

# IS VIOLENCE INHERENT IN UPPER LEVEL DRUG MARKETS?

## AN INVESTIGATION

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## **Abstract**

*'Drug-trafficking has become the main source of revenue for organized crime, as well as to terrorists and insurgents: in other words, drug-related illegality has become a threat to nations in so many theatres around the world... Unless we deal effectively with the threat posed by organized crime, our societies will be held hostage'*

(United Nations, 2010:5).

The illicit drug trade is the largest transnational form of organised crime in the world and dates back well before any regulations were introduced to monitor or control such substances, or indeed, to respond to the problems it subsequently created. The detrimental impacts of this sustained problem, either with supply or demand, have become embedded in many nations which has allowed upper-level drug traffickers to increase their networks and control, often using violence as a weapon. Despite the large profits generated from the drug trade, it is argued that the suffering caused by the high crime levels and costs to the economy is greater than that of the drugs themselves (Clutterbuck, 1995).

Until relatively recently, the responsibility for tackling illicit drug cultivation, production, and trafficking was left to individual countries, and subsequently, this worsened the problem in many locations such as Mexico and Afghanistan, especially in regard to increases in drug-related violence. Whilst there is now a more integrated international response to the issue of illegal drugs as well as collaborative working partnerships between a range of criminal justice agencies, this research explores the continued increases in violence associated with upper level drug markets, whilst also assessing whether current criminal justice responses to the issue may in fact escalate such behaviour further.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

The aim of this research is to explore the relationship between upper-echelon drug trafficking and the violence associated with it. According to the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) (2010), 'Drug smuggling by organised criminals is a major threat' and this is largely because of the various problems that are associated with such activities, including extreme acts of violence. As the United Nations (UN) (2009c: 18) note, 'The system of international drug control has produced several unintended consequences, the most formidable of which is the creation of a lucrative black market for drugs and the violence and corruption it generates'. Whilst extreme violence in association with drug-trafficking may not be evident in the United Kingdom (UK) at present, the scale of the illicit market in the UK suggests that such problems are not inconceivable in the future as 'the illicit drug market in the UK has been estimated at £4–6.6 billion a year' (Matrix Knowledge Group, 2007: 2).

The lucrative nature of the drugs market means that traffickers will go to any means to protect their trade, including the use of violence wherever necessary (Hammersley, 2008). Many of the damaging effects of this industry are evident worldwide, from volatile cultivation and distribution countries such as Afghanistan, Colombia and Mexico, to UK-based addicts who commit crime to support their habit (UN, 2010b). Consequently, the threat posed by the trade is the focus of much governmental policy. This research examines the contemporary patterns in drug-trafficking and associated violence, as well as identifying case studies and theoretical explanations for such activities, in order to assess whether the current strategies implemented are actually effective in tackling such problems, or if criminal justice responses further escalate violence by trafficking groups.

An examination of the current drugs market will establish the scale of the trafficking problem, as well as identifying the many obstacles that the drug trade is creating for enforcement agencies. The chapter is divided into two parts; the first illustrates key drugs markets in terms of countries responsible for production and transit. This will identify patterns of cultivation and trading, costs to producers, profits generated to organised criminals and the activities that they often choose to reinvest their money in. The second part of this chapter identifies patterns in the demand for drugs and the countries which are the main markets for drug sales. The harms associated with drugs will also be discussed, with a particular focus on costs for law enforcement, both in implementing counter-trafficking strategies, as well as having to respond to the subsequent problems which arise from *implementation*, including extreme violence.

Chapter Four focuses on particular case studies where upper-level drug trafficking and violence are substantially interconnected, thus such locations are subsequently major targets for global law enforcement in the 'War on Drugs'. The first example to be explored is that of Mexico, where significant issues with drugs and violence have existed for many years, not only between the cartels and enforcement officials, but *between the cartels themselves* in territorial wars. Various strategies have been implemented to tackle these issues but to date, have largely failed in curtailing the escalating drugs and violence nexus within Mexico. The final case study is Afghanistan, and in particular, the association between drug trafficking and the profits used for terrorist activities, referred to as 'narco-terrorism' (Martin, 2009). Although this country is also volatile, the dynamics are very different to Mexico as the problems are less about violence between rival groups, but against other countries.

Chapter Five explores various theories for violence, assessing whether such explanations can effectively contribute to understanding violence caused specifically in relation to drug trafficking or if a more realistic justification is to explore the current strategies implemented. This includes possible evidence for the motivations of drug traffickers which encourage them to commit such violent acts. Theories to be examined here include Merton's (1938) theory of anomie and Collins' (2008) argument that there are no violent individuals but only violent situations.

The Sixth chapter examines the current responses to drug trafficking by both governmental policies and international partnerships, such as the UN. Strategies and enforcement techniques are firstly briefly explained in terms of their achievements and limitations. There then follows an analysis of whether these techniques and approaches collectively are facilitating the current drugs-violence situation or deterring any real progress by intensifying the levels of violence.

Lastly, a conclusion to the research question will be made using all the information produced in this dissertation. This will identify whether any recommendations can be made to reduce the violence associated with upper-level drug traffickers.

Previous research in criminology conducted into the issue of drugs has tended to focus predominately on street-level drugs, those associated with such markets, and the effects drugs have on society. However, the individuals and groups at the higher levels in the supply chain have proven more difficult to research due to issues with safety, accessibility and the vast range of different crime organisations involved globally. Much of the work that has been produced is often from a law enforcement perspective, either through official publications or from insider accounts by former police officers. Although this is useful, it can be limited in scope and is rarely impartial. Additionally, there are very few pieces of research whose principal aim is to explore the violence associated with upper-level drugs trafficking. Instead, material is often descriptive and case specific, looking at strategies implemented or transit routes in particular countries. Therefore, this research offers a fresh insight into an area that is often overlooked, despite the suggestion by the UN (2009c: 182) that 'Drug control must be conducted in ways designed to limit associated violence and corruption'.

## **Chapter Two: Methodology**

The methodological approach chosen for this research was a literary analysis, defined as ‘the act of collecting or analysing data that was originally collected for another purpose’ (Riedel, 2000 in Bachman and Schutt, 2011: 306). This approach entailed the collation and evaluation of pre-existing literary data on the issue of drug-trafficking, obtained from academic texts, journal articles, research reports by established governmental and research bodies, and the use of internet-related information.

Primary research was not conducted for this dissertation due to the transnational nature of drug-trafficking and the various problems associated with such an approach. Such issues relate to both practical matters such as the time constraints of conducting a student research project along with limited resources, as well as ethical issues including researcher safety and confidentiality. The most problematic obstacle for this research was accessibility to relevant participants, as the sensitivity of the issue predicated that contact with individuals directly involved in such activities was not appropriate, whilst governmental agencies involved in this issue are at a national and international level, making access untenable.

When conducting a literature-based analysis, information can be collected from a range of different sources. Beneficially, this gives the researcher a vast pool of resources to utilise whilst incurring little cost, therefore, making the approach suitable to the needs of the lone student researcher (Bryman, 2008). When investigating an issue with global significance, such as drugs, a literary analysis is cost effective and less time consuming in terms of data collection than any other method, recognised by Bryman who suggests it ‘offers the prospect of having access to good quality data for a tiny fraction of the resources involved in carrying out data collection exercise yourself’ (2008: 297). Consequently, this allows the researcher more time to analyse and interpret the data (Punch, 2005; Champion, 2006; Denscombe, 2007; Bryman, 2008) and it is *this* process of reanalysis which can offer the possibility of developing new insights and comparisons not considered before (Bryman, 2008).

