budget spent on the military inventory of the region over the last few years, mainly linked up to the expenditures of Brazil, Colombia, Chile and

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Venezuela. In this geographic space we cannot observe arms races and the spending in this sector are inferior to 2% of its GDP, the smallest of the world in relative terms. Of course there is a “security dilemma” on the relations between Chile and Peru, but both OEA through its XL General Assembly (June 2010) and CDS from its Extraordinary Meeting November 2011 had assumed the responsibility of drawing mechanisms of making the arms expenditures more transparent and avoid this kind of perceptions.

The positive scenario of security that is described in the previous paragraphs coexists with a much more complicated situation in terms of non-conventional threats to security, an outlook in which the hemisphere loses its relatives advantages to integrate an unstable and volatile global board, with high levels of uncertainty.

The non-conventional threats to security spot just three regular aspects: their protagonists are non-state actors; the use of violence as a rational political tool is not always used and, when it’s the case, it is out of the traditional formats associated with the Clausewitzian logic, introducing itself into what is commonly known as asymmetry. Besides these elements, this realm is known for its heterogeneity, incremented by different processes of securization, resulting in a situation that was symbolically defined as “strategic uncertainty”, or “globalization of fear”. Namely, a permanent perception of insecurity that reaches every individual, without allowing them to ignore it, in which the dangers and threats don’t feature a clear source nor territorial and political limits for their actions.

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3 In a situation of this kind, the decisions made by a nation through its sovereign exercise of the right to retain the means it thinks are necessary to feel secure unintentionally cause insecurity in its neighbor states; in other words, the “search for security” that leads these actors is interpreted by the rest as a simple “search for power”.

4 From a constructivist perspective, the “securization” is a discursive and political process in which a political community decides to treat something as a threat towards a valued object of reference, allowing the adoption of urgent and exceptional measures to respond that threat.

Inside the non-conventional security agenda the transnational threats insert themselves and their dynamics – as with any process of this nature – transcend the possibilities of a state reaching two or more political actors of the kind. These phenomena are also denominated as “new threats”, a wrong idea that leads to confusion because, with one or another exception associated to the cybernetic question, such events are not new in the global arena; in any case, they differ from older times in some characteristics and also have changed the importance acquired in the external agenda of the states.

A closed list of transnational threats does not exist in the scope of International Security, or a hierarchy showing their different grades of importance. Things are like that because the surroundings of these phenomena are diffuse, people use different focuses to analyze them, and their gravity varies according to space and temporal criteria. Either way, it is necessary to try to do some basic identification because, quoting the Spanish intellectual Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, “naming what hurts us help us to protect ourselves”6. To that effect, among the transnational threats’ inventory of Latin America the organized crime, through different labels, can be highlighted.

It is common to link directly the criminal question (mainly when related to expansion, growth and depth of its action) to governance, which deterioration beyond reasonable levels may concede space to a erosion of the state capacity of exercising authority over all the territory and monopolize the use of violence in an effective way. The logic of this link is that in a process as described above, a symptom of a state “weakening”7, the loss of control over geographic spaces increasingly bigger makes them attractive to organizations tied to criminality and also terrorism that can start their activities from these places.

Concerning the organized crime, Latin America finds itself completely inserted in global schemes of this transnational threat which dimensions are truly enormous: on the final document of the Latin American Commission on

6 Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, foreword to “Notas sobre globalizadores y globalizados”, in Geopolítica Del Caos, multiple authors. (Barcelona: Le Monde Diplomatique/Temas de Debate, 1999), 15.
Drugs and Democracy, created by three ex-presidents of the region, one can identify four different characteristics of the Latin American organized crime: (i) its quantitative growth, both through international traffic and control of domestic markets by competing groups; (ii) the growth of violence, reaching every sector of society; (iii) the proliferation of links with the political realm and the proliferation within democratic institutions; finally, (iv) the corruption of public employees, especially members of the security groupings and policemen.

According to data from OAS, the criminal violence in Latin America has a “pandemic” character and costs to the Latin Americans more than US$ 16bi per year; on the other hand, the region has just 8% of the world population and almost 70% of extortive kidnappings that occur every year. In line with evaluations made by a NGO specialized in urban violence, 24 of the 25 most violent cities of the world are Latin American, being the only exception the North American city of New Orleans holding the 21st place. The list is headed by the Honduran city of San Pedro Sula, with a homicide rate bigger than 159 cases for every 100 thousand inhabitants (159/00000), followed by Ciudad Juárez in Mexico with 148/00000.

Some authors talk about the “five wars of globalization” in reference to the identical quantity of predominant expressions of the organized crime.

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10 The report also points out that five out of the ten more violent cities of the world are located in Mexico; 45 out of the 50 most violent cities are located in America, of which 40 are located in Latin America; the most violent sub-national jurisdiction is located in Honduras and three of the ten most violent sub-national jurisdictions are Hondurans; and 19 out of the 50 most violent sub-national jurisdictions are located in Mexico or Central America. For more data, see: Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y la Justicia Penal, Metodología del ranking (2011) de las 50 ciudades y las 50 jurisdicciones subnacionales más violentas del mundo. (México DF: CCSP, 2012)
11 According to some sources, the real homicide rate of Ciudad Juárez is much bigger than the data indicated by official organisms, and in fact it would be the biggest of the world: 191 cases out of 100 thousand inhabitants. See: “Criminalidad y violencia en América Latina iniciando la segunda década del Siglo XXI”, Informes Del GERIUP (January 11th 2012).
nowadays: the illegal traffic of drugs, armaments, people, intellectual property and money\textsuperscript{12}. The first three have been denominated “transboundary transactions of high value” by a specialist on the subject\textsuperscript{13}, a concept that we don’t share because of the variation of the “value” of a illegal transboudary transaction according to the place and the moment that it occurs, not being convenient to limit it to just three types of traffic.

In Latin America one can find these five manifestations of criminality, along with other ones such as the contraband of the most diverse goods, or the traffic of fauna, biodiversity and gemstones. But these types are not present with the same intensity. Clearly the drugs’ traffic and production and also the traffic of small arms and light weapons stand out because of their gravity. The key value that these features represent inside the map of Latin American organized crime is also proven by an exhaustive survey made by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which focused on five specific illegal transnational flows: cocaine, heroin, small arms and light weapons, migration and human traffic\textsuperscript{14}.

Concerning the weapon traffic, according to data presented some years ago by the non-governmental entity Oxfam, there are almost 700 million light weapons all around the world, representing nearly one weapon for each ten inhabitants. About 60% of these arms are in hands of civil people, while a fourth part of them is sold in illegal markets or smuggled, which means these weapons end in possession of offenders, insurgent groups or criminals\textsuperscript{15}. Based on this data, one can suppose that Latin America concentrates about a half of the illegal weapons in circulation in the world, if the numbers estimated by the


\textsuperscript{13}The concept is related to Moisés Naím and was taken out from: Ivan Briscoe, “Crimen y drogas en los Estados frágiles”, \textit{Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE)}, 20 de julio de 2007, http://www.fride.org/publicacion/151/crimen-y-drogas-en-los-estados-fragiles


\textsuperscript{15}These data were concluded at the UN Conference on Traffic of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), which occurred in New York between June and July 2006. The event allowed this problem, responsible for the majority of the deaths by armed violence in the world, to be known in a detailed and updated way.
Defense Information Center (DIC) from Washington, which calculate them as more than 80 million, are taken in account16.

Regarding the drugs problem, South America plays an important role: without accounting marginal amounts of heroin and cannabis, the subcontinent is responsible for the total of the cocaine produced globally. In its last annual report, the UNODC stated that the area dedicated to illegal culturing of this drug hung around the 153,7 thousand hectares in 2011, which 64 thousand, or 41.6% of the global amount, are located in Colombia; 62.5 thousand (40.7%) in Peru; and 27.2 thousand in Bolivia (17.7%).

The cocaine produced in these three Andean countries is the tip of an iceberg with global dimensions. The illegal culture of the coca leaf; its transport through different ways, racking and storage; its sales to giant distributors and posterior commercialization to consumers; the payment of protection services to ensure each one of these phases; and the corruption of public employees configure together a multimillionaire business. Just considering that the coca croppers, peasants with few resources and low level of education, can receive between US$ 300 and US$ 500 for the number of leaves necessary to produce a kilogram of cocaine is enough. This cocaine, when leaves Colombia, costs about one thousand dollars, in Guatemala it is cataloged costing US$ 13,000, in the USA its value reaches the US$ 30,000 and, when it goes to Europe, the price can hit more than US$ 160,00017. Even though one cannot affirm precisely the amount of money of these illegal processes, UNODC calculates the annual total as something between US$ 75bi and US$100bi18.

Beyond the South American framework, even though the importance of Europe as a consumer market of the Andean cocaine is notably growing, doubling its share in the last few years, the USA still holds the first spot, hoarding up 36% of the global production, or 157 tons. The long path roam by the South American cocaine to reach its main market helps us to understand a great part of the violence observed in other parts of the hemisphere, once it

17 “La Conferencia Internacional de Apoyo a la Estrategia de Seguridad de Centroamérica”, Informes del GERIUP (June 29th 2011)
crosses the isthmus and Mexico when travels northbound. It is estimated that more than 80% of the cocaine that passes through Mexican and Central American lands tend to make it through the North American market, with the other 20% planning an insertion into the European market.

In Central America, the cocaine traffic from the Andean countries involves, on its path to the North American market, both Mexican cartels (such as *infra*) and local gangs, which account more than 70 thousand members. This way, a truly severe deterioration of the security conditions of the region is helped out, which, according to the World Bank, diminishes the hopes for peace and stability that followed the resolutions of the civil wars\(^\text{19}\). According to the first World Report on Homicides, presented last year by the UNODC, the Caribbean and the Central America are the only two regions of the world where the number of homicides has increased when compared to 1995. In fact, with 6.2 thousand assassinations and a population of 7.7mi (murder rate of 82/00000), Honduras is the most violence country of the planet, followed by El Salvador with four thousand homicides and a population of 6.1mi inhabitants\(^\text{20}\).