Accessibility of information using literary analysis is further reinforced with the expansion of the internet and the significant amount of material now available, consequently, allowing for cross-cultural analysis which is especially relevant to a global issue such as drug trafficking, often affected by cultural and legal differences (Bryman, 2008). Access to internationally-based data by agencies such as the UN is particularly helpful when examining the links between the higher-level drugs trade and violence, providing the basis for an evaluation of differing global counter-trafficking strategies. Furthermore, there is also the opportunity for longitudinal research so that previous strategies implemented and levels of associated violence can be compared over a period of time to identify any potential impacts of counter-trafficking strategies to date. This is supported by Bryman (2008) and Punch (2005) who highlight the beneficial nature of secondary sources in allowing accessibility to hard-to-reach populations, one such example being Afghanistan, Al Qaeda and the links drug trafficking has to terrorism and violence. Consequently the ‘greatest attraction of using documentary sources is their accessibility’ (Denscombe, 2007:230).

The high quality of the data accessible on drug-trafficking, which has often been through rigorous sampling procedures, suggests that sources can be credible (Punch, 2005; Bryman, 2008), which may not always be true of self-generated primary data. This is especially true of governmental publications which are seen as authoritative, objective and factual (Denscombe,

2007) because they have accessed a larger, more representative sample size than would have been achievable by a lone researcher (Punch, 2005; Champion, 2006; Bryman, 2008). Furthermore, the use of up-to-date information is crucial when examining an issue such as drugs, especially with the use of online news reports which are updated on a daily basis, and their reporting of international issues, such as the ongoing drug-related violence in Mexico (Denscombe, 2007).

There are, however, a number of potential limitations associated with literary analysis, as difficulty with the lack of familiarity with the data and the complexity of the high volumes of resources available need to be managed as some will not be relevant to the researcher's aim (Bryman, 2008). Consequently, the time for familiarisation should not be underestimated (ibid). Data and conclusions from existing material must also be approached with caution and their validity questioned until the methods of sampling and data collection are assessed, particularly when using statistical evidence (Denscombe, 2007; Bryman, 2008; Gomm, 2008; Bachman and Schutt, 2011). Furthermore, as the data may have been created for separate purposes, certain aspects the researcher will wish to explore may be missing and the data unavailable for reconstruction (Champion, 2006). The covert nature of drug trafficking means that research is often limited so using secondary sources can represent the increased use of speculation as clarification is often not possible (Champion, 2006). As McSweeney et al (2008: 3) highlight, 'the relationship between the supply of illicit drugs, the demand for them and enforcement activities still remains poorly conceptualised, under-researched and little understood in the UK'.

Due to the constantly evolving environment within drug trafficking, material can quickly become out of date, and this is particularly applicable to books which, despite the vast amount of detailed information given, may not always portray the current climate of drug trafficking. To overcome this, annually updated information and recent publications will primarily be relied upon, such as the United Nation's World Drug Report, SOCA's annual UK crime threat assessment, and intelligence by agencies such as Europol. Credibility of sources and authorship should also be considered, especially with the increased use of the internet (Denscombe, 2007), although this can be circumvented to a large extent by only utilising data from reputable sites. Many sources may be biased, however, either towards a political party or a certain attitude (Gomm, 2008) and this could be evident in governmental or enforcement agencies publications regarding the success of particular counter-trafficking strategies. For example, statistics by the Home Office on the number of seizures made by the UK Border Agency may *appear* impressive but do not necessarily illustrate the complete nature of the problem and the scale of drugs entering the UK. Therefore, conclusions may owe more to the interpretations of the researcher rather than an objective picture of reality (Denscombe, 2007) and this factor is also likely to affect the political standpoint taken by news-based sources.

Overall, although the use of a literary analysis may create a range of limitations that need to be considered by researchers, the benefits available when researching drug trafficking are substantial, therefore, such an approach was deemed the most suitable in this instance and according to Bryman 'should be considered by all social researchers' (2008: 296).



### **Chapter Three: The Contemporary Drugs Market**

The drugs trade is the largest industry in the world and has existed well before any regulations were created to outlaw it in the twentieth century (Mares, 2006; Roman et al, 2007; Hammersley, 2008; UN, 2010b). Consequently, many of the associated problems are embedded and have played a major part in socialisation across the globe (Mares, 2006, Roman et al, 2007). As the nature of the drugs trade continues to develop, people have become much more aware of the harms created and the effects on society. This has increased the need for political debate and strategies to be implemented both nationally and internationally, including the initiation of the 'War on Drugs' by America (Dorn et al, 1992; Mares, 2006; Kemp, 2011b). The main focus for enforcement has been on cocaine and opiates, especially heroin, as the 'global opiate and cocaine markets represent two of the biggest transnational drugs and crime threats of our time' (UN, 2010b: 16). However, despite these efforts the drugs trade remains unscathed and shows no signs of letting up (Kemp, 2011b). The scale of the drugs trade, with a particular focus on cocaine and heroin, will be further examined in this chapter to identify the contemporary patterns and trends emerging in regards to both supply and demand and any problems this is creating for law enforcement.

The main country currently responsible for the production of heroin is Afghanistan (Perl, 2001; BBC, 2003; Arnold, 2005; UN, 2009b; Europol, 2010; Interpol, 2010; UN, 2010b; BBC, 2011a; Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2011), which accounts for supplying 90% of the world's usage (UN, 2010a: 109). Although records illustrated a 15% decline in opium poppy cultivation in 2009, this does not correlate with consumption levels and it appears that large amounts have been stockpiled which would be enough to globally supply for the next two years (SOCA, 2009b; UN, 2010b). This will create problems for the future as production-based interventions alone will be inadequate.

Cocaine is predominately produced in Colombia but there is an emerging trend of growth and manufacturing in Peru and Bolivia (Clutterbuck, 1995; Arnold, 2005; SOCA, 2009b; CIA, 2010; Europol, 2010; UN, 2010a; UN, 2010b). Statistics indicate that coca cultivation is down 28% in the past decade which is parallel to a decrease in consumption levels in the United States of America (US) which is the dominant destination country (UN, 2010b:4). However, the global retail sales figures for cocaine are valued at eighty-eight billion dollars which is greater than opiates and the GDP of many countries (UN, 2010b: 35). This illustrates that the decline in supply has not significantly affected the size of the market and still presents a substantial threat internationally due to the associated harms from consumption and the upper-level drug traffickers (UN, 2010b).

Nevertheless, these statistics need to be taken with caution as global figures are difficult to calculate and the methods of collection can vary (Fazey, 2007; UN, 2010b). Many countries may not always have information readily available regarding the levels of supply and demand so the statistics may be biased towards the developed countries who have more resources to produce the data needed (Fazey, 2007; UN, 2010b). Therefore despite all the estimates and information about the drugs trade, there is still a 'dark figure' which prevents an understanding of the scale of the problem.

The drugs trade is a very lucrative market but the profits are not distributed evenly to all those involved. Estimates suggest that the farmers who yield the crops only receive one and a half per cent of the profits made, with the majority generating downstream to the traffickers

who transport and deal the drugs (UN, 2010b:77-78). Although this indicates the disproportions, it can bring about economic reform to many countries experiencing financial hardship (Bhattacharyya, 2005). Many frontier areas lack the infrastructure to yield licit crops so the drug trade offers an alternative means of survival (Roman et al, 2007; Hammersley, 2008; European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), 2010; National Geographic Channel, 2010). This has been recognised by international agencies, such as Europol and the UNODC, and attempts have been made to provide other crops to yield (UN, 2010b). However, it has failed to stem the flow of drugs and farmers continue to cultivate illicit substances due to the higher income offered.