Endorsing this quantitative data, Douglas Fraser, chief of the North American South Command, has declared in the beginning of last year (2011) that the Central American area “probably has become the more ‘deadliest’ zone of the planet, aside Iraq and Afghanistan”\(^\text{21}\). Validating this overwhelming appreciation, the homicide taxes of some cities of this region, such as the Honduran city of San Pedro Sula, located in the north of the country, are equal to the ones registered in Mogadishu (Somalia) or the Afghan location of Kandahar.

A similar situation is noted in Mexico, where the protagonist status of drug traffic aiming USA is shared by six big cartels that work in the Aztec territory (one from *Sinaloa*, one from *Ciudad Juárez*, other from *Tijuana*, one from the Mexican Gulf, the *Familia Michoacana* – almost disappearing


nowadays – and Los Zetas), complemented by many other less-known but equally important groups (among them: La Línea, Los Aztecas, Los Mexicas and Los Caballeros Templarios). According to the well-known specialist Eduardo Buscaglia, the Mexican criminal groups are today the third most important in the world, behind the Russian mafia and the Chinese triad, and ahead of the Italian mafia and the Colombian cartels22.

As shown by official statistics of the Attorney General of the Republic of Mexico (PGR, initials in Spanish), in just a lustrum, since Felipe Calderón took office as President of Mexico in the end of 2006 until similar moment of 2011, the violence associated to the organized crime produced almost 50 thousand deaths, number to which must me added something around 1.5 mi of displaced people and 5.4 thousand people reported as missing by the National Commission on Human Rights. The non-official numbers raise the quantity of homicides to more than 60 thousand, according to the following progression: in the last month of 2006, 62 deaths; 2826 in 2007; 6837 in 2008; 19546 in 2010; and 20646 in 201123.

From the more than 60 thousand deaths caused by criminality, 80 per cent is concentrated in just a dozen of the 32 Mexican states. The first place is held by Chihuahua, with 12.7 thousand assassinations, the majority in Ciudad Juárez, which disputes the dramatic role of the most violent city of the world. The Chihuahua State Commission on Human Rights has documented 12 thousand orphan children in this boundary city and more than 120 thousand displaced people because of the violence. The second place is occupied by Sinaloa, with seven thousand deaths, and in third place Guerrero, with 5.1 thousand24.

In through this wave of criminal violence that characterized the presidential tenure of Calderón, probably the most critical episode was registered in August 2011, when Los Zetas was the main character of an

22 Buscaglia is an expert recognized by the United Nations, is a Professor at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) and directs the International Law and Economic Development Center.
explosive attempt killed 60 people in a Monterrey casino when of daylight. The words expressed in that moment by the Mexican Executive Power reflected the dimension of these events:

“It is evident that we are not facing common criminals. We are in front of truly terrorists that have got over us not only within the limits of the law, but also within the common element sense of respect for life”.

The “Conflicts Barometer” that is elaborated by the Heidelberg University provides an eloquent example of the current perceptions on some academic center of the so-called First World about the gravity of the Mexican case. In the year of 2010 the German institution had already included Mexico in the group of the six most dangerous countries of the planet, with levels of violence only comparable to the ones from Somalia, Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. In a scale from 1 to 5, Mexico was credited the maximum rate, which means “war”. It means, according to the analysis, that the country lives “a conflict in which the violent use of force happens in an organized and systematic way, and in which the destruction is massive and of large duration”.

Along the described context, the versions that highlighted the severe problems of governance that the criminal organizations cause to the Mexican State have become stronger again to gamble with its “fault” in the medium term, if the conditions are not reverted. It is useful to remember that this kind of interpretation has started in the beginning of the year of 2009 in the USA, when its Department of Defense qualified Mexico as a “Failed State” along with Pakistan; shortly after, a top official of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has commented that a possible collapse at the south of the border was among the main security problems of the institution.

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The Calderón Government has permanently denied this accusation arguing – from our point of view correctly – that in Mexico clear losses of control of geographic areas to non-state challengers, a key characteristic of a “Failed State”, are yet to be registered. Neither the institutional perspective proportionate a solid argument to the idea of “failing” once the failure would be limited to just a small part of the federal structure; in fact, the ones related to security, intelligence, police and justice activities²⁷.

Nonetheless, disturbing territorial progress by the criminal gangs are being registered recently, typified as symptoms of an incipient refeudalization that destroy what was gained in the Revolution with its counterpart of disarmament and demobilization of irregular groups²⁸. Even though large geographic areas taken away from the State in a traditional way are yet to be detected, an investigation leaded by the Senate few years ago proved that the cartels completely controlled (through corruption and cooptation of officials) around 195 town halls and had direct influence over another 1536, which totaled 71% of the 2439 Mexican cities.

Certain areas, particularly relevant for the illegal traffic because of their proximity to the North American territory, have seen the multiplied presence of criminal groups, which face long and fierce battles for their control.

Watching these progresses, the hypothesis of a state failure has returned to be part of the thought of many experts, both national and international, with a novelty: the supposed existence of an insurgency is now integrating the analysis. North American officials can be found among the ones who agree with this point of view, despite the White House officially classifying the Mexican organizations as transnational criminals²⁹.

It was the case of Richard Lugar, the best ranked Republican in the Foreign Relations Commission of the Senate and one of the most influent members of the Capitol, when he declared that the violence associated to the organized crime in Mexico had acquired characteristics of a “drug insurgency” because the cartels try to limit the government control in some parts of the

²⁸ Raúl Benítez Manaut, op. cit.
country, convincing the population that the military offensive and the political reforms of President Calderón are futile and, therefore, the reason of the violence spiral.

Starring the first reference on importance of the Mexican drug insurgency, Lugar has emphasized the increasing infrastructure of the Azteca cartels in USA, including distribution networks, safe houses and money laundering operations. In these terms, he has sustained that the problem has direct influence on the national security of his country and thus has demanded the use of the Armed Forces and the intelligence community to the Obama administration so that more active vigilance could be offered to help stopping the illegal transnational trafficking from Mexico. In this sense, has proposed “deploying airplanes, surveillance and joint intelligence goods” and “adapting the tactics to face the cartel changing menaces”.

Because of these moments, the aforementioned Buscaglia has contributed to this question stating the Mexican organized criminality is already part of the State, being present in different areas of its. Textually: “When we speak that the Mexican State has fragmented itself in its debility, we want to say that different fragments of the Mexican State in a municipal or provincial level already form part of the structure of the organized crime”. This expert has gone beyond the conventional classifications to postulate, based on these local or regional fragments, an incipient “Afghanization” of the State; namely, its absence in almost a thousand of regional areas in which the criminal cartels have shaken or captured the municipal governments to therefore continue their illegal business. The analogy with the Afghan situation progress until the point of typifying the Mexican criminal gangs as “insurgent mafia”, because they face the State in equal terms and carry out complex operations similar to the ones accomplished by the Taliban to ambush North American or Allied troops.

Almost two years after the appreciation made by Lugar, this vision continued to enjoy validation and the second civil mandatory of the North American Army, Joseph Westphal, alleged that the criminal insurgents could

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31 “Cárteles controlan casi mil territorios del país, dice experto”, Informador (June 27th, 2010).
end controlling Mexico. At the same time, the proposal of employing new arms and tactics to face the cartels made by the veteran Senator reigned in purlieto villages next to the south border, where the local police demanded to the political authorities: armored vehicles; communicational military teams; M-16, M-14 automatic weapons and grenade launchers; unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs); and the corresponding trainings, including combat tactics.

According to the Texas Public Security director, who has reported in a number of occasions to the Congress, the growth and complexity of the Mexican cartels activities near the common border are the causes of the police demands, which many times are satisfied by donations from the Defense Department32.

The North American academy also formulated interpretations on the organized criminality in terms of insurgency. The independent think tank Center for a New American Security (CNAS) published a dossier entitled “Criminal Wars: Gangs, Cartels and North American National Security” two years ago. In its content, they indicate that the organized crime “metastasizes in a new organized criminal insurgency” that menaces the governments and civil societies of the Western Hemisphere and, more and more, the USA33.

One of the authors of the aforementioned dossier sustained that into the criminal insurgencies the search for earnings (economic) occupy the place that in other circumstances correspond to the ideology, religion or ethnic group. He added that this recent phenomenon erodes and punches the political institutions and the societies of democratic States through corruption and violence, pursuing the establishment of geographic areas where then can develop their activities in an unstoppable way.

Concerning the USA, source of these new approaches, it seems that these Mexican criminal insurgencies represent a real menace to the North American welfare, although the growth and consolidation of these non-state actors foreshadow them as potential direct menaces to the national security of the superpower. This idea is sustained as follows:

“The Mexican cartels operate psychological operations, foment the antigovernment protests, attack both the police and the Armed Forces through infantry assaults, assassinate politicians and journalists, decapitate their victims to amplify the strategic impact of their attacks, co-opt and corrupt military men, policemen and public officials at all levels of government. The result is an extreme banditry and a group of criminal insurgents that are interconnected, resulting in a virtual civil war. In consequence, some Mexican cartels have combined high levels of violence, symbols and religious rituals, and political action to consolidate their control over the huge business that they intend to master. They also look for the legitimate of the community, cultivation the popular perception that they are protectors of the society”34.

In this area, the most recent conceptual contribution belongs to Ioan Grillo, specialist in studies on the Mexican and Central American criminality. From his perspective, what defines Mexican organized crime as a case of criminal insurgency is the will of the protagonists to face the State through a type of armed rebellion that doesn’t sustain itself on any kind of ideology thinking. So, despite the influence of ideological factors, the Mexican criminality is at the same time a political and paramilitary phenomenon. Political because of its decision to face the State forces in order to preserve the preservation of its businesses; paramilitary because of the well-armed and very specialized armies that are formed to accomplish the previous objective.