Illicit drugs can be transported in a various ways including: air freight, couriers, submarine, and maritime shipments (Europol, 2010; UN, 2010b; BBC, 2011b). Diagram One indicates the main transit routes for cocaine and heroin (see Appendix A). These can vary and are adjusted constantly according to: law enforcement strategies, effective detection avoidance methods which are usually in areas experiencing economic and/or political instability, and the development of new routes to supply emerging markets (Fazey, 2007; Bean, 2008; McSweeney et al, 2008). This indicates the cross-border and evolving nature of the drugs market which requires an equivalent response from enforcement. To conceal the produce on these forms of transportation, the traffickers are increasingly becoming imaginative and clever, for example, moulding cocaine to look like a brick (Europol, 2010). Consequently, this reinforces the need for intelligence-based approaches as the traffickers methods are expanding constantly and distorting stereotypical expectations. Furthermore, with the expansion of trans-national communication, global links are widespread which is ideal for the supply of drugs, allowing easy access between destinations and blurring the boundaries for enforcement (SOCA, 2009b).

Between the chain of production, transit and the final destination countries, drugs are intercepted by a number of different trafficking groups. Examples of the most notorious gangs situated across the globe are: the Triads, Sicilian Mafia, Sinaloa Cartel, Cali Cartel, Yakuza, and the Yardies (De Grazia, 1991). Violence or the threat of violence is often implicit in the activities of these organised criminals and the victims are limitless. (SOCA, 2009b). For example, in Mexico, the decapitated bodies of fifteen young men were found near a shopping centre with messages alleged to be from 'El Chapo', Mexico's most wanted drug baron as a warning for rival criminal groups (BBC, 2011c). Similar environments are evident elsewhere where drug trafficking and the associated extreme violence has infiltrated the system, such as Colombia and Afghanistan, and continues to threaten the stability of the nations. Therefore the devastating effects are not just visible in the producing regions but anywhere the drugs trade is heavily situated (UN, 2010b).

Although drug trafficking and the violence associated present substantial global threats, this is intensified by the cross-over between other illegal and legitimate activities (Willoughby, 2003; SOCA, 2009b; UN, 2010b). Many organised criminals involve themselves within drug trafficking for the financial opportunities which can be reinvested into activities such as: people smuggling, terrorism, organized prostitution and even investment within election campaigns (Fazey, 2007; SOCA, 2009b). Due to the massive revenue made from the drugs trade it can essentially buy its way out of anything desired (Hammersley, 2008). This includes bribery and intimidation. Drug trafficking thrives and breeds on corruption for protection to secure assistance from those with information or influence (SOCA, 2009b; UN, 2010b). Consequently, drug trafficking not only presents overt harms with the ties to other activities but covertly due to corruption, which can have serious repercussions when trying to tackle drug trafficking.

Problems associated with drugs vary from supply to demand but are all equally as damaging. Europe and the US are the largest consumers of heroin and/or cocaine (CIA, 2010; Europol, 2010; UN, 2010b). Within Europe the UK is the biggest user of cocaine and second for heroin, foremost being the Russian Federation (UN, 2009b; UN, 2010a; UN, 2010b). The problems linked to cocaine are mainly evident in the US as it is responsible for 40% of the global cocaine-using population and has a close proximity to the main producing regions (UN, 2010b:17). However, the market is constantly changing with new ones emerging, for example the boom in cocaine consumption in West Africa (UN, 2010b). Therefore strategies for prevention need to be flexible to ensure that the problems are not displaced.

The number of users estimated worldwide in 2008 who had used illicit substances at least once in the last year was 155-250 million or 3.5% to 5.7% of the population aged 15-64 (UN, 2010b: 12). This is expected to increase with the growing availability of drugs, urbanisation, and escalating world population (UN, 2010b: 32). Subsequently, the demand and profits made will only proliferate. However, whether this will mean more supply is needed or other methods, such as cutting will be utilised, remains unknown. This demand is financing crime, terrorism and corruption within the drugs market, so may only worsen the existing problems if not tackled effectively (De Grazia, 1991). Therefore with substantial potential profits to be made, it is not surprising that it is the world's largest expenditure (Hammersley, 2008).

Profits are able to be further enhanced through cutting which can make more of a substance available for sale and can be done at any point in the chain and multiple times (SOCA, 2009b; UN, 2010b). This can be a consequence of supply-led interventions, especially the declining production levels in Colombia, which limit the quantities reaching a destination. Therefore to meet the continuing demand the dealer would cut purity rather than increase prices (UN, 2010b). Evidence to support this has found that the UK Border Agency (UKBA) generally record higher purity levels than from police force seizures (SOCA, 2009a). Subsequently, with an increase in the dilution of drugs, it is suggested that despite the increase in users over the last ten years, the consumption rates have actually declined significantly (UN, 2010b). However, caution needs to be taken as problems can arise with the cutting agents and the potential health implications if a user is supplied with a purer form of the drug.

The economies in consuming countries can be negatively impacted due to the interconnected political, economic, cultural, and social ramifications (McSweeney et al, 2008). This can place a substantial strain on the health service, especially with the use of heroin and dirty needles, and problem drug-users who pose a threat because of the danger of disease, overdose and the increasing need for resources for rehabilitation (Europol, 2010; UN, 2010b). For instance, the Russian Federation are currently experiencing concurrent increases in heroin consumption and the spread of HIV (ibid). Consequently, this will impact the health service not only regarding the costs overall but the volume of assistance and attention needed instead of focusing on other patients.

Drug-related violence is noticeable throughout society. Street gangs that control and supply local neighbourhood's use the same principles as upper-level traffickers and use violence for enforcement (Kemp, 2011a). The secondary consequences of this are community and public safety as the increased crime and violence can amplify fear and even the stability of the country (McSweeney et al, 2008). Drug-related crime costs the UK an estimated £12 billion per year primarily for heroin and cocaine (Hammersley, 2008:129). This goes towards funding for: increases in gang activity which is linked to gun crime and the mortality rate,

prostitution, and the amplifying the prison populations (Roman et al, 2007; McSweeney et al, 2008; Transform Drugs Policy, 2009; UN, 2010b). This indicates the scale of the problem for one nation, but when considered globally, the cost for law enforcement is argued to be more than the expenditure of the entire drugs market (Clutterbuck, 1995).

The drugs trade has a damaging effect on everyone; from individuals to entire countries (Bhattacharyya, 2005; SOCA, 2009b). Associated harms are evident everywhere from individuals who sell their body to feed their habit, to the countries at war to prevent the traffickers gaining control. So far, the drugs trade has cost thousands of lives which in total is more than the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan and Vietnam combined (Kemp, 2011a). Due to the scale of the drugs market its abolishment appears impossible (Bean, 2008).

## **Chapter Four: Case Studies**

To demonstrate the impacts of drug trafficking, cases studies of Mexico and Afghanistan are explored which both operated different functions in the drugs trade but share one common consequence; the dominance of upper-level drug traffickers within their society. Despite the substantial differences in the circumstances of each of these countries and their histories, the violence associated with these groups and the drug trade has become so damaging that they both face political instability and subsequently are two major targets globally in tackling the war on drugs (UN, 2010b).

### **Mexico**

Mexico is a major producing and transit country as it is situated perfectly in-between the largest producer and consumer of cocaine, and has the advantage of long borders with the US which are difficult to patrol (Kemp, 2011b). This has created a business worth over \$40 billion a year allowing Mexican drug cartels to control the US drug smuggling market (Arnold, 2005; Cook, 2007; BBC, 2010a; New York Times, 2010; UN, 2010b; Kemp, 2011b). Therefore it is unsurprising that such a profitable business attracts competition and the country now finds itself in a violent turf war with powerful drug cartels (New York Times, 2010). This has become so extreme that it is now the violence capital of the world and has destabilised the country (Kemp, 2011b). However, instability and revolution are not new to Mexico since its history has featured social upheaval in the 1810 and 1910 revolutions (Ross, 2010). Mexican cartels have existed for many years and have been smuggling for decades (ibid). Increases in their dominance and control over Colombian cocaine trafficking heading to the US emerged in the 1990's with the demise of the Colombian Cali and Medellin cartel's (Cook, 2007; UN, 2010b). This shows that drug smuggling is deep-rooted within Mexico but that its dominance over the business and country has gradually expanded with the success of other national strategies.