From this British reporter’s point of view, the evolution of the Mexican organized crime until the present insurgency stage recognizes the year of 2006 as a critical point. This year these groups have started to apply violence systematically and to fight for the control of territory through the use of tactics to spread terror, as it has in Central America some decades before. There is a transformation from a classic “war for drugs” to a new “war for feoffs” (the idea of refedualism stated before by Benítez Manaut) financed by the drugs; the difference, albeit slight, is really important. Textually:

“The motivations of the gangsters define in many aspects what they really are. If they kill civilians deliberately and on purpose, they behave as terrorists. If what they look after is to hold the monopoly of the use of violence in certain territory, they behave like warlords. And if they are fighting a total war against the central government, many would allege that they are rebels or insurgents”35.

The aforementioned readings, elaborated by Lugar, Buscaglia, the CNAS and Grillo, have a great significance since they deconstruct and redefine the concept of insurgency. Beyond its different approaches, it has traditionally been understood as “the prolonged use of low intensity violence to nullify or force a fundamental change on the political system or its status quo”36. On the other hand, the North American Department of Defense makes reference to “the organized use of subversion and violence by a group or movement that seeks the removal of a governing authority or to force its change”37. A third interpretation understands the insurgent movements as “an organic group of men who rise against the established order and which objectives are embodied on basic documents”38. In this last case, the armed warfare is the way through which the rising is canalized, despite the non-explicit mention.

Whatever the definitions that were just described, the insurgency (like the terrorism) remains attached to the political violence sphere, understood as that violence that comes from organized agents that look to change, substitute or destabilize the current State institutionalization39.

This deconstruction and redefinition, mainly of North American precedence, has not been able to conquer the adhesion of Mexican experts. From their point of view, even when the local criminal groups increasingly

36 Here is used the simplified definition of: Steven Metz, The Future of Insurgency. (Carlisle Barracs: USAWC, Strategic Studies Institute, 2012)
appeal to terrorist tactics, they cannot be named this way neither as insurgents because of a myriad of motivations, including the following three: (i) the criminality lack the type of wanting that characterizes the insurgency groups, that use to attach themselves to some kind of collective identity, have a political content and include some government program; consequently (ii) the criminal gangs do not have a symbolic representation as defendants of the people; last (iii) the insurgencies might (and have to) be considered as valid interlocutors for the State in the frame of a political negotiation that tend to solve intrastate armed conflicts, a thing that does not happen with criminality40.

Deepening the subject, although there are a great number of works that approach the interaction between political violence (insurgencies or terrorism) and organized crime, these lectures usually defend that in this nexus the first type is the one which might venture criminal activities and not the other way round. It can be mentioned two different analytical approaches to the dynamics that are established between the parts, the first suggesting that the relation must start from a specific necessity of the insurgent or terrorist, which might be related to financing or equipment; examples would be the engagement with drug trafficking or the incursion to the weapons commercialization business, respectively.

Some organizational and operational characteristics that are shared between the political violence and the criminality ease the described process, including the rationality; the secret action; the challenge to the State and its laws; the asymmetric use of violence; and the innovation and adaptation capabilities. Nonetheless, the terrorists or insurgents have never abjured the political points of their goals, or forsworn publicizing and diffusing their actions, while the criminal organizations act depending on economic reasons and pursue keeping the anonymity41.

The alternative analytical approach, which does complement the last one, proposes that although the organized crime and the political violence are different phenomena, the increasing interaction between them may make room for a situation of “motivational convergence”. In this process of progressive convergence, the resulting surplus of the criminal activities might be able to build the goal of all insurgent or terrorist organizations, or at least part of them, though they don’t abdicate their political flags in order to maintain their legitimacy before the eyes of their retinues or sympathizers.

Concrete examples of this second approach would be the Afghan taleban and the aforementioned Colombian FARC. In both cases the groups, in a specific moment of their histories, start to collect taxes first from the peasants engaged to the drug trafficking business, later expanding it to the processing and commercialization activities. The last stage of this process of growing engagement would be the above organizations posing themselves as narcotic dealers42.

From the vision of Makarenko, the referred motivational convergence is explained by a “rebellion-crime nexus” that adopts the form of a continuous, with the criminality on an extreme of the spectrum and the insurgency on the other one, and the two of them are considered different phenomena. In between the two extremes, are presented the different possibilities of interaction (Frame number one)43.

In front of this panorama, the true importance of the redefinition of the insurgency concept by Lugar, the CNAS and Grillo is located on the privation of its traditional political connotation, emphasizing its most clear effect, weaken or stop the functions of a government, especially its control over certain territorial spaces, independently of its main goal44. In the completely opposite direction of the traditional writings, it is not watched here the incursion of insurgent organizations to the criminality field, but just the contrary.

Frame number one: Rebellion-crime nexus.

The South American scenario opposite the new focus on Insurgency

An approach on the present South American scenario in terms of insurgency, from a traditional perspective of this concept, has been limited to two residual cases of other times and at the same time true remnants of the Cold War: on one side, the FARC in their own country; on the other, the Sendero Luminoso (SL) in Peru. Both organizations have started to enter the criminality field a long time ago, progressively denaturing themselves to the point of being normally typified in the crime scope.

Concerning the FARC, their turning point in direction of the organized crime has started in the beginning of the 1990’s, with the frame being a reorientation generated by the death of their leader, Jacobo Arenas, who used to maintain the ideological and doctrinal purity of the organization. This process was marked by a profound reorganization of the Colombian criminality scenario, originated by the loss and breakup of the mythical drug trafficking cartels in Cali and Medellín. In the mid of the decade the country’s Justice has acted in accordance to this change and has emitted almost fifty arrest warrants against hierarchs and intermediaries of the group for drug trafficking. The list included the founder and maximum chief of the organization, Manuel Marulanda Vélez (aka “Tirofijo”), besides Luis Edgar Devia (“Raúl Reyes”), Luciano Marín (“Iván Márquez”), Guillermo Sánchez Vargas (“Alfonso Cano”), and Jorge Briceño Suárez (“Mono Jojoy”).

It has been said of the FARC that in other times they used to be an ideological insurgency, but they have soon become a “criminal bunch of drug dealers with brutal expressions of contra productive terrorism”. Broadening this idea, the Salvadoran Joaquín Villalobos has said: “They have started extorting drug dealers and ended being the owners of the biggest cocaine production of the world. They have wandered from a political Latin America guerrilla to the
first irregular army of the drug traffic”\textsuperscript{45}. The remarkable of this last phrase is that it was not emitted by a Colombian official, but by an old leader of the \textit{Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front} (FMLN), unhappy with the change of the organization towards the criminal activities.

There are plenty of evidences on the levels of complexity and transnationality that the criminal actions of the FARC have reached. These constancies have dramatically increased since the information obtained from the personal computers of Raúl Reyes, found in the Angostura camps, where this insurgent chief was killed during the \textit{Operación Fénix} that was mentioned in the initial part of this paper\textsuperscript{46}.

In this sense, can also be mentioned the ties with criminal groups of Brazil; the arms trafficking in Peru, where else they are able to coordinate actions with \textit{Sendero Luminoso}, cultivate coca in the Amazonian territory and forcibly recruit indigenes; the installation of sanctuaries in Ecuador and Venezuela; the legalization of actives precedents from Costa Rica or other Central American nations; in Mexico, the link with criminal cartels and the \textit{Popular Revolutionary Army} (EPR, initials in Spanish); the execution of extortive kidnappings in Paraguay, jointly operating with the \textit{Patria Libre} party; the ties with the Basque separatist organization ETA and the Ireland Republican Army (IRA); the contacts with the recently defeated Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, looking for the acquisition of antiaircraft missiles; the significant net of European NGOs that back them and promote their ideals (the official ones, not the criminals, of course); and the support of the Latin American political forces centered on the Bolivarian Continental Movement (CCB, initials in Spanish).


\textsuperscript{46} We find the reports emitted by the Colombian government concerning the information from the personal computers of Raúl Reyes faithful, and also consider reliable the verification made by INTERPOL, which details are open to public. See: OIPC-INTERPOL, \textit{Informe forense de Interpol sobre los ordenadores y equipos informáticos de las FARC decomisados por Colombia}. (Lyon: OIPC-INTERPOL, 2008)
In the past four years the FARC have suffered the worst losses of their entire history. In February 2008 their founder and leader “Tirofijo” has died; in March Raúl Reyes and Iván Ríos had the same destiny, finalized by their own bodyguard; “Mono Jojoy” was killed in September 2010 and Alfonso Cano in October 2011. Concerning Nelly Ávila Moreno (“Karina”), the maximum female chief of the group, she has surrendered in May 2008 in undernourishment state so she could make a public claim to her old comrades to put their guns down and reintegrate society. One must add to these misfortunes the Operación Jaque, which has rescued ten refugees of the group, including the political director and ex-presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, in the mid of the year of 2008. Throughout the whole process, thousands of insurgents have deserted from the organization, which has lost the required capacity to make big operations and had to be satisfied with isolated and sporadic assaults.

In the end of the previous year (2011), the Colombian Armed Forces Command has estimated that the FARC ranks had no more than nine thousand active personnel, number that supposed a reduction of 50 percent in the body of the organization when compared to the situation of eight or nine years ago. In this context, analyses speculating the definite defeat of this group in the short run, or at least the acceptance of negotiations with the government, a clear sign of fragility, have started to crop up.

Precisely, some delegations sent by the Colombian government and the FARC have gone through some really secret exploratory dialogues in Cuba between February and August 2012, which have resulted the signature of an accord in Oslo through which public and official negotiations were inaugurate.