There are currently believed to be seven drug cartel's operating in Mexico, however this is continually changing due to alliances being formed or cartel's splitting because of differing ideologies (BBC, 2010a; Tuckman, 2011). Each cartel is run like a business with a set of rules to abide by (Kemp, 2011b). Many of the larger cartels, such as the Sinaloa, are believed to hire 'enforcer gangs' to perpetrate violence and intimidate others, commonly known as 'sicarios' (Cook, 2007: 6). This demonstrates the intuitive resources utilised to ensure that those in control do not risk exposure to enforcement agencies. With so much of the country subjugated, the violence is evidence of their gang law and control over the nation (BBC, 2010a; Kemp, 2011b), this has been described by Sebastian Rotella as a producing a 'state within a state' (Willoughby, 2003:127).

Consequently, there has been an overwhelming need to tackle this problem as the trade and the associated harms continue to expand and destabilise the country (Willoughby, 2003). This has been recognised by the US, and combined with the health threat it poses to them has resulted in their substantial intervention originating from President Regan in 1982 (Willoughby, 2003; Cook, 2007). To date the US has donated \$400 million to assist Mexico's efforts and has provided equipment and training to support law enforcement strategies as well as concentrating on security screening along the border (Cook, 2007; BBC, 2010a). Continuing failures with previous approaches and increasing international pressured to the launch of the 2006 anti-cartel initiative. (New York Times, 2010; Kemp, 2011b). Instead of focusing primarily on the borders, President Calderon decided punitive

enforcement was needed and deployed fifty thousand military troops across nine states to combine various security tactics, these included: extraditions, eradications, seizures, interrogating suspects, conducting raids, combining federal and public security forces, and judicial reforms (Cook, 2007; Hanson, 2008). With such a large scale strategy implemented, its effectiveness was believed to be guaranteed.

However, the increased militarization has caused the violence to spiral (Ross, 2010; Kemp, 2011b). No longer is the violence reserved for the cartels but assassinations and kidnappings are now directed towards citizens, rival drug gang members, journalists, politicians, and anyone posing a threat (Hanson, 2008; New York Times, 2010; Ross, 2010; Kemp, 2011b). Estimates suggest that since the war was declared there have been roughly 34,600 deaths of which 15,273 were in 2010 alone, making it the most violent year on record (BBC, 2011d; Tuckman, 2011). However, it is unclear from the statistics how many deaths are linked to the cartels, committed by the state or civilians (Tuckman, 2011). Therefore analysing statistical evidence solely is not enough to comprehend the level of violence associated with the drugs trade as the enforcement strategy envisages increases in violence to combat the cartels (BBC, 2010b; UN, 2010b).

Turf war and violence over the key trafficking routes or border crossing areas has always existed between the cartels (Hanson, 2008; Tuckman, 2011). However, changes have emerged as the cartels are now fighting over a shrinking market thus expanding the levels of violence used to ensure their survival (Cook, 2007; UN, 2010b). To this end they are increasingly more adventurous with ways to portray their messages and shock people in order to instil fear. A recent example of this is shown by the decapitated and mutilated bodies hung from a bridge in sight of the public (BBC, 2010c). This not only shows the brutality which is used but the lack of concern for law enforcement or being caught as they were left visible in broad daylight. Messages of this nature are common with video evidence often used to document the gruesome deaths and inflict fear in others about their cartels' capabilities (Hanson, 2008). This is aimed not only at rival cartels but also at the police and public officials to display their solidarity and resistance.

Corruption is vital to the drugs trade, and Mexico is no exception (Kemp, 2011b). With substantial resources at their disposal the cartels are able to repeatedly infiltrate the underpaid forces at all levels (Cook, 2007; BBC, 2010a; BBC, 2010d; Kemp, 2011b). This massively undermines efforts to address the problem by allowing the cartels to maintain control and power. Realising the magnitude of the problem, in the 2006 initiative the army were extensively deployed, salaries increased, and the structure of the police force was completely rebuilt (Cook, 2007; Hanson, 2008; BBC, 2010a). Although this is expected to take years, the vulnerability of the police force in comparison to the cartels may leave them susceptible to intimidation. This is enhanced by the extreme violence which has become so frequent that no one is immune and officers remain afraid of revealing their identities and patrolling particular areas, such as Guadalupe (BBC, 2010d; Kemp, 2011b). Consequently, despite reforms corruption is difficult to eradicate when increased violence by cartels is being used.

Although the majority of the violence is concentrated within the northern and Pacific coastal states, no region has escaped (Kemp, 2011b; Tuckman, 2011). This has caused a loss in public faith towards the government and exposed many of their failings (New York Times, 2010). One noticeable example of this is Ciudad Juarez, which since 2008 has been the violence capital of the world, despite also having the highest federal presence (BBC, 2010a; Kemp, 2011b; Tuckman, 2011). Whether the increased militarisation is causally linked to the

enhanced violence is unknown but certainly seems to have inflamed the cartels and made their activities more overt. Many civilians hold Calderon responsible for this which has increasingly been demonstrated through propaganda featuring him with a pig emblem on his chest and a flag strangling Juarez (Kemp, 2011b). This shows that the public blame Calderon's strategy for the increases in violence as the aggressive law enforcement style has encouraged the cartel's to protect themselves using extreme violence.

### **Afghanistan**

Despite being an extremely poor country (CIA, 2010), Afghanistan is presently at the forefront in both terrorism and drugs (Macqueen, 2010). As the leading opium producer since 2007, it is responsible for the raw material of the world's deadliest drug, heroin (Perl, 2001; Arnold, 2005; UN, 2009a; CIA, 2010; Macqueen, 2010; UN, 2010b). Such a lucrative trade yields large earnings which are commonly used to fund other legal and illegal activities, the most relevant being terrorism (Starkey, 2008; Macqueen, 2010). This has been instilled using corruption which has led to the drug trade being embedded within the economy and along with terrorism, earns half the country's GDP (CIA, 2010; Macqueen, 2010). Combined, this represents a significant health and security threat to nations globally (UN, 2009a; UN, 2009b; Europol, 2010).

Following the 9/11 terrorist attack, the protection of Osama Bin Laden and involvement in drug production by the Afghan government, the Taliban, the global security threat was deemed severe and in need of Western assistance (CIA, 2010). Therefore with the increases in opium stockpiles mounting, at the end of September 2001, US and British forces began attacks on targets in Afghanistan and it was disclosed that troops were pursuing a stockpile estimated to be worth £20 billion (Perl, 2001; Arnold, 2005). If released on to the world market this would provide Al Qaeda and the Taliban with cash resources to continue their war with the West as well as funding extremists in neighbouring countries, such as the Chechen Resistance (Perl, 2001; Arnold, 2005). Furthermore, corruption was seen as a significant threat preventing change, especially with the acceptance of opium production and taxation of the profits, so the Taliban government were overthrown and efforts have been made for economic reformation and to rebuild political stability (CIA, 2010).