Concerning Sendero, this armed group has emerged with a Maoist stamp in the beginnings of the 80’s and was appointed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Peru as the responsible for more than a half of the seventy thousand fatal victims that the internal war which occurred in the last two decades of the 20th century has left. As soon as the main leaders of the

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47 “FARC están reducidas al 50% frente a hace 8 años”, ABC (Asunción), December 18, 2011.
48 See for example: Eduardo Posada Carbo, “¿El fin de las FARC?”, Infolatam, November 06, 2011.
49 SL was created with a clear Maoist philosophy in the end of the 1960s by the Professor Abimael Guzmán and has always claimed the title of ‘Communist Party of Peru’. It has been aiming to change the existing institutions for a communist, peasant and revolutionary regime. In the 1970s it has achieved
organization were jailed, the organization was virtually disarticulated, but since a little more than a decade ago remaining people have started to act in the Valley of the Apurímac and Ene Rivers forest zone (VRAE, initials in Spanish). This residual senderism has been linked more and more to the drug trafficking business, obtaining this way the funds to sustain its operations and acquire armament.

In the frame of this criminalization process, the senderistas evolved from the protection of the drug that was transferred out of this zone of the Department of Ayacucho, to the direct participation in the seeding of the coca leaf, its harvest and posterior transformation in cocaine hydrochloride. Few years ago a dossier made by the Ministry of Defense has affirmed that the SL behaves “like an enterprise more dedicated to the illegal drug traffic in the VRAE”. This perspective was ratified by the minister Ántero Flores-Aráoz, who has asserted that the ideological component of the senderistas had diluted with a function of “society” with the drug trafficking.50

In the mid of the past decade, the remaining senderistas have extended their activities beyond the borders of Peru, affirming their transnationality. This way, the SL has started to rob banks in Bolivia and to sell drugs in low class neighborhoods of Buenos Aires. At the same time, has it has resumed the armed actions in the VRAE with increasing levels of violence, including assaults against military and police headcounts; the capacity obtained by the group was in evidence in the end of the year of 2009, when it managed to bring down a Mi-27 helicopter of Russian origin using an anti-aircraft machine gun of 12.7mm and a RPG grenade launcher in the middle of the forest.

On the other hand, the government has launched the intensive use of its Armed Forces to face this problem, executing huge operations. These actions were made with great difficulty and limited success, which a Peruvian expert

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51 “Senderistas se capitalizan en Bolivia”, La Razón, March 7th, 2009; Leonardo de Corso y Virginia Messi, “Cómo funciona el mayor centro de venta de drogas”, Clarín, April 18th, 2010.
has attributed to the evolution of the tactics and enrollments of the SL, faster than the updating of the military doctrine of the country; in this sense, makes parallelisms with the action of the USA in Afghanistan. Textually: “For any Armed Force, the doctrine ends being equivalent to the software that is going to be applied to its hardware, which is all the equipment. The doctrine is important because it tells you how an organization is going to battle, if it is the case of facing a non-state and asymmetric enemy, which is exactly what happens in the VRAE.”

The updating of the Peruvian Armed Forces, mainly in terms of asymmetric combat, picking and analyzing combat information, and joint operations, has allowed the greatest effectiveness in February 2012, when the so-called “Comrade Artemio”, maximum leader of the SL in the VRAE was captured (seriously injured after a combat with the official forces). Aside from this important strike, at the very moment of the closure of this paper the remaining criminal senderistas have not laid down their arms.

Nonetheless, the South American situation in terms of insurgency is completely different of the one expressed in the precedent paragraphs if the traditional focus of this concept is opened up and the readings about the deterioration of the Mexican situation are adopted. In this case, in the South American space the existing insurgencies raise from two to four, with the possibility of including a fifth episode. To the aforementioned FARC and SL are added the Emerging Criminal Bands in Colombia (BACRIM, initials in Spanish), the criminal organizations located in the big urban agglomerations of Brazil and even the Paraguayan People’s Army (EPP, initials in Spanish).

The BACRIM were typified has the new armed enemy of the State by the Ministry of Interior and Justice of Colombia. The drug traffic is the founding base of the activities of these groups, of which origins go back to the year of 2006, when the process of disarmament and demobilization of the paramilitary groups centered on the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC, initials in Spanish) has ended, result of an agreement with the then-President Álvaro Uribe. The members of the groups that have not accepted the

government invitation and have continued to stay out of the law reorganized themselves into new criminal entities that today total nearly seven thousand troops. The most important groups at the national level, bearing in mind both their dimensions and their territorial domain, are the Paisas, Rastrojos, Urabeños, Popular Revolutionary Antiterrorist Army of Colombia (ERPAC, initials in Spanish), Nueva Generación and Águilas Negras.

Concerning Brazil, in the favelas of its most populated cities, mainly Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, the bases of many criminal organizations linked mostly to drug trafficking can be found, and in a secondary place also other illegal activities like prostitution, gambling, arms trafficking, contraband and extortion.

The power and dimension of these groups, among them the Primeiro Comando da Capital from São Paulo and the Comando Vermelho from Rio de Janeiro, is so big that the operations headed by the State to demobilize them count cents of specialized policemen, backed logistically by the Armed Forces. For example, the operations against criminality developed in the last two years in the favelas of Vila Cruzeiro, Complexo do Alemão or Rocinha were executed by provincial and federal police units that have entered these agglomerations through the use of armored vehicles of the Marine Infantry.

Finally, the EPP is result of the regrouping of old members of the Patria Libre Party. Though it defines itself as a revolutionary group of Marxist-Leninist principles, with ideological elements related to the ideas of the local caudillo Francisco Solano López, its activities are clearly oriented towards the surplus obtained through the making of extortive kidnappings of important ranchers. The Paraguayan authorities affirm that the group is linked to the FARC and its members receive from the Colombian group training in rural combat and kidnapping execution.

After the EPP has invaded a ranch causing the killings of four people five years ago, the Executive has sent different police and military groupings to the North of the national territory. The initiatives included the deployment of thousands of troops that, however, could not be able to stop the main leaders of the group. Throughout the process, the problem has started to concern the Brazilian government and parliament because of the “spill” it could cause over their territory. A measure taken because of this restlessness was provided by the
ex-president José Sarney, who has admitted to fear that the increasing of the activities of the EPP could produce a “colombianization” of Paraguay.\textsuperscript{53}

**Some conclusions**

Inside the Latin American security panorama, the low levels of conflict in Westphalian terms that are registered coexist with a dynamic and heterogeneous agenda in terms of non-conventional threats. These threats deploy themselves in a transnational way and are represented by non-state actors that use the violence, as a rational political tool, asymmetrically. In this frame, the organized crime occupies a preponderant place, highlighting the Andean area as a cocaine producer zone, and Mexico and the Central American isthmus being a drug trafficking corridor aiming the USA, the main consumer market of the world.

In this context, the increase and complexity of the organized crime in Mexico has urged the dawn of a current of thought that reformulates the concept of insurgency in order to apply it to the Azteca case. The reformulation of the insurgency overlooks the political nature of the goals of who leads it, playing down its setting into the political violence realm. At the same time, it disregards the traditional approaches that understand that, in case of links between insurgency and criminality, the first is the one that changes itself in order to enter the field of the second.

The reformulated approach of insurgency emphasizes its debility or stopping effect on the right exercise of the government functions, mainly its effective control over all the national territory. The instrumental aspects of insurgency occupy the center of the question, displacing the pursued goals from this position. In this link between insurgency and criminality, it is the second factor the one that adapts the first’s physiognomy.

An application of this new concept of insurgency, emerged at the heat of the deterioration of the Mexican situation in terms of criminality, to the South American security panorama generates important repercussions. From a

quantitative point of view, the common diagnosis that consist on the existence of two residual insurgencies characterized more and more by a drug-terrorist stamp, the FARC and the SL, give room to other works that raise the number of insurgencies to no less than five: to the farianos and senderistas are added the BACRIM, Brazilian organizations that act in the favelas of the biggest cities of Brazil and the Paraguayan EPP.

Qualitatively, the analysis of South America from the new interpretation of insurgency allows the formation of at least three important conclusions. First, it establishes that the South American insurgency is not a decreasing phenomenon but, on the contrary, a increasing one; second, it stops confining the insurgency to the Andean zone, with the geographical and cultural particularities that it has, to extend it to other parts of the region; finally, also in space terms, it stops thinking it as a quasi-rural phenomenon to link it to the analysis of urban surroundings.

In addition to these qualitative and quantitative changes, an eventual consolidation of these new approaches on insurgency may generate other effects on South America. First, in respect to the use of military instruments, bearing in mind that a combat against criminality does not represent the same thing that one against an enemy that challenges its control over the territory and the exercise of authority; second, in respect to the treatment used towards the insurgents, once the resolution of an insurgency case can be developed from a “political” deal with the counterpart, a thing that the criminal bands have not access to; third, the new perspectives might generate repercussions, both cooperative and doctrinal, in terms of security, especially in the frame of the multilateral institutions, like the South American Security Council (CDS, initials in Spanish) of UNASUR.
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ABSTRACT
The Latin America’s geographic space is prodigal with non-conventional threats to the security of the states, the societies and the individuals which integrate it. These threats are characterized by their transnational dynamics, the non-state character of their protagonists and the asymmetrical use of violence.

Inside this outlook we can highlight the organized criminality, which is present in every region of the hemisphere, showing different features in each case. The case of Mexico can be emphasized because of its gravity, typified by research centers and experts as an example of a new form of insurgency. This readings force us to reformulate the concept of insurgency, defining it with more attention to the question of territorial control than the political motivation of its acts.

Based on the outlook described, the objective of this paper is to apply the reformulation of the concept of insurgency to the South America’s scenario. In order to do this, the scope of this concept will be established, concrete cases of application will be identified, as well as their impacts on the regional strategic surroundings and the multilateral cooperation about security.

KEYWORDS
Security; South America; Organized Crime; Insurgency.

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