Many enforcement publications and officials document the successes of the war on Afghanistan and it is clear that the economy is beginning to recover from decades of conflicts and corruption (CIA, 2010; UN, 2010b). This includes eradication programmes in high cultivating areas such as Helmand and Kandahar where they have received progressive assistance to establish alternative means of agriculture (Starkey, 2008; UN, 2010b). However, work is not complete yet and continuing vulnerabilities, such as criminality, weak governance, corruption, and the inability by the Afghan government to extend the law to all parts of the country threatens to destroy the progress made (CIA, 2010). Communities remain disrupted and impacts so far on society in general have not lived up to expectations, leaving many supporting the Taliban (Gah, 2009). As end of the war is edging closer with British troops beginning to cease combat missions by 2015, there is still much to be done and serious concerns about the high number of insurgents remaining (Gah, 2009; Sanders, 2011). This will be a massive challenge for the Afghanistan National army to ensure they maintain security once troops leave (Sanders, 2011).

Despite attempts at reforms, corruption is still evident at all levels (Starkey, 2008; CIA, 2009; UN, 2009a; Macqueen, 2010; Sanders, 2011). This offers an explanation as to why in 2008-2009 only 10,000 hectares of opium were seized and almost no major traffickers brought to

justice (UN, 2009b). However, as the number of insurgents and the levels of violence used increases, many officials trying to tackle them are faced with the dilemma of being bought or killed, with the obvious choice being made (Macqueen, 2010). This particularly relates to those patrolling the borders where corruption, lawlessness and uncontrolled borders continue to result in an insignificant 2% interception rate of the opiates produced and trafficked within Afghanistan (UN, 2009a). Approximately 60-80% of the drugs produced move through the borders which are desert areas, leaving soldiers extremely vulnerable to corruption (Macqueen, 2010). Even when corruption is declined, traffickers are commonly heavily armed and experienced fighters to ensure they face no obstacles (Macqueen, 2010). Therefore the borders remain difficult to police adequately and are still becoming more elusive to violence and corruption (Arnold, 2005; UN, 2010b).

With as many as twenty-five thousand insurgents still remaining, their strength and abilities may be underestimated with fears that they are holding back until the troops leave before attempting to attack (Sanders, 2011). The Taliban have reshaped and continue to profit from the drug trade and dominate much of the country (Sanders, 2011). Estimates suggest that they are earning higher incomes now than when they were in power, with a total revenue from opiate farming and trade accumulating between \$350-650 million from 2005 to 2008 (UN, 2009a; UN, 2009b). This is excluding profits gained from other activities (UN, 2009b). With the increases in terror attacks over the years, it is believed that these profits help fund weapons, ammunition and fuel for the war (Perl, 2001; Willoughby, 2003; Starkey, 2008). This demonstrates that despite assistance it could be worsening the problem and resulting in increased levels of violence as insurgents attempt to protect themselves and portray messages to the West. Therefore posing a major threat to the security and health of Afghan society as well as internationally (Europol, 2010).

Collaborations between insurgents can create further problems and allow those with extreme ideologies to radicalise others. This can occur both within Afghanistan and in other countries as well. Reports by the American State Department found that Britain had the highest concentration of Al-Qaeda supporters than any other Western country (The Telegraph, 2010). This shows that the networks the insurgents have internationally can be utilised not only for drug trafficking but also to transmit messages linked to terrorism to further instil ideologies and plan attacks. Consequently, newly formed narco-cartels are blurring the differences between greed and ideology (UN, 2009a), and are diluting the boundaries for dealing with drug trafficking and terrorism as separate issues.

Many critics argue that attempts to tackle the 'War on Drugs' are undermining the 'War on Terrorism' (Arnold, 2005; Macqueen, 2010). The involvement of Britain and America in the war has left the relationship with the Afghan government fragile therefore they are hesitant to confront officials identified as corrupt (Macqueen, 2010). Evidently, corruption is a major concern for the stability of Afghanistan as it undermines the trust in public institutions and officials and renders the development assistance by the West pointless (Macqueen, 2010). But with the increased consumption levels, especially in Western Europe, the profits gained by the organised criminals persists and merely funds the enemies being fought in the war (Macqueen, 2010). With the mortality rate for opium consumption substantially higher than the number of soldiers lost in the war, and terrorism seemingly enabled through the profits from the drugs trade, maybe a change in concentration is needed for the prevention of both (Macqueen, 2010).



## **Chapter Five: Explanations of Drug-related Violence**

‘Violence’ is a broad term and can include a variety of different methods, individuals and contexts which make formulating explanations extremely difficult (Levi et al, 2007; Collins, 2008). It is an emotive topic with graphic illustrations depicted throughout society, not all of which are deemed in a negative manner, for example, the current United Nations (UN) intervention in Libya. These can be both norm-breaking and norm-strengthening and vary from street violence to government-sponsored violence (Levi et al, 2007; Schinkel, 2010), therefore, due to its heterogeneous nature, it is difficult to distinguish one single theory or strand of theories which define all the manifestations (Levi et al, 2007). Many of the existing theories of violent behaviour have a tendency to focus on street-level violence rather than more extreme forms, for instance the violence associated with drug trafficking or actions committed by the state (Levi et al, 2007). Although such approaches may explain other forms of violence, for example, the premise of much biological psychology is a focus on people’s genetic composition which can make individuals prone to violence (Levi et al, 2007), the relationship between drug trafficking and violence is *not* based on susceptibility but rather, is dominated by authority, power and the reliance on fear. This can come from a range of different levels in the drugs trade, but the main focus of this research is the upper-level organisations where violence is commonly perpetrated between rival gangs and against law enforcement officials. Therefore, the focus of this chapter is an assessment of whether any of the general theories of violence can adequately explain this specific behaviour or if a more pragmatic explanation can be gained through examining the context it takes place in and aggravating factors that enhance that situation.

Socio-cultural approaches of violence focus on the environment in which the behaviour occurs and the upbringings of those involved which includes factors such as; social disorganisation, social inequality, and blocked opportunities for advancement which cause violent gangs to emerge as they have no other opportunities for economic mobility (Levi et al, 2007). Within Merton’s (1938) theory of anomie, deviant behaviour may emerge as a result of disequilibrium, or dissociation between the culturally accepted goals and the ability to achieve them via legitimate means, therefore, the ways in which people respond to this dilemma are formulated in his typologies of adaption: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion (Merton, 1938). In terms of those involved in the drugs trade, two of Merton’s particular modes of response may be pertinent; innovation, and rebellion. The innovation response may be applied to any form of criminality where the individual concerned aspires to culturally accepted goals of success or status, but where illicit means are used to achieve this, and this may be the case for senior-level cartel members who utilise violence to sustain their market position. One example of this may be Colombia’s most wanted drug trafficker, Daniel ‘El Loco’ Barrera, who is suspected of plotting to assassinate Colombia’s former chief prosecutor, and from whom twenty nine million pounds in drug profits were recently recovered (McDermott, 2010). Alternatively, the rebellion category identifies that such individuals reject the prevailing values and substitute new ones in their place (Merton, 1938), thus allowing people to form their own organisations with different aspirations, and different means utilised to achieve such goals. An example of this is evident in particular areas of Mexico where children are more likely to aspire to be the next ‘El Chapo’, the leader of a major cartel and who has featured in the 2010 Forbes list of the world’s billionaires, more than the President (BBC, 2010a; Kemp, 2011b). These powerful cartel members grew up in the same neighbourhoods with the same blocked opportunities as today’s young people in Mexico and Colombia, thus are more ‘realistic’ role models than

those 'celebrities' commonly accepted by society. Therefore when this proliferates throughout an organisation and the drug trade is used as an alternative economic source, shared values and rules can be established which include the use of violence for enforcement.

An alternative approach may be to focus primarily on the impact violence can have on others in its own right, instead of as a secondary consequence. Whilst drug dealing is dependent on trust, any organisation operating outside the law has to have the means of exercising its authority onto others and to protect its interests from outsiders or competitors. In this sense, violence can be used to obtain economic benefits as a means of exerting control and as a weapon for intimidation (Levi et al, 2007). This can help sustain people's reputations, especially if known as unpredictable and reckless, for instance, the Kray twins were perceived as 'nutters' that encouraged one another to greater levels of violence, which then helped establish their domination over London (Levi et al, 2007; Metropolitan Police, 2011). Furthermore, once a reputation has been established many people will fear these individuals which can be used to their advantage to obtain any desired benefits. A notorious example of this is Pablo Escobar who was a leading drug trafficker in Colombia but was able to emerge in politics for a brief period (Bowden, 2001). As the Medellin cartel, of which he was the leader, became more powerful and wealthy there was a stronger need to establish violence to maintain control, which escalated from instrumental violence towards 'traitors' to the bombing of Avianca Flight 203 which killed three presidential candidates (Bowden, 2001). Through the use violence as a means to achieve power Escobar is argued to have 'built a brutal criminal organisation that would hold an entire nation hostage' (Bowden, 2001:2). This shows how violence can be used to instil fear in others to protect the drugs trade and the people associated with it as, without such behaviour, organisations would not be able to sustain their reputations or control over others and would be quickly overthrown by law enforcement or competitors. This means that the violence associated with the drugs trade is difficult to eradicate as it is entrenched within the business to ensure the survival of successful drug markets.

Instead of concentrating predominantly on the individuals that commit the violence, consideration of the organisation itself and the context which causes the violence to arise may be more significant. Collins' micro-sociological theory argues that there are no violent individuals, only violent situations (Collins, 2008), and these situations are shaped by an emotional field of tension and fear which need to be overcome (Collins, 2008). This emphasises that the ability of someone to kill another depends on the social pressure and support in the background that encourages such individuals in the situation but will ultimately reward them after the confrontation itself (Collins, 2008). Even though the offender will be aware of the harm they are causing, the act will be depersonalised to some degree; this includes gangland and execution-style shootings in the head to avoid face-to-face confrontation or stabbings from behind (Collins, 2008). Violence of this form is seen regularly in the drugs trade but whether this theory successfully explains the reasons is unclear and may be too simplistic. Furthermore, other types of violence are not accounted for which do include contact, for example, mutilation and decapitation which is increasing visible in Mexico (Hanson, 2008). However, it does explicate the use of violence by the state and the police accurately and is explained in the same way, to argue that a build-up of tension raises the possibility of them using both their authority and informal pressure to gain command (Collins, 2008). An example of this is clear in Afghanistan where US and British forces are involved in conflict to regain authority from the Taliban and anti-government groups who presented a significant threat to their own nation and globally (Perl, 2001; Europol, 2010). This demonstrates that violence can be used as a tool to regain control from

others as well as to protect oneself, therefore, this could be expanded to explain why there are high levels of violence in Mexico since the anti-cartel initiative was launched by increasing the militarisation and violence used by the *state* to regain authority.

By identifying drug-related violence which co-exists with government-sponsored violence that is based on the notion of regaining command from another group, it may be necessary to further explore the *methods* of State intervention which have been implemented, and whether they have impacted on the levels of violence in the drugs arena. As each nation is different in terms of its history, the nature of violence, and the responses by government to such behaviour, it is difficult to compare and generalise theories to accommodate all localities; instead, looking at the contextualisation of the violence may provide a more accurate understanding. Mexico, Afghanistan and Colombia are three of the biggest threat countries for drug production and trafficking; each respective government has enforced proactive military strategies but each country also has extremely high levels of violence. There is the possibility, therefore, that such factors could be causally linked in relation to the escalation of violence and as a result, drug traffickers are increasing their own levels of violence in response. One example of this is within Mexico where President Calderon has continually had to justify the 2006 counter-trafficking strategy as violence is now perpetrated by cartels against gang members, officials, journalists and even civilians, in an attempt to inflict fear into others to protect their businesses (US Joint Forces Command (USJFC), 2008; BBC, 2010a). The current levels of violence in the affected areas has become so severe that corruption is also a serious issue as the USJFC (2008:36) state,

‘A serious impediment to growth in Latin America remains the power of criminal gangs and drug cartels to corrupt, distort, and damage the region’s potential... the government, its politicians, police, and judicial infrastructure are all under sustained assault and pressure by criminal gangs and drug cartels. How that internal conflict turns out over the next several years will have a major impact on the stability of the Mexican state’.

This illustrates that the increases in violence since the 2006 strategy was implemented has created further problems which may prove more difficult to eradicate.

The society where violence takes place may be significant, especially if they are politically unstable, leaving them vulnerable to corruption and influence by others (UN, 2010b). Drug trafficking can affect the stability of a country in two ways: by insurgents and illegal armed groups drawing funds from taxing or even managing drug production and/or trafficking; or where countries do not tackle the situation effectively thus drug traffickers become powerful enough to challenge the State through violent confrontations or high-level corruption (UN, 2010b). Clear illustrations of each of these are Afghanistan in relation to the former reason, and both Mexico and Colombia for the latter factor. Under these circumstances, violence can be used to intimidate others and achieve the desired affects, whether this be threatening police officers to help transport drugs through border controls or executing a rival gang member to sustain domination of the area. Subsequently, violence associated with the drug trade may be used as a weapon against vulnerable governments and thus further escalating the authority of drug cartels.

Inter-group conflict may provide a partial explanation for violence as the rivalry between organisations can lead to increased levels of such behaviour to defend their market stronghold. This is significant within Mexico where, since the 2006 anti-cartel strategy was initiated, there has been more noticeable violence due to the competition for the shrinking market (Cook, 2007; UN, 2010b). Although violence has been present for a substantial period

of time, the *nature* of such behaviour has become much more public and extreme, for example, the use of torture, beheadings, and incidents where bodies are left laid out in the street with a message warning others of the cartels capabilities (BBC, 2011d). This shows not only how violence is used to eliminate competition but again, how the strategies implemented by both drug cartels and governments can have dramatic consequences for society. Furthermore, to aid the problem of a declining market, many of the cartels are forming alliances, in particular the Gulf and Tijuana cartels in Mexico, to combat the larger, more dominant organisations as well as law enforcement agencies (Cook, 2007), though there also is evidence of these patterns of behaviour in other areas outside Mexico.

Whereas in the past governments would not have become embroiled in inter-group violence between drug traffickers, the implementation of particular strategies to combat these organisations has meant that such violence has spiralled (Grayson, 2007). Although evident in the areas mentioned above, similar counter-trafficking methods have been instigated elsewhere with comparable consequences, one such example being Rio de Janeiro where drug traffickers regularly battle with the police. Traffickers create barriers around favelas as the police are believed to be creating unwanted violence in the form of retaliation by cartels, thus establishing an ongoing battle between the two groups which is likely to escalate (Blair, 2009). This became apparent in August 2010 when police intercepted a drug trafficking gang but in the process, caused a forty minute gun battle with the eventual demise of one woman and four police officers injured (Phillips, 2010). Evidently, if the drug traffickers were left undisturbed, such violence would decrease, providing an explanation as to why the levels of violence are so high in areas which have a significant presence of law enforcement. However, it is unrealistic to ignore the actions of traffickers, despite the potential for decreasing the numbers of fatalities, as such groups will inevitably demand increasing power and may challenge the authority and control of government, therefore, this is an ongoing dilemma that must be considered when reviewing current strategies employed to counter drug-trafficking organisations.

Overall, when seeking an explanation for the violence associated with the drugs trade, perhaps the best approach is found via an examination of *the context* in which such violence takes place and the surrounding factors affecting that particular setting. Although socio-cultural theory may help to identify the significance of unity in people's backgrounds that join drug organisations, it does very little to explain any of the violence already associated with it and the reasons why this behaviour can become so extreme. If consideration is given as to *why* these individuals perform violent acts and how this can benefit them, the underlying causes are identified; authority, control and reputation are essential. Without these elements, upper-level drug traffickers are unable to maintain market and location domination thus violence is used as a weapon both to sustain profits and also establish fear in potential competitors. Collins' (2008) micro-sociological theory briefly identifies this issue but fails to fully formulate a comprehensive explanation for violence in the drugs trade. Consequently, to fully understand the violence inflicted in a particular country, a range of different factors need to be reviewed, particularly the strategies implemented by law enforcement, and the implications of such approaches on society as (Williams, 2009:1) notes, 'inflammatory language and hyperbolic rhetoric do nothing to clarify the issues... Moreover, too few commentaries focus on the reasons for this increase in violence or what it really means'.

## **Chapter Six: Current responses**

Drug trafficking is a worldwide phenomenon which is unable to be tackled singlehandedly (UN, 2009b; Drug Policy Alliance, 2010; Kemp, 2011b). However, its international nature makes it incredibly difficult to enforce globally consistent strategies. Recently there has been a shift in emphasis away from 'safety' towards 'security' as the risks it presents have become more significant and recognisable (Hammersley, 2008: 127). This has triggered a number of policy initiatives being implemented as well as the introduction of international agencies at all levels across the globe in an attempt to curb the drugs trade (Dorn and White, 1999; Europol, 2010). Furthermore, nationally each country has applied relevant responses to the main problems they are experiencing. For instance, Colombia is the biggest producer of cocaine so has employed extensive eradication techniques, meanwhile the UK has focused on the availability and abuse of drugs. The effectiveness of these responses, both nationally and internationally, will be analysed in more depth in this chapter to establish whether they are helping or hindering by escalating the violence by these trafficking groups.

Many countries have been experiencing the detrimental effects of drug trafficking and the chaos it causes for a number of years (EMCDDA, 2010). To address this a number of national initiatives have been implemented to try to combat and reduce the drugs trade, particularly in the most problematic areas such as Colombia, with the introduction of 'Plan Colombia' (Cooper, 2001). Since it was first implemented in 2000 the focus has slightly shifted, with emphasis currently on a punitive approach with a heavy military presence in an attempt to regain control from trafficking groups and their extreme violence. This has been applied using techniques including: the eradication of crops, the capture and assassination of leading drug traffickers, extraditions, interrogation, raids and even judicial reform (EMCDDA, 2010). This demonstrates the determination of the nations to try to ensure that they tackle the drug traffickers from every angle possible and remove any loopholes. Although they may have had the best intentions, for many of these countries applying these tactics, it was the first time a radical and hard-line approach had been adopted against drugs so its success was optimistic (Mexico Weekly, 2011).

Statistics are constantly documented in the media to illustrate the success of national strategies. However, these need to be taken with caution as the bigger picture should be evaluated as many of the responses, especially in the eminent production areas, may boast reductions but fail to mention the underlying consequences. For example, 'Plan Colombia' statistics are increasingly used to portray its success, however, it fails to mention that the acreage devoted to coca cultivation in neighbouring areas, such as Peru and Bolivia, has increased significantly (Carpenter, 2004; EMCDDA, 2010). Therefore, rather than eradicating the problem it has merely displaced it which can create further complications. For instance, in Peru and Bolivia the production of some coca is legal so distinguishing between this and what is used for illicit substances can prove difficult (EMCDDA, 2010:9).

Within the media these operations are often presented as successful the capture and assassinations of a number of leading traffickers responsible for large scale operations (BBC, 2010a). These are believed to be making a significant impact as it helps reduce the key members responsible (BBC, 2010b). However, despite a number of high-profile assassinations across the world, including Pablo Escobar, there has been little effect (Kemp, 2011b). Instead of destroying the entire group or cartel, it has merely 'slashed a few tyres' (The Economist, 2010). This demonstrates that there will always be someone else to take

command to ensure that their business survives. Therefore attempts to target the cartel members themselves are proving ineffective and are causing more problems by filling the prisons with like-minded people who can form alliances and continue their involvement in the drug markets rather than deterring or reducing supply (Macqueen, 2010).

Paradoxically, this does not mean the gangs remain unscathed, the demise and capture of leading members often upsets the group dynamics and can cause them to fight for powerful and profitable leadership positions (BBC, 2010a; Mexico Weekly, 2011). This is not restricted to within the cartels but has resulted in inter-group conflict between them once a weakness in leadership is established, causing a fight for a shrinking market (Cook, 2007; BBC, 2010a; UN, 2010b; Mexico Weekly, 2011). Therefore, rather than deter trafficking groups, the aggressive enforcement style, when implemented, has caused drug-related violence to rise due to the competition it creates. Although this may be viewed as positive as it demonstrates that it is having an impact (BBC, 2010b; UN, 2010b), the negative consequences for the communities and lengths they are prepared to go to shows that they have no intentions to surrender.

Violence has become so frequent in many areas that it has become an integral part of people's lives (Kemp, 2011b). No longer is this confined within the gangs but has left everyone vulnerable, including journalists, police officers, prosecutors and even civilians who pose a threat. Some argue that the levels of drug-related violence may have increased due to the traffickers attempting to force the government to back down by terrorising the public and killing civilians (Mexico Weekly, 2011). This is particularly visible in Mexico where the cartels have resisted the 2006 counter-trafficking initiative and have begun trails of torture, brutal killings, and mutilated corpses against anyone in their way, often leaving the bodies in public to act as propaganda for their defiance (Keeley, 2009). This shows that the cartels are retaliating using the same methods employed by the enforcement agencies but taking the violence to extremes in a bid to confront the government. If such an approach was not implemented the trafficking groups would not retort and extreme violence would not be necessary in these circumstances.

Consequently, the public are increasingly losing their support for the strategies and hold the government responsible for increasing the levels of violence (BBC, 2011e). Without support from the communities, strategies are unable to work effectively as cooperation and community enforcement are essential to combat such a large and lucrative trade. Therefore for Mexico, and many similar nations, an aggressive method by enforcement agencies only generates an 'us vs. them' mentality instead of a community response which is essential.

One of the biggest hindrances to the effectiveness of these strategies is corruption which can completely undermine all previous successes that have been made (Macqueen, 2010; Kemp, 2011b). For instance within Afghanistan President Karzai released five drug traffickers who were sentenced to maximum terms on an election promise. Although the exact reasons are unknown for their release it is clear that there was substantial evidence against them so there would be few excuses for their acquittal (Macqueen, 2010). This shows that the full potential of a strategy is unable to be attained when the organisers and enforcers are not fully committed. Despite efforts by national strategies to overhaul the criminal justice system, especially police forces, there still remains high levels of corruption (BBC, 2010a). This may be worsened by the increased levels of violence which creates more dangerous situations for law enforcement officials who may be bribed or threatened into corruption to not only protect

themselves but their families. Therefore due to the money, power, and threat the drug traffickers pose, corruption can never be eliminated only reduced (Bean, 2008).

The US government officially called for a 'War on Drugs' over forty years ago and consequently the nation plays a leading role in the push of aggressive counter-drug tactics across the globe (Arnold, 2005; Drug Policy Alliance, 2010). Particular emphasis has always been placed on Central and South America as they provide the crucial production and transit routes for cocaine to the US and has been pushed by Barack Obama recently (Hough, 2010). However, this does not prevent further financial assistance and support for other nations in need. Despite the fundamental benefits of assistance from the US through financial help and military support, it has not escaped criticism. Each new initiative launched in Washington's international campaign may begin by touting examples of successes but ultimately reality intrudes and it becomes clear that it has not stemmed drug supply or the traffickers involved (Carpenter, 2004). To combat this, the existing strategy is quietly buried and a new one launched in its place. For example in March 2010 the US and Mexico refocused the counter-narcotics strategy, the Merida Initiative, away from military assistance towards strengthening civilian law enforcement and rebuilding the communities crippled by crime and poverty (Hanson, 2008; New York Times, 2010). Although this shows that the US are eager to help implement more effective responses, the abandonment of old tactics may be perceived by the drug traffickers as weakness and a sign that their aggressive resistance is successful.

Over the past ten years the world's leading economic powers have joined together under the understanding that drug trafficking is an international problem that will require a united response if progress is to be made and have driven important changes in international policy and the way responses are developed (Fazey, 2007). This now combines a mixture of intelligence-led techniques as well as proactively helping other nations to implement policy on the ground and target particular problem areas (ibid). For example, the UK is currently offering assistance to Colombia to tackle the cocaine trade and drug barons causing chaos within the country (BBC, 2010e). Furthermore, this has enabled legislative reform and progress to be made which would otherwise have been controversial had they not been shrouded in the drugs war mantle (Green, 1998:130-131). The core driving force which has initiated this and continually pushes policy is the G8 (Fazey, 2007). This demonstrates the continuing determination from many of the leading developed countries to tackle these drug traffickers and assist many of the under-developing countries where production and transit are prominent to share the responsibility (UN, 2009b).

Various international agencies have been established with the sole purpose of concentrating on the most effective techniques to tackle the drug trade. Examples of this include: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), The World Customs Organisation (WCO), Interpol the International Police Organisation, Europol the European Police Organisation, and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) (Fazey, 2007; Interpol, 2009; Europol, 2010; UN, 2010b). Although each has a slightly different objective, they all combine proactive methods to tackle drug trafficking from every source. For instance, Interpol is the world's largest police organisation with 188 member countries. Its primary role is the identification of new drug trafficking trends and criminal organisations operating internationally but it also provides support to national and international police bodies (Interpol, 2009; Interpol, 2010). This is not confined to tackling the supply aspects of drugs markets but is representative for the entire trade, with specialised agencies, such as SOCA, concentrating on patterns developing in the UK and distributing the information globally. Therefore much of their work is invaluable and has helped create a more balanced approach

which focuses on development, security, justice and health to reduce both the supply and demand (UN, 2010b).

These international agencies have had a positive effect on responding to drug trafficking as it has matured and become more receptive to the needs of those most seriously affected by drawing on expertise from the international community (UN, 2010b). The efficiency of these agencies may not be evident when considering the scale of the drugs trade, but they have helped gather intelligence which is vital to be able to develop techniques, track current trends and national strategies, and make sure the most effective response is used. This has not necessarily had a direct impact on targeting the violence caused by upper-level drug traffickers but assistance is given to the nations in need to help respond and offer intelligence which can identify where strategies have gone wrong.

Today the responses against upper-level drug traffickers have adopted a variety of methods ranging from aggressive front-line tactics to intelligence-led observations. Evidently, the national strategies which have initiated violence to stop the upper-level drug traffickers have only begun a violent war with no sign of surrender which is hindering progress due to the consequential fear and corruption. Whether the international agencies and their approach will work more effectively is too early to tell but shows more promising signs by developing the intelligence and trends to have a complete understanding of the problem on a larger scale rather than displacing them elsewhere. However, as enforcement continues to try and crack-down on the upper-level drug traffickers, repercussions of extreme violence being used for protection may only worsen in an attempt to protect their criminal activities.



## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion**

It is not an understatement to argue that the illicit drug trade is the largest form of organised crime in the world (Mares, 2006; Roman et al, 2007; Bean, 2008; Hammersley, 2008; UN, 2010b). The substantial profits generated are often contributed towards other licit and illegal activities, which further infuses the drug trade in society and makes it difficult to disentangle and eradicate. This has a detrimental impact in some manner on everyone, from the families of the British soldiers fighting the war in Afghanistan, to the nations whose countries are on the verge of civil war resulting from the extreme violence initiated by the upper-level drug traffickers. Therefore, this presents a significant global threat in requiring international cooperation. The modernisation of society runs parallel with the drugs trade with the increasing availability, urbanisation, transport links, and technology which have enabled the global harms to become much more visible. Consequently, a number of national and international initiatives have been launched to tackle both the supply and demand aspects of drug trafficking (Dorn et al, 1992; Mares, 2006). However, this has not necessary produced beneficial results and the consequences may be hindering progress due to the enhanced levels of violence.

Violence is clearly embedded within the drug trade and has always existed as evidence of their gang law (BBC, 2010a; Kemp, 2011b). This is evident in a variety of different forms, with the most extreme originating from the upper-level traffickers, such as Pablo Escobar and the links to Al Qaeda. Although it is inherent, over recent years the nature has changed and become much more overt and intense. This is particularly noticeable in Mexico where upper-level drug trafficking groups increasingly have to use extreme violence as propaganda of their determination to remain dominant not only to rivals but law enforcement. Evidently, instead of seeking to evade the government, many of these upper-level traffickers choose to confront and usurp it (UN, 2010b). The resulting fear this causes in societies creates further problems related to corruption and public safety.

Upper-level drug traffickers increasingly use violence as a weapon to exert their control and sustain their reputations by intimidating others. Although many argue that the violence used is innate or psychological in some way, it is difficult to generalise and so it is better to consider the individual differences. This applies individual characteristics as well as the environments in which violence occurs. Rather than intentionally wanting to harm people, it may be a response to the environment and needs to be explored in terms of the context it takes place in to fully understand the explanations for their behaviour. For example, within Afghanistan the insurgents use violence as a means of protection from the soldiers fighting to dismantle them as well as for terrorism to present their messages to the West. This shows that violence is not homogeneous, even at the upper-level of the drug market, and can be used for inter-group conflict, intimidation and against law enforcement officials.

The initiatives implemented by law enforcement agencies are incredibly important to ensuring that current problems are not inflamed. Tactics which may appear to show strategies are successful, such as the capture of leading traffickers and reductions in production rates can have secondary consequences which may be more harmful than the original intentions. For instance, capturing upper-level drug traffickers is constructive for disrupting the activities of the group, but drug trafficking involves a network of people which cannot be eradicated or deterred simply by eliminating one individual. Instead the dynamics are likely to change and can cause amplified violence as members of a group or rival groups fight for dominance of a

shrinking market (Cook, 2007; BBC, 2010b; UN, 2010b; Mexico Weekly, 2011). Evidently, the aggressive enforcement responses have triggered more drug-related violence, especially in regards to upper-level drug traffickers as the nature has changed and become more overt and extreme than before. Whether this is directly causal to the tactics employed or the existing volatile nature which has made the nations more susceptible is unknown. Clearly what is needed is a new approach that will not take such a fire-brigade response and will be more proactive.

Nevertheless, international agencies have recognised the need for a consistent strategy across the borders to be able to combat such a large scale trade rather than rely on the primary nations alone. Assistance is constantly given to these countries facing problems and even those where new trends are emerging to prevent issues escalating any further. Although this is a step in the right direction, the drug trade is still alive and kicking and the successes made have not yet been detrimental enough to cause concern to the traffickers (Kemp, 2011b).

The drug trade is such a large economic activity to bring under control regardless of the initiatives implemented and the international cooperation that it seems almost impossible to eliminate (Carpenter, 2004; Arnold, 2005; Bhattachayya, 2005; Bean, 2008; Macqueen, 2010). As the trade grows and law enforcement attempts to continue its 'War on Drugs', the interconnected violence can only be assumed to escalate to ensure its survival using their most powerful and deadly weapon.

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## Appendix A

Diagram One:

