6 Insurgencies

Key Terms

- De facto control
- Liberation insurgencies
- Provocation effect
- Religious insurgencies
- Revolutionary insurgencies
- Separatist insurgencies

This chapter explains what is meant by insurgencies. It demonstrates that the primary raison d'être of these groups is to achieve some political goal (such as more autonomy or improved socio-economic conditions) by challenging the host state through armed struggle or challenging other paramilitary groups. The most important goal of the chapter is to demonstrate what the difference is between an insurgency and a terrorist group, two concepts that have often been conflated. Insurgencies can commit acts of terrorism, but they are not the same as terrorist groups. This chapter explains why this is the case.

Definition

An insurgency is a substate group that wants to bring about political change, obtain power and political control, and seek some transformation of governance (Kiras, 2007). Thus they want to undermine a constituted authority through an armed struggle. They often have greater military capacity vis-à-vis the state, compared to other violent non-state actors; they also have a standing army to help them accomplish their goals. Because insurgencies are engaged in battle, they have a more visible structure and are usually not clandestine organizations, like a terrorist sleeper cell. One of the key distinguishing features of an insurgency is that they exercise some territorial control, which they use as their base. Being able to control territory constrains their strategy, and is indicative of other capabilities. Because they can control territory, they also often need to build governance structures in the areas that they control (de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca, 2012). Thus they are not just trying to fight more effectively

than the state, they are also trying to administer more effectively as well. Today's insurgencies also have more advanced recruitment methods and greater access to weapons (Beckett, 2005). They can operate in urban terrain and are more involved in organized crime.

Political Ideology and Objectives

Insurgencies emerge over a range of issues involving territory, history, ideology and leadership (Rid and Hecker, 2009). However, insurgencies often have very concrete political goals, usually separatist or ideological. They want to spread their ideology and often may hold popular assemblies and local meetings (Palma, 2015: 490). Here we focus on four different types of insurgencies: liberation, separatist, reform/revolutionary and religious/traditional.

'Liberation' insurgencies seek independence from colonial rule. These were common after World War II when many states, particularly in Africa, were seeking independence from foreign control, such as in the insurgencies that developed in Algeria, Mozambique and Angola. In the case of Algeria, the National Liberation Front (FLN) was the umbrella organization that advocated armed efforts to gain independence from France, which had ruled Algeria since 1834. In 1954, the FLN formed an armed wing known as the ELN. As with many liberation insurgencies, after independence was achieved, the armed wing was converted into the regular armed forces.

'Separatist' insurgencies want to represent an ethnic group and form an independent state. They renounce the political community and aim to create a new independent political community. The drive for secession is sometimes mostly ethnic, but could be also religious, racial or a combination of these (Harris, 2010). In some cases, they may be willing to accept greater autonomy. Separatist insurgencies can take place in strong states that happen to have substate identities that are particularly intense such as the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and the Chechens in Russia.

'Reform' or 'revolutionary' insurgencies seek radical reform of the national government, such as the National Resistance Army in Uganda or the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front in Ethiopia. This category of reform insurgency is similar to the category of an 'egalitarian' insurgency, which is focused on creating a new system based on an equal distribution of income that can help radically transform society (O'Neill, 2001). Most revolutionary and

reform insurgencies aim to make society more egalitarian and to advocate on behalf of the poor, such as the FARC and Shining Path of Peru. Many leftist insurgencies became obsolete after the Cold War ended because these groups were no longer receiving state support from the Eastern bloc nations and the USSR. The end of the Cold War also led to less ideological commitment to socialist/communist ideals (Robison et al., 2006). In some cases, the reform insurgencies were able to become part of the government, such as was the case in Nepal, with its Maoist insurgency.

'Religious' insurgencies are focused on transforming the state into one that promotes certain religious ideals. Islamic fundamentalism is often noted for being the inspiration for insurgencies around the world, such as against the Soviets in Afghanistan, against the Philippine government and in Sudan and Iraq. Some scholars have argued that religious insurgencies are most likely to take place in states that are heterogeneous, and where Islam may be forced to confront Western values (Metz, 1994). Others have argued that religious insurgencies can also be anarchic because they aim to eliminate institutionalized political arrangements that they deem to be illegitimate (O'Neill, 2001). Some of the religious insurgencies appeared to have this aim, refusing to engage in the conventional political system or to respect the idea of the state, simply because it is viewed as a Western import. These religious insurgencies discourage participation in the current political system and focus on advocating values that are rooted in their religion. Some elements of the Iraqi insurgency appear to be rejecting government as a whole (Berman, 2011). Other Iraqi insurgency groups aimed initially to expel the US from Iraq, but also provide Sunni tribes with greater representation and power. Examples of insurgencies are presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Examples of Insurgencies that Commit Acts of Terrorism and Examples of Terrorist Groups

Insurgencies that commit acts of terrorism (hold territory)	Terrorist groups (do not hold territory)
Boko Haram (Nigeria)	ETA
IS (Syria and Iraq)	Baader-Meinhof Gang
FARC (Colombia)	Weather Underground
Al-Shabaab (Somalia)	Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN)
Taliban (Afghanistan)	Red Brigades
PKK (Turkey)	Aum Shinrikyo
LTTE (Sri Lanka)	Abu Nidal Organization
Naxalites (India)	Abu Sayyaf
Haqqani Network (Afghanistan)	Jemaah Islamiyah
Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) (Philippines)	Japanese Red Army
Shining Path (Peru)	Egyptian Islamic Jihad

Case Study The Zapatistas

Few insurgent movements are able to maintain a commitment to their ideals without having to eventually compromise these ideals by resorting to acts of violence, theft and crime that are worse than the misdeeds of their opponents. The Zapatistas are one of the few insurgent groups that have not fallen prey to the lure of more lucrative options of funding.

The Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) is an insurgent group committed to calling the world's attention to the growing gaps between rich and poor, highlighting the plight of the poor people of Chiapas in particular. The group called for greater democratization in Mexico and land reform which had been mandated by the 1917 Constitution but ignored by the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) for over six decades. The group did not demand independence but aimed for greater autonomy, with natural resource extraction in Chiapas benefiting the people of Chiapas directly.

The group's origins stretched back over a decade before the armed insurgency took place, initially attracting peasants. Focusing on an egalitarian agenda, young women were also encouraged to join. The Zapatistas went public on 1 January 1994 – when the North American Free Trade Agreement came into effect. They claimed that they needed to opt for an armed struggle because peaceful protests had yielded few results. An estimated 3,000 armed insurgents seized key towns in Chiapas, freed prisoners in one of the jails and set fire to several police buildings and military barracks. The next day the Mexican army was able to counter-attack and intense fighting broke out, with the Zapatistas suffering heavy casualties and being forced to retreat into the jungle. Massive protests in both Mexico and abroad, however, forced a halt to the offensive, and a ceasefire on 12 January 1994 ended the armed clashes. The Zapatistas retained some land for over a year, but by February 1995 the Mexican government had broken the ceasefire and overran the territory under Zapatista control.

The Zapatistas enjoyed tremendous popular support through their media and propaganda campaign. The Internet provided the means for rapid dissemination (Cleaver, 1998). Though much of civil society did not want to engage in an uprising against the Mexican government, it was also not apathetic enough to do nothing, and the general mood of civil society was supportive of negotiations (Esteva, 1999). This support did not come just from local sources but also from around the globe. Grass-roots activists from over 40 countries and five continents attended both intercontinental meetings that the group later held (Cleaver, 1998). Much of the support was generated by the uncompromising ideals of the organization. While other violent non-state actors have resorted to targeting citizens or getting involved in organized crime, the Zapatistas are one of the few who have avoided these traps, sticking to their ideals.

The goals of the Zapatistas extended beyond greater autonomy for the poor people of Chiapas and the rights of indigenous groups. It is a movement that targeted those who have been excluded and oppressed and negatively affected by neo-liberalism (Olesen, 2004: 261). At the same time, the movement did not reject liberal democracy but focused on improving the quality of democracy both at the national and international level. Thus part of the group's wider critique took aim at the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the World Bank.

Strategy and Tactics

Insurgencies engage in long and tense campaigns of irregular warfare (one exception was the insurgency in Cuba led by Fidel Castro which was a very quick victory). Tactical offensives, with local numerical superiority, are carried out to further stretch enemy resources. Insurgencies use guerrilla hit-and-run attacks on supply lines and small and isolated units. They usually have time on their side, as they may have a stronger commitment than the state to wage a long war of attrition. Insurgent groups have lasted several decades in countries such as Guatemala, Eritrea, Western Sahara and Laos. They focus on using their strengths in mobilizing and organizing against the weaknesses of the more powerful state.

Insurgencies can engage in campaigns against an opponent where they have better knowledge of the terrain and are able to control territory better. Afghan guerrillas had better knowledge of the mountains than the Soviets. Chechen fighters had better knowledge of the urban jungle, buildings, etc. than the Russians (Schaefer, 2010). Iraqi insurgents had better knowledge of Fallujah. States often abandon the countryside to defend more valuable resources of the state in urban areas and military bases. Insurgencies can get control over some space, especially if the government is not strong enough to control the entire country.

Because the goal of insurgencies is to gain the loyalty of a large support group, this impacts their choice of tactics. Insurgencies of the past mostly focused on targeting the state in an armed struggle. Insurgencies of the past had engaged in selective violence, usually targeting the state and the military. Though civilians may be victims of insurgencies, they are not the prime target. Insurgencies of today have been more likely to use terror tactics or at least have made alliances or links with noted terror organizations. In spite of their more frequent use of terror, they are equipped to be able to fight against a military. The IS is an example of an insurgency/de facto state that uses and encourages the use of terror (for more on the IS, see Chapter 7).

In comparison to terrorist groups, insurgencies typically were bound by conventions that entailed moral distinctions between belligerents and neutrals, combatants and non-combatants. Some targets were deemed inappropriate and illegitimate. Terrorists, on the other hand, refuse to accept the conventional and moral limits that defined actions by insurgencies. In the past, the use of terrorist tactics have been discouraged by insurgencies (Wickham-Crowley, 1990). Civilians were not usually targeted by insurgencies because it undermines the

legitimacy of the group. But today, acts of terrorism can also occur in the context of an armed conflict where basic human rights are repeatedly violated. Some insurgency campaigns are particularly dirty, targeting civilians such as was the case with UNITA. Today, many insurgency campaigns are no longer bound by conventions and have created terror cells that engage in brutal behaviour on behalf of the insurgency.

One of the more powerful insurgencies that used terrorism as part of an armed struggle strategy is the LTTE (for more on the Tamil Tigers, see the case study in this chapter). In addition to fighting the Sri Lankan government by conventional means, the LTTE targeted civilians and targets with high symbolic value.[1] The group has killed high-profile political figures in both Sri Lanka and India, including Indian prime minister candidate Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993 (the only group able to assassinate a sitting president), and former Sri Lankan Prime Minister and presidential hopeful Gamini Dissanayake in 1994. Former president Mrs Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga was also wounded in a botched suicide attack in December 1999, permanently losing her eye. It has also killed moderate Tamil politicians. Of 37 prominent politicians assassinated by LTTE cadres, 24 were Tamils.

1. The LTTE used a suicide truck bomb on the newly inaugurated World Trade Centre in Colombo in October 1997, killing 18 people and injuring over 100.

In 1987, the LTTE began an unrelenting suicide campaign, often targeting civilians. From 1984 to 2004 the LTTE killed 3,045 civilians and injured 3,704. The bloodiest year of the terrorism campaign was the year the campaign started, 1987, when 547 civilians were killed. In total, the group has been responsible for 1,660 acts of terror (START database; Kumaraswamy and Copland, 2013).

Structure and Recruitment

Structure

Insurgencies of the past were very hierarchical and organized around the Maoist notion of the need to have a core leadership with a degree of hierarchy. Given the military function of insurgencies, they often have to operate with some hierarchy. Hierarchy is also needed to ensure that forces remain intact.

However, the more an organization is decentralized, the more it is able to survive and regroup after an attack on the organization (Brafman and Beckstrom, 2006). The other issue is that groups that are too hierarchical may have charismatic leadership that is resistant to bureaucratization, which is important for administering territory (Asal et al., 2012).

The Shining Path is an example of an organization that had a mixture of both network and hierarchy. The group was founded by Abimael Guzmán and aimed to overthrow the Peruvian government and implement a communist system. Before it dismantled, the group had a national directorate, a central committee and several regional commands. It was Guzmán, however, who made the final call on all decisions on the group's strategy, objectives and aims. The rank-and-file members were organized into cells that had little contact with the hierarchy and were able to make many day-to-day decisions on their own. The network allowed the group to operate over a vast geographic area (Dishman, 2005).

The PKK has had a hierarchical leadership with Abdullah Öcalan at the top and a chairmanship council, a central committee and a central disciplinary board below him, in descending order. Öcalan has been considered ruthless and willing to suppress any internal leadership challenges. From 1983 to 1985, Öcalan ordered the murder of 11 high-level former or current PKK members (Marcus, 2009). Öcalan also wanted to ensure that no other autonomous Kurdish organization emerged that could challenge his claim to represent the Kurds. The PKK has been successful at creating a central system in which all Kurdish organizations are chained hierarchically. Öcalan has been able to maintain youth, women's and students' organizations under his organizational command. Media sources are also under his influence. Unofficial members known as commissars always accompany Kurdish politicians. Kurdish political elites are investigated thoroughly by PKK leadership. In 1999, Öcalan was captured and he has remained behind bars. However, his imprisonment did not signal the end of his grip on the PKK. He has had regular contact with lawyers who are able to deliver his orders to his followers, such as whether to engage or refrain from violence (Roth and Sever, 2007).[2]

2. From prison Öcalan directed followers to refrain from violence in 2002, but in 2004 he ordered his followers to restart the conflict, and violence resumed.

The LTTE was tightly organized and led (until 2009) by its highly charismatic leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran. Prabhakaran was known for his brutality and

uncompromising attitude. He allowed little dissent to his power and ideas. In fact, any dissent within the organization over strategy and direction led to murder within the group, with many Tamil leaders killed as a result (Whittaker, 2013).

Increasingly, modern insurgencies have become more and more operationally decentralized. The FARC in Colombia was more hierarchically controlled, while the Taliban in Afghanistan was more networked (Sanin and Giustozzi, 2010). Insurgencies in Iraq are also much more networked and diffuse. They are looser and more ambiguous (Hoffman and McCormick, 2004). There is a constellation of cells that are gravitating towards one another, carrying out armed attacks, trading weapons, partaking in joint training and exchanging intelligence. These alliances are constantly shifting, however (Williams, 2009: 13).

Insurgencies have an army that may be well organized into fighting units, with a command and rank structure. Insurgencies have developed training routines and may even wear uniforms (Palma, 2015). They are also specialized in executing operations. FARC developed an impressive military structure that was designed to confront the national military head-on if needed. The organization deliberately paralleled that of the Colombian army. FARC's primary tactical unit consisted of 150–200 armed combatants. In 2000, FARC had control over 70 different fronts that were organized into seven regional blocs, but by 2008 it had lost over 20 fronts and half of its fighters.

Some individuals may be focused on military operations while other individuals are responsible for recruitment or the dissemination of propaganda. Insurgencies often have internal rules of conduct of violent actions, to help maintain the legitimacy of the group (Kiras, 2007). They may have guidebooks that detail their choice of targets and what their relationship should be with the population. These guides may also provide information on how prisoners should be treated and how recruitment should take place.

Insurgencies may also have military manuals that outline their military tactics, operations and strategy. FARC operated with a complex manual. The Naxalites, a communist insurgency in India, had a 332-page army and air-defence manual. The Taliban's manual was over 150 pages (Bangerter, 2012). These military manuals also make clear how the command structure works, how decisions are

made and who has the power to make decisions. This is especially helpful if insurgencies have just experienced a merger between several groups.

Though Chechen groups have historically operated very independently, they have always retained some obligation of mutual defence during times of war. Clans could be quickly linked and connected into larger clan confederations that could cooperate to defend themselves. The Chechen insurgency initially resembled a commander and cadre organization, which was more similar to the Russian army. It then transformed into horizontal networks after the first war instead of using a unified guerrilla army. In general, Chechen networks do not have a clear hierarchy and have quicker operational flexibility. There is faster exchange of information between nodes because information does not have to travel up the command structure. There may be a central gang dominated by a powerful leader, but the organization is more networked with many different groups radiating from the centre. The lack of a clear command after the assassination of Chechen leader Jokhar Dadaev in April 1996 led to an increased assault on Russian military outposts, as attacks were no longer waiting to be coordinated from the top.

Recruitment

Insurgencies try to establish moral superiority with the local population. They have to carry out a campaign of political indoctrination to attract new recruits. Insurgency troops tend to come from the lower classes and are often composed of young males. They also target an alienated population who have been disenfranchised. Although often forced to join, they may be lured in with money and resources. Child soldiers have often been used as well. Also common is to recruit students and peasants. Ethnic-based and religious-based insurgencies focus on their constituency, often targeting religious establishments in the case of the latter. Insurgencies also recruit from the prison populations. The Shining Path targeted mostly young vulnerable students who would eventually become teachers returning to their villages to carry on the movement’s message. The group also recruited among the highland indigenous communities.

In the case of the LTTE, rank-and-file members are mostly recruited from the lower middle classes and all LTTE cadres come from the lower castes. The most militant members have been drawn from the higher castes and tend to be university-educated, English-speaking professionals (Hudson and Majeska,

1999). Tamil Tigers have recruited child soldiers, relying on a ‘baby brigade’ of boys and girls aged 10–16. In 1998, a Sri Lankan military report claimed that 60% of all Tamil fighters were 18 years or younger. The LTTE was accused of having up to 5,794 child soldiers in its ranks since 2001. About one-third of its membership is women, and women have participated in about one-third of the group’s suicide attacks (Schweitzer and Schweitzer, 2002: 84)

The LTTE kept the numbers of the group small and maintained a high standard of training. LTTE members were prohibited from smoking cigarettes and consuming alcohol in any form. They were required to avoid their family members and avoid communication with them. Initially LTTE members were prohibited from having love affairs or sexual relationships as they could deter their prime motive, but this policy changed after Prabhakaran married Mathivathani Erambu in October 1984.

The major challenge in the recruitment of insurgents is maintaining a large number of capable fighters and a steady flow of motivated recruits. This is all the more difficult given that insurgents are perpetually engaging in acts of violence that impose risk (Gates, 2002). Large death tolls not only diminish the number of active members but may also discourage more individuals from joining the organization. Moreover, the most valuable recruits are usually the hardest to retain (Frisch, 2012).

Funding and Support

Funding

Insurgencies of the past relied on state support to fund their operations. Many left-leaning countries were accused of supporting insurgencies. However, state support has waned in recent years. This loss of state support has led to three consequences. First, insurgencies have started to rely on more economic tactics in warfare, such as terrorism, instead of targeting the state through an armed struggle, which is much more costly. Second, insurgencies have had to forge links with criminal gangs and other violent non-state actors. Third, insurgencies have had to find other sources of funding to finance themselves.

Decline in state sponsorship has led to more involvement in the drug trade, smuggling, extortion and kidnapping. Insurgencies that are heavily involved in

different forms of illegal businesses are referred to as commercial insurgencies (Metz, 1994; Palma, 2015). Chapter 2 detailed the crime-terror nexus and the emergence of hybrid groups. These insurgencies began with political motivations but became lured by profits to focus most of their activities on illegal activities that were highly lucrative. The LTTE were highly involved in organized crime such as credit card fraud and drug trafficking, but they also received support from the diaspora, particularly in Canada. Some of these donations were legitimate while others were obtained by means of coercion and extortion. Boko Haram receives most of its funding from bank robberies, extortion, ransoms and kidnappings. They have also received some funding from the al-Qaeda global network. Al-Shabaab has also engaged in theft, stealing equipment from various organizations and looting UN compounds and private media stations (Kelley, 2014).

Many insurgencies, such as the Shining Path, are also involved in the drug trade. Involvement in the drug trade helped the group to improve its military capabilities. It moved into the coca-cultivating Upper Huallaga valley in 1984 and established itself as a middleman. It charged landing fees for any aircraft that was transporting drugs to Colombia to be processed and trafficked (Kay, 1999: 102). Though the Shining Path has had a reputation for sticking to a highly dogmatic ideology, it became more flexible and moderate in its relations with the local population producing coca. The PKK is said to control about 30% of the laboratories that refine heroin in and around Turkey, with the rest being controlled by the Turkish mafia (Steinberg, 2008). The PKK and IRA have also been linked with the smuggling of contraband cigarettes (Shelley and Melzer, 2008).

Of the nine major drug-producing countries, only Bolivia and Thailand have not experienced armed conflict. Most insurgents exacerbate the drug trade since they have a serious need to finance their conflict efforts. Only the Zapatistas have avoided getting involved in the drug trade. They have received significant funding from donations and believe that their involvement in the drug trade would jeopardize such donations (Dishman, 2001: 47).

Laos has an insurgency comprising the Hmong minority that inhabit the country's opium-producing hills, which has enabled the group to wage a low-intensity insurgency with the communist government since 1975. All of the major non-state actors in Afghanistan have also been heavily involved in the drug trade,

such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezbe-Islami and factions of the Northern Alliance (Goodhand, 2000).

Sources of support

An insurgency is often supported by a popular movement, fuelled by deep-seated grievances such as relative deprivation (terrorist groups may also have deep-seated grievances). They aim to win over the population and undermine authority. No insurgency can be successful without the support of the population; its centre of gravity is the population's support. Because of this, insurgencies will try to achieve a different level of embeddedness with overall society, which makes them different from totally marginalized organizations. The insurgency has to show that it can be stronger than the state or other insurgencies.

Insurgencies gain support by provoking the state and demonstrating strength. With the former, known as the 'provocation effect', an insurgency uses violence against the state to force the state to overreact, which will only serve to reinforce the insurgent's cause. Over-retaliation and oppressive measures will push more people to support the insurgency. With the 'demonstration effect', an insurgency attempts to appear stronger than it is. Insurgencies need to demonstrate to the public that the state is ineffective and that the insurgency will likely win, making it important to join the winning side (McCormick and Giordano, 2007).

Insurgencies need sizeable support for their cause, which moderated their behaviour in the past. Che Guevara rejected using terrorism as a tactic due to fears that it would alienate the population (Hashim, 2013: 8). Today's insurgencies seem to care little about whether or not they should resort to terrorism. Since terrorism as a tactic has become more commonly used, most insurgencies target civilians at some point.

Insurgencies of the past often received significant support from foreign governments and possibly other violent non-state actors (Schneckener, 2006, 2007). Venezuela has supported FARC. Libya has supported the MILF and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Countries such as Eritrea, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Djibouti have been accused of offering support for al-Shabaab through weapons and funding. Kashmiri insurgents have long been supported by Pakistan (for more on this, see Chapter 4).

Ethnic political organizations often have a wide range of external support (Byman et al., 2001). Though direct support declined after World War II, alternative forms of support such as from diasporic groups, advocacy groups and even refugees have played an important role in providing financial and human support to ethnic insurgencies (Byman, 1998). This non-state support is based on a common ethnic identity and shared political and ideological objectives.

Power and Impact on the State and Society

Insurgencies involve adversaries that are not symmetrical in equipment or training. Insurgents avoid direct confrontations with their opponents but they are capable of seizing territory. Because of this, they most often emerge in very weak states where the state does not have a monopoly over the legitimate use of force for the entire territory. Insurgencies often begin in rural areas or mountainous areas that are beyond the government's control. They have to demonstrate that they are powerful enough to protect those whom they are advocating on behalf of. They also have to protect their core group members from destruction or capture.

Insurgencies usually operate within a defined territory. As mentioned before, we distinguish insurgencies from terrorist groups in that insurgencies control territory or occupy a common territory. The control of territory indicates that the space is being patrolled, managed and administered by that group (Mobley, 2012: 14). The control of territory is instrumental to the definition of what constitutes an insurgency. Though insurgencies sometimes have transnational objectives, they are mostly territorially bound.

Controlling territory is also different than a safe haven, which is used to describe a space where a terrorist group might find refuge from its adversaries. This is more the result of state sponsorship or due to the remoteness of the territory than due to the group's capacity and popularity to take territory by force. ETA was never strong enough to control Spain's territory (Sánchez-Cuenca and de la Calle, 2009: 34). They had to flee to a safe haven in France. Though the region that they were trying to separate from was occupied by Basques, only 1% of Basques offered ETA full support (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2007, 305). In contrast, at the height of its power, the Shining Path controlled large areas of Peru. The Tamil Tigers controlled large parts of northern and eastern Sri Lanka (de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca, 2012: 582). In contrast, in southern

Thailand, none of the many violent groups are insurgencies. They do not control or administer territory.

The issue of whether or not the IRA was an insurgency or a terrorist group is highly contested. The IRA did have paramilitaries, and at one point it was on the verge of becoming an insurgency. In the early 1970s, the IRA had de facto control over some neighbourhoods in Belfast and Derry (Sánchez-Cuenca and de la Calle, 2009: 35). In the rural area of South Armagh, the IRA presence was so strong that the British army had to travel by helicopter to avoid sniper fire (Kennedy-Pipe and McInnes, 1997). Nevertheless, paramilitaries in Northern Ireland never controlled territory. Scholars have claimed that it was the 'motorman' operation of the British in July 1972 that prevented this from happening (Smith and Neumann, 2005).

Once insurgencies have seized some territory, they exercise de facto control and may start to provide some administrative services. They have replaced the authority and sovereignty of the state and can now create a parallel state. They seek to demonstrate that the government is illegitimate while establishing themselves as a preferable alternative to the state. They need to provide an alternative form of governance. Insurgencies therefore have to be able to provide some services that reflect their values and concerns. Insurgents may therefore engage in state-building by providing security, collecting taxes and setting up administrative structures in cases where the government is absent (Kalyvas, 2006). Bernard Fall suggests that when a country is 'being subverted it is being out-administered, not out fought' (qtd by/Fall, 2015: 55)

Seizing territory implies control over the population and high levels of interaction with the citizens. Many living under their territory may be forced to join the ranks (Kalyvas and Kocher, 2007). Insurgencies also use the territory that they seize to train these new recruits in remote, safe bases. The seizure of territory allows the group to further expand in capacity, attain greater military resources and employ more effective hit-and-run tactics against the state. Controlling territory has many advantages, but it also makes the group a fixed target that its opponent can more easily attack. It also creates greater demands on the group to provide services and win over the population (Mobley, 2012: 15).

Box 6.1 De Facto States

A de facto state is a geographic entity, usually consisting of a particular ethnic group, which wishes to secede from the parent state that it is a part of and be recognized as a de jure state by

the international community (Pegg, 1998: 26). De facto states are in control of the territory that they lay claim to. For example, the de facto state of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan exercises considerable control, and has a clear armed forces structure, police force, border troops and customs posts (Lynch, 2002: 838). In some cases, de facto states may have an organized political leadership, some administrative capacity to provide services and popular support. De facto states often go unrecognized by the international community for fear that this would harm the relationship with the sovereign state and that it could set a precedent that would lead to more cases of secession around the world. Because de facto states are not recognized, they are considered violent non-state actors.

For most de facto states, the parent state offers little motivation to remain. They do not offer enough services or are too repressive of the residents of the de facto state. The authorities of de facto states often believe that the economies of the parent state are either just as bad as theirs or worse (Lynch, 2002: 843).

Though the parent state is unappealing, de facto states usually have very low functioning institutions, low levels of democracy and corrupt economies. Power is usually personalized and corruption and patron-clientelism tend to be high. Repression is more likely to be used rather than accommodation and compromise (Lynch, 2002: 836). De facto states cannot legally trade with the outside world, which encourages illegal business activity. They have little transparency and have high levels of crime. Revenues tend to go into private pockets (Kolstø, 2006).

De facto states do offer some administrative services. However, most de facto states are too weak to provide much. The de facto state of Abkhazia is able to maintain a legislature, executive and judiciary but is unable to provide many services to the population (Sanchez, 2006). Transnistria has aimed to offer an attractive alternative to Moldova. It declared itself independent from its parent state Moldova in 1992, and fighting broke out between the Transnistrian Republican Guard and Cossack units. The Russians provided military support, but after four months of fighting there had been no solid resolution and Transnistria remains a de facto state. Though not yet internationally recognized, Transnistria has worked to improve its educational system. It has no programme for state health insurance but does provide free medicine and covers the cost of urgent operations. It relies heavily on Russian support for the development of textbooks and higher education and for medical infrastructure (Blakkisrud and Kolstø, 2011: 192).

De facto states must have strong militaries to defend the territory they have gained. The military in Nagorno-Karabakh may have as many as 20,000 troops (with possibly as many as 30,000 in reserve); there are 2,000 in South Ossetia and 5,000 in Abkhazia. This is not large compared to the host state but it is considerable. This leaves fewer resources available for welfare, education, healthcare and building infrastructure. The role of the military for survival is predominant, leading to the militarization of society (Kolstø, 2006: 732).

Some de facto states have difficulty providing security since they are constantly facing the threat from the parent state. In Abkhazia, the state has not been able to provide law and order and security is guaranteed by Russia, NGOs and other international organizations (Lynch, 2002: 836). In some cases, security has to be outsourced – as Russia, for example, has provided security for Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Security institutions in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria are often headed by Russians or officials who are ‘de facto delegated by state institutions of the Russian Federation’ (Popescu, 2006: 11). Chechnya had a de facto state that was on the brink of anarchy between the first and second Chechen wars. There were no state institutions, schools

were closed and there were no thriving businesses – with the exception of smuggling, stealing and kidnapping (Tishkov, 2004).

De facto states pose great challenges for peace and stability. De facto states weaken the sovereignty, capability and security of the parent state as resources are diverted from providing services to competing against the de facto state. They often perpetuate frozen or active conflicts with the sovereign state. These conflicts tend to be intractable with settlements nearly impossible (Lynch, 2002: 838).

Insurgencies can also seriously threaten security. One of the most dangerous insurgencies was the LTTE in Sri Lanka. In its terrorist campaign, the group aimed to cause tremendous damage to strategic targets with high financial and symbolic value such as commercial buildings, naval vessels and aircraft. In October 1997, the LTTE used a truck bomb to damage the newly inaugurated World Trade Centre in Colombo, killing 18 people and injuring over 100. Four days later, a flotilla of 20 small boats attacked two Sri Lankan navy gunboats off the coast of Sri Lanka by ramming an explosive-laden boat into one of the navy gunboats, sinking it and killing nine navy sailors. Its July 2001 attack on the Colombo airport is the most destructive terrorist act in aviation history, destroying or damaging 26 aircraft. This constituted half of the national airline's commercial planes and 25% of the air force fleet (Aryasinha, 2001: 30).

The PKK launched its insurgency against the Turkish government in 1984 which caused major damage and a high death toll. The insurgency began by attacking military posts, but many civilians were later targeted. Those who worked for state hospitals and schools were targeted as well. From 1984–87, 217 teachers were killed or kidnapped by the PKK (Phillips, 2008). In total, the conflict killed over 40,000 people, destroyed thousands of villages and displaced millions.

Case Study Tamil Tigers (LTTE)

The LTTE is an insurgency that has been fighting for independence from Sri Lanka for decades. At its height it was one of the most dangerous and powerful insurgencies in the world. The LTTE has used both a rural guerrilla campaign and an urban suicide attack campaign. The urban suicide attack campaign was carried out by the terror wings that worked as part of the LTTE, known as the Black Tigers and the Black Tigresses, which were formed by the LTTE in 1987. To distance itself from this type of violence, the LTTE has not officially claimed attacks against non-military targets (Hoffman and McCormick, 2004: 262). In spite of its numerous acts of terrorism, the LTTE is an insurgency because of its ability and aim to control and administer territory.

Tensions between Tamils (who constitute about 12% of the population) and Sinhalese (about 74% of the population) had been ongoing for years. These tensions came to a head after the 1956 election of

the Sri Lanka Freedom Party which implemented a ‘Sinhala Only’ policy. In response to this discrimination, many Tamil groups formed to advocate on the group’s behalf. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was founded in this context (Nadarajah and Sriskandarajah, 2005). Frustrated with the TULF’s lack of action, a youth guerrilla movement formed that comprised 35 competing groups, eventually whittled down to a handful of groups. One of these groups was the LTTE, which had been founded on 5 May 1976. The LTTE were quickly able to marginalize the other competing groups. It ordered civilians to boycott the local government elections of 1983 in which the TULF took part, leading to 10% voter turnout. Thereafter, Tamil political parties were largely unable to represent Tamil people as insurgent groups took over their position.

The turning point for the LTTE in terms of attracting recruits came in July 1983 (known as Black July) after an upsurge in violence took place against Tamils, seeing thousands murdered by Sinhalese mobs in response to an LTTE ambush that killed 13 Sri Lankan soldiers. Over seven days 8,000 homes and 5,000 shops were destroyed and another 150,000 people were made homeless. Recruits flooded the organization hoping to join the movement.

The LTTE was estimated to have 8,000–10,000 armed combatants with a core of trained guerrillas in the order of 3,000–6,000. The LTTE had a well-developed militia. It has a naval capacity with 12 vessels, one of the few insurgencies with this capability. It is also the first insurgency to acquire air power and use light aircraft in some of its attacks.

As a result of this extraordinary power, the LTTE was able to set up a de facto state. It has exercised control over 70% of the Tamil areas of the north and east, though not the five main population centres which have been under government control. The LTTE has built up a civil administration, a police force, a justice system and a humanitarian assistance agency. It also has a health and education board, a bank, a radio station and a television station. To help pay for the administration, the LTTE has a taxation system for the territory under its control and the government-controlled areas. It also developed a customs regime at the borders of the front lines.

On 16 May 2009, the LTTE was finally defeated by the Sri Lankan government. The death of their charismatic leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, three days later seemed to signal the end of the group, with most fighters surrendering to the Sri Lankan government. An estimated 90,000 people were killed in the conflict.

Box 6.2 Self-Defence Militias

Militias are self-defence units that are outside the formal security sector and central government. They do not support the formal state. They are irregular armed forces usually operating within failing or weak states. They are usually composed of volunteers who are trying to defend their localities. These are groups such as the Kurdish Peshmerga that may form to protect de facto states. Militias are particularly prevalent where particular ethnic factions or religious groups feel that they do not receive adequate protection from the state (Williams, 2009). They are the militaries that form to provide some sort of defence. Thus they often represent specific ethnic, religious, tribal, clan or other communal groups and have high levels of legitimacy in the areas they protect; loyalty levels are high. Because they are defensive units, they do not always receive formal training but in some cases, if they have experience in battle, they are skilled if unconventional fighters. Self-defence units were formed by the Tutsis and Hutus to stop the massacres taking place in Rwanda in 1994. Self-defence units were also set up by the African

National Congress Party (ANC) in South Africa to defend themselves from the Inkatha militias. Another example is the Mahdi army, which is the armed wing of the Sadrist movement in Iraq.

Conclusion

Insurgencies are armed organizations that are strong enough to contest the state in some form of unconventional warfare. They usually aim to take hold of territory and are strong enough to do so. Although the popularity and legitimacy of insurgencies varies, they usually have to take into account how their strategy of violence affects their popularity and the population they control. Terrorism may be part of their grand strategy, but their ultimate aim of ruling or gaining more autonomy means that engaging in warfare and offering services are more critical components for achieving their aims.

Summary Points

- Insurgencies have often been mistaken for terrorist groups.
- Insurgencies are much more powerful than terrorist groups, but they are also more constrained.
- Insurgencies often use terrorism as a tactic, but their primary strategy is to engage in armed struggle and to win over the hearts and minds of a constituency.
- Insurgencies have had to change how they fund themselves due to losses in state sponsorship.
- Insurgencies that want to secede from their host state and have control over a defined territory become de facto states.

Key Questions

1. What are the primary strategies of insurgencies?
2. Why are insurgencies likely to receive so much support?
3. In what ways have insurgencies changed from the past?
4. In what ways do insurgencies pose a threat to states?
5. Why is the LTTE considered to be an insurgency? Do you agree with this? Why or why not?
6. Theory: What are the different ways in which realists, liberals and constructivists would assess the power of insurgencies?

Further Reading

Beckett, I.F.W. (2001) *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-insurgencies: Guerrillas and their Opponents since 1750* (Psychology Press). Overview of the history of insurgencies and the efforts to counter them; provides information on the roots of insurgency and guerrilla warfare.

Data on Armed Conflict: www.prio.org/Data/Armed-Conflict

Horowitz, D.L. (1985) *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (University of California Press). Overview of historical ethnic insurgencies, explaining why these groups form and militarize and strategies for dealing with these groups.

Salehyan, I. (2009) *Rebels without Borders* (Cornell University Press). Explores the effects of insurgencies that are transnational, and how these conflict spillovers affect stability.

Salehyan, I. (2010) *Transnational Insurgencies and the Escalation of Regional Conflict: Lessons for Iraq and Afghanistan* (Strategic Studies Institute). More information on insurgencies with more detailed analyses of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Taras, R. and Ganguly, R. (2015) *Understanding Ethnic Conflict* (Routledge). Thorough overview of different types of insurgencies with a particular focus on ethnic insurgencies.

7 Terrorist Organizations and Terror Networks

Key Terms

- Affiliates
- Aum Shinrikyo
- Black Tigers and Tigresses
- Osama bin Laden
- Religious terrorism
- Terrorist networks

This chapter provides an overview of terrorist groups of the past and compares them to how they operate today. As the chapter will detail, tightly knit terror groups of the past are being overshadowed by terror networks that take advantage of advances in technology. We offer an in-depth look at al-Qaeda, the best-known terror network of the 21st century and compare it with the IS, a former terrorist group turned insurgency/de facto state.

Definition

There is no widely accepted definition of what a terrorist group is. Labelling a group a terrorist group is a way of delegitimizing an opponent who may have legitimate grievances, which is why the term is so controversial. In spite of this, it is possible to identify several common characteristics of terrorist groups. We highlight four criteria that are important for distinguishing terrorist groups from other violent non-state actors: (1) Like insurgencies, terrorist groups seek political change through the use of violence; they are largely politically motivated. (2) In contrast to insurgencies, terrorist groups are weak actors militarily and often politically as well. They do not have the power or possibly the aim to hold territory. They often have to base themselves in other countries, hiding out in sleeper cells in order to operate. They have to remain clandestine and more

underground (McCormick, 2003: 486). They are comparatively much weaker vis-à-vis the state. They target civilians because they do not have enough support and strength to use other methods. (3) Terrorist groups' main power derives from their ability to attract a large audience by engaging in shocking and unconventional violence (Lisanti, 2010). Their impact is more psychological than physical. (4) Though other groups may use terror as a tactic, for terrorist groups the use of indiscriminate violence against civilian targets is not only central to their strategy but is also their defining characteristic (Williams, 2012).

Based on these criteria, today there are fewer terrorist groups than there were in the past. Many terrorist groups have changed and have become more networked and multifunctional. They are often linked up with insurgencies and vice versa. Confusingly, there are more and more insurgencies that create terror wings, such as was the case with the LTTE and the Black Tigers and Tigress units. Because of this, the distinction between terrorist groups and other violent non-state actors has become increasingly blurred. It is also important to note that terrorists can gain strength and transition into full-blown insurgencies once they control territory, which is what happened in the case of AQI. This is common when an ethno-nationalist group represents a popular movement and becomes stronger. They also may be able to escalate into an insurgency, possibly due to support from an outside actor. It is also possible that as an insurgency loses strength and cannot hold territory, it goes underground and resorts to a terror strategy.

Political Ideology and Objectives

Terrorist groups of the past often had very specific objectives and staged extraordinary attacks in order to exact concessions from the state or rich individuals and groups. New forms of terrorism have focused more on challenging the value systems of the liberal international system. They are less specific, more amorphous; they represent conflicts between value systems.

The goals of past terrorist groups were mostly ideologically (left- or right-wing) motivated or nationalistic. Previously, terrorism often challenged the pre-existing territorial boundaries and political hegemony of states. Many of

these groups were ethno-nationalistic groups, and were often inspired by socialist ideals. Comparatively speaking, ethnic and sectarian groups usually have a concrete goal with many different potential compromise options. While many are fighting for complete independence, middle ground may be reached by attaining more autonomy. These groups are seeking to free themselves from oppression and assert their own political, social and economic rights, as well as their cultural identity. They may be turning to terrorism as a last resort after years of repression. However, left-wing groups that originated in Western countries were less specific in their aims. They were also concerned with rejecting the past and the existing order, but there was little ground for negotiation and compromise. Due to loss of state support, there has been a decline in groups motivated by socialism.

Religious terrorism has become more dominant in recent decades, and the role of religion has also changed. Religious terrorism has become more transnational in nature (Mickolus and Simmons, 2002). In the past, religious terrorism was often conflated with ethnic terrorism. The ultimate goal of religious groups was actually based on a secular identity, such as the role of Catholicism in the conflict in Northern Ireland. Religious terrorism is still being driven by complex national, cultural and historical contexts, but the national objective is unclear. New religious terrorism is more deadly because there is no need to adhere to international norms, or to compromise and show empathy. Much of the new religious terrorism also appears to be interested in violence for the sake of violence in reaction to a general loathing for the existing world order. From 1968 to 2005, the casualty rate (wounded and killed) for religious attacks, excluding al-Qaeda, was 38.1 compared to 9.82 for leftist groups, 2.41 for right-wing groups and 9.06 for nationalist separatist groups (Piazza, 2009). In addition to being violent, the political agenda is purposely inflexible and difficult to accommodate.

Terrorists tend to see the world in a polarized way, which makes it difficult to moderate their views to accommodate the masses (Alex, 2004: 214). The goal is not to persuade based on convincing others that the policies the group hopes to achieve are preferable, but to make it clear that refusing to submit to the demands of the group will have dire consequences (Goodwin, 2006: 2038). Terrorist groups have extreme ideologies and uncompromising demands (Hoffman, 2006). The uncompromising ideals of a terrorist group

were clearly illustrated by Red Army Faction founder Ulrike Meinhof: ‘Protest is when I say I don’t like this. Resistance is when I put an end to what I don’t like. Protest is when I say I refuse to go along with this anymore. Resistance is when I make sure everybody else stops going along too’ (qtd by Davis et al., 2013: 171). The world is seen in a polarized way: us versus them. At the same time, the ideologies of terrorist groups can be confusing and incoherent.

Strategy and Tactics

Terrorist groups have always targeted civilians, but today maximum damage is used to attract more media attention for their ideology and grievances. Causing greater damage also appears to be attractive to potential recruits (Enders and Sandler, 2000). Each act of terror attempts to outdo the preceding one to try to find new ways to attract attention. Terrorist groups are no longer trying to exact a specific concession but are engaged in a war of attrition. More lethal technologies have facilitated this as has the erosion of taboos. Terrorist groups lack restraint, particularly since many of the perpetrators are amateurs who are loosely connected to a base. Some scholars have claimed that religiously motivated terrorists are more likely to conduct mass casualty attacks because unlike politically motivated terrorists, they are not constrained by the fear that excessive violence will offend, because they only care about their support group. Terrorist groups also escalate the levels of violence in efforts to outdo other political organizations, such as has been the case with Palestine Liberation Organization and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). It is not just a means of attracting the attention of the state, but also a strategy to crowd out rivals.

Terrorist groups of the past did not aim to inflict such high casualties as they do today (Hoffman, 2006). For example, IRA violence was mostly aimed at the state rather than Protestant civilians. About 42.6% of those who died were civilians, though the death toll per terrorist attack was only 1.3 (O’Leary, 2005: 235).[1] Thus the goal was not to inflict huge numbers of casualties, which could have backfired, causing the group to lose all of its support or resulted in a crackdown that might have forced it to shut down completely, or at least complicate its functioning. Terrorist groups today are

much bloodier, not killing in the tens but in the hundreds. Terrorist groups of the past believed that recruitment and support levels would wane if they caused too much damage.

1. The IRA's weapon of choice was car bombs (O'Leary, 2005: 234).

The disregard for death tolls has led to a rise in suicide bombing, the deadliest terrorist tactic. Because it is so cheap and effective, suicide bombing is commonly used by terror groups. There were 382 suicide attacks in 2013, 592 in 2014 and 452 in 2015. Suicide terrorism is characterized by the willingness of individuals to die in the course of destroying or attempting to annihilate enemy targets to further certain political or social objectives (Schweitzer and Schweitzer, 2002). Individuals purposely cause their own death by blowing themselves up along with a chosen target (Schweitzer and Schweitzer, 2002: 78). It is a tactic of the weak, designed to put the group on a more equal footing with the state, as dramatically and inexpensively as possible. It also is used to disrupt a peace process when the actor has not been included.

Hamas began to use suicide terrorism as a tactic on 6 April 1994 in efforts to derail the Oslo peace process taking place between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel. After Hamas felt that it was losing support from many of its rivals, including secular nationalist Palestinian groups and religious groups such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), it established its military wing, the al-Qassam wing, in an effort to make a name for itself as a serious contender to represent the Palestinian cause.

Box 7.1 Suicide Terrorism

Suicide terrorism aims to capture the headlines, convince potential members that it has what it takes to win, and extend its base of active support. For this reason, suicide attacks are a form of strategic signalling. Suicide terrorism signals to a group's supporters that they are willing to challenge the state. Suicide attacks may also encourage the state to retaliate in ways that push the public to support the terrorist group, helping the group to mobilize.

Suicide attacks can be a source of unity between the terrorist group and its political constituents. The death of martyrs is presented as a collective loss, not only for the organization with which they were affiliated, but the community from which they volunteered. Opinion polls in 2002 reported that more than 70% of the Palestinian population living in Lebanon support suicide attacks against Israel (Winkates, 2006).

Most media attention has focused on the massive suicide campaigns from Palestinian groups, assuming that Palestinian suicide terrorism was largely religiously motivated. Not only is Palestinian suicide terrorism not always religiously influenced, but the concept of martyrdom is not just a religious construct. In fact, one of the most ruthless and bloody suicide campaigns carried out in history was perpetrated by the ethno-nationalist LTTE through their Black Tigers and Tigresses, which were formed in 1987. The LTTE pioneered new methods of how to use suicide bombings effectively and used them on a scale that had never been seen before, even managing to kill Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. They also have the notorious claim to fame of inventing the suicide vest and belt.

Studies are not in agreement about the role of religion in driving suicide terrorism. Some scholars have noted that only about 60% of the suicide attacks carried out between 1993 and 2003 were conducted by religious organizations (Hoffman and McCormick, 2004). Others claim that the number is as low as 40% (Pape, 2005). The secular LTTE was one of the groups that used suicide attacks the most (137 attacks), the Algerian armed Islamic group Laskar-e-Taiba not as much. This trend seems to be changing in that the target countries of suicide attacks are mostly countries with Islamic majorities: Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Iraq has been the most dangerous country for suicide attacks by some distance. Over 1,000 suicide bombings took place between 2003 and 2010 with 12,000 civilians killed during this time period (Burnham, 2011). In Afghanistan, the use of suicide terrorism is a more recent phenomenon. It was never part of the struggle against the Soviets in the 1980s. It was only used as a tactic after 2004 based on its success in Iraq.

There have been 36 countries and territories over the last 30 years that have experienced suicide terrorism. Though al-Qaeda does not utilize suicide bombing as often as it could, when it does use this tactic, it creates mass casualties. In fact, the most deadly attacks have been committed by al-Qaeda, followed by Hezbollah and Jemaah Islamiyah.

Though attacking civilians has been considered morally reprehensible, targeting them is increasingly used. Scholars explain this by pointing out that terrorism is a form of asymmetrical warfare available to a weak actor to attempt to level the playing field. They also may feel helpless. Using a terrorist tactic is a way to symbolically express power over forces that were viewed as oppressive (Alex, 2004: 212). The terrorist is trying to demonstrate the state's impotence and vulnerability. As noted in the statement of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) to the Thatcher government after the Brighton bombing, 'Today we were unlucky, but remember we only have to be lucky once. You have to be lucky always' (BBC, 1984).

Militarily speaking, terrorist groups are relatively weak actors. Terrorist groups are not strong enough to compete against or target the state directly. Of course there are strong insurgencies that have resorted to terrorism, but this is usually because winning a conflict by purely conventional methods

was not possible. Terrorism is a relatively cheap and easy method to kill in large numbers. Terrorists also want to exploit their enemies' heavy-handed response to an illegitimate act of violence.

The specific tactics of terrorists have changed over the years. In the 1970s, more than 100 plane hijackings took place. These types of acts were spectacular and planes were used in order to create hostage crises. Attacks on embassies have also been used as a tactic to hold hostages. Kidnapping high-profile victims was also popular, the most memorable being the 1979 kidnapping and murder of Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades. In Colombia, M-19 seized the Supreme Court in November 1985, with the government refusing to yield to demands, resulting in the death of over 100 people including 11 court justices. Kidnappings were initially used to gain political concessions, but they became increasingly used as a way to fund violent groups. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been earned through kidnappings. There have been hundreds of kidnappings, though some groups have claimed that they no longer use kidnapping as a tactic. Bank robberies were used more initially, though not as often as other tactics. A notable bank robbery was the PLO and Christian Phalange attack on the major banks in Beirut that led to as much as $100 million being stolen – the biggest bank robbery of all time (Adams, 1986).

Typical tactics today include kidnapping, hostage-taking, sabotage, murder, suicide attacks, vehicle bombs and improvised explosive devices, as well as potentially the use of material for weapons of mass destruction (e.g. 'dirty bombs'). Potential targets range from military sites, police stations and official government buildings to companies, airports, restaurants, shopping malls and means of public transport. Terrorist groups have used a host of different weapons, including grenades, hand guns, rifles and different small types of bombs.

Structure and Recruitment

The structural changes to terror organizations constitute one of the biggest differences between old and new groups. Past terrorist groups were organized more hierarchically with charismatic leaders at the helm. Policies, tactics and ideas were generated directly from the leader. Though the leader

would rely on subordinates to take on different responsibilities, the leaders were in charge of maintaining discipline and managing the activities of the organization. Leaders of terrorist organizations relied on creating intense loyalties among group members to prevent defection and dissent within the organization (Crenshaw, 2010). The command and control structure was clear.

Most nationalist and left-wing groups were more tightly organized. Left-wing and nationalist terror groups were often sponsored by another state, which necessitated a tight control from the state patron to the group's leader. A hierarchical model was important for giving assurance to state patrons of operational goals, since rogue actions by cells could undermine the state patron's objectives. However, with time more successful groups could not survive if they were too hierarchically organized. Many groups changed their structure in response to counter-terror measures (Gunaratna and Oreg, 2010: 1046).

Terrorist networks today no longer have a single leader or command cadre to manage the organization. Decision-making is decentralized, as are the operations. Modern terror networks are composed of different, largely autonomous cells. Independent behaviour is allowed among the cells, as is local initiative and autonomy. Cells are mostly self-organized and self-enrolling. The leaders of the cells usually have the most experience. The leader of each cell ensures that tasks are successfully carried out. All external contact is handled by the cell leader. Cell leaders are also responsible for maintaining ideological fervour (Dear, 2013; Fellman and Wright, 2014).

There may be multiple leaders within the network. The leaders of the hub of the network have challenging tasks. They have to ensure that the cells adhere to the same ideology and general goals, aims and beliefs. They also have to ensure that the nodes are regularly communicating. Hub leaders are dynamic individuals with extensive social networks (Sageman, 2004). They attract recruits and help guide and train them. They also help link up with different cells and help cells communicate with each other. The cells may receive needed material support and some ideological support.

Networked groups have less institutional presence – they may disappear at any time and can attach and detach. There is no affiliation with a specific territory. There is more flexibility in ideology, allowing the group to align with different regional conflicts or allies, though there is adherence to a grand vision. The use of networks elongates the lifespan of the terrorist group as it can survive the decapitation of the leader and other disruptions (Comas et al., 2015; Sageman, 2004).

The biggest problem for decentralized groups is informational asymmetry, but this has been largely overcome with the help of technological advances (Johnston, 2008). Today's groups have been able to exploit improvements in technology and communication. Communication technologies have enabled new terrorists to maintain links between cells more easily. Satellite and mobile phones and the Internet are used to exchange information and give orders. Communication and planning is less intense than in hierarchical structures, making it harder for law enforcement to dismantle these groups. Communication also moves very freely (Matusitz, 2013; Nacos, 2016).

In the most extreme forms, there are very loose linkages and little supervision and control over the nodes. There are few if any formal commitments (Mishal and Rosenthal, 2005). Amateurs may want to join networks, and may receive no training or logistical support, learning from publications on the Internet. These groups are especially difficult to identify and counteract since they have no infrastructure; thus there is little to target (Nacos, 2016).

For example, those responsible for the Madrid bombings in 2004 were not directly linked with al-Qaeda, though they were inspired by it. The group responsible was known as the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group, which consisted of a local group of immigrants that were inspired by al-Qaeda's focus on the worldwide battle between Islam and the 'new world order'. However, this group was not actively embedded in the network, and any damage to the cell – all members died or were arrested – had no impact on al-Qaeda.

Recruitment

In the past, recruitment for many terror organizations was top-down. Groups would target particular individuals who might be vulnerable or sympathetic to their cause. Terror groups were based on an extreme ideology. Because of this, they appealed to few, and membership was small. Membership was exclusive and recruits were thoroughly vetted. For many left-wing groups, the use of pretentious language meant that many recruits were the children from affluent homes. They were mostly recruited from extremist political groups at universities. For many revolutionary terrorist groups, being part of a secret society was an integral part of the appeal.

Nationalist movements focused on recruiting co-national or co-religion persons. In contrast to ideological groups, the recruits were often not from wealthy families, but individuals who felt disenfranchised. The IRA recruits were mostly young males of Catholic origin, coming from working class, lower middle class or small farmers. Few recruits were prosperous professionals and most recruits came from families that had supported the IRA in the past (O'Leary, 2005: 230).

Aum Shinrikyo focused on recruiting those who were both skilled and alienated. The group recruited those who could be useful for the organization's drive to attain weapons of mass destruction but also those who were alienated from the current system, such as dropouts and lonely or needy individuals. Once one became a member of Aum Shinrikyo, it was very hard to leave. The cult used many bizarre methods to ensure no one escaped, such as drugs, sleep deprivation, electric shocks and poor diet. Once members joined, they were forced to cede their identities completely, which helped reinforce group norms and prevented anyone from challenging the authority of the leader (Cameron, 1999: 284).

Today recruitment is largely bottom-up. Local cells are formed around friendship and kinship ties, promoted by local religious leaders and further radicalized by propaganda on the Internet. In the case of Islamic terrorism, recruiters hold informal gatherings in private homes, mosques, cultural centres, religious summer camps and schools. Potential candidates have one-on-one conversations where their motivations and qualifications were assessed. Recruits are often very young. For example, the Jemaah Islamiyah

in Indonesia has a network of over 50 Islamic boarding schools that are sympathetic to its goals, which it recruits from.

Al-Qaeda has effectively used the Internet to promote local home-grown jihadi operations. Al-Qaeda has recruited by disseminating textual propaganda and videos, providing training on how to hack computer networks, and publishing online magazines like the *Voice of Jihad* (Sawt al-Jihad) (Rudner, 2013: 968). Al-Qaeda assigns handlers to oversee recruits and enforce discipline to prevent penetration by authorities. Al-Qaeda prefers to recruit those who can pass through surveillance and border controls easily. Ideally, recruits know how to blend in with their host communities and carry multiple passports and documents, as well as professional credentials.

Funding and Support

Funding

Terror groups usually rely on clandestine support for their organizations, but more and more they have been involved in organized crime. Terror groups today are more criminalized and less dependent on state sponsors; trafficking drugs is their number one source of funding (Richmond, 2003: 291). In addition to the drug trade, they are engaged in siphoning off raw materials and smuggling weapons. To deal with these earnings, they have legitimate businesses that they use to launder the money they earn from illicit activities. Terrorist groups also skim money from NGOs and charities. Finally, they earn large sums of money through membership dues and overseas donations. Much of the IRA's £10 million came from theft and racketeering, but as much as 12.7% of all revenues came from overseas donations (O'Leary, 2005: 230).

Al-Qaeda has transnational fundraising abilities through the use of informal networks. In the early 1990s, bin Laden founded a network of business enterprises in Sudan from small farms and fishing operations to multinational investment and construction companies (Mannes, 2003: 34). When these transfers were disrupted in the US and Europe, al-Qaeda was able to rely on

under-regulated financial systems in the Arab world (Basile, 2004). Al-Qaeda is able to receive money through a number of untraceable means, such as front corporations, secret bank accounts, and legitimate charities. Some al-Qaeda cells are also involved in drug trafficking in Afghanistan and the illegal diamond trade in Africa.

Even religious groups have resorted to criminal activities to fund their operations. The Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah al-Musallaha; GIA) has always survived by smuggling. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), has acquired many of the smuggling networks once controlled by the weakened GIA.[2] AQIM also makes money by taxing drug traffickers (Shelley, 2014: 237). It is not entirely clear whether AQIM has taken on a direct role in drug trafficking, but it has worked with traffickers and offered them protection (Pham, 2011). There are also other al-Qaeda cells that are involved in drug trafficking in Afghanistan and the illegal diamond trade in Africa. Some terrorist groups actually produce the drugs themselves. Aum Shinrikyo, which was responsible for sarin gas attacks in Tokyo in 1995, was the most significant producer and distributor of methamphetamines in Japan.

2. AQIM was previously known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat.

The costs of maintaining a terror cell are much lower than maintaining an insurgency. Insurgencies must have access to weapons and military training in order to hold territory. Simply maintaining a small cell may not be financially difficult. A suicide bombing planned by one cell would not need a steady flow of income because the group would cease after the attack. Hamas and Hezbollah have claimed that an act of terror costs from $500 to $3,500. The USS Cole bombing in 2000 cost al-Qaeda less than $5,000 (Hutchinson and O'Malley, 2007). The Madrid train bombings, which killed 191 people and caused over 2,000 injuries, cost approximately $10,000 (Sandler and Enders, 2004). Sporadic crime requires few specialized skills and little division of labour. Moreover, cells that are home-grown avoid the costs of circumventing international and national law enforcement.

Support

Terrorist groups of the past were more like tiny gangs of bandits than serious political movements. Terrorist groups usually lack popular support for their struggle, which is why they resort to non-conventional tactics.

Terrorist organizations usually receive more public support when they avoid a strategy of targeting too many civilians. For terrorist groups whose supporters are just as ‘radical’ as the terrorists themselves, the organization is less constrained in terms of killing civilians in indiscriminate ways, such as in the case of Palestinian groups. Civilians account for 70% of victims in Palestinian terrorist attacks, as opposed to around 40% for the Basque ETA and the IRA. As for public opinion, in Palestine, 90% of respondents in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip approve of armed attacks against soldiers and settlers in the occupied territories, and more than 50% support the killing of civilians inside Israel (Sánchez-Cuenca and De la Calle, 2009: 303). When nationalist groups have a collective sense of legitimate grievance, the citizens can be as ‘radical’ as the activists. Groups that act on behalf of these groups will be less constrained in how many civilians are killed and how indiscriminate the attacks are.

There are many foreign governments that have chosen to support terrorist groups, though in contrast to most insurgencies, this takes place more clandestinely. Libya has made supporting terrorist groups a centrepiece of its foreign policy. It has supported the IRA and ETA along with the PFLP. Syria supported the Japanese Red Army. States can offer numerous sources of support. Iraq has offered a sanctuary in the past to anti-Iranian and anti-Turkish groups (Byman, 2005: 3). Libya’s support of the IRA enabled huge arms shipments that helped the organization sustain a prolonged fight against the UK. When states work with terrorist groups, some become more deadly and potent while others are restrained. At times too much state support can cause the group to lose contact with its constituency. States may decide to host terrorist groups, provide them with weapons, training and funding.

Power and Impact on the State and Society

The primary impact of terrorist groups on the state and society is psychological. They aim to inflict fear and terror. They want to affect people’s freedoms. They are the weakest of all of the violent non-state

actors, but they attract the most media attention. The economic costs of terrorism are much lower than other forms of violence, with the losses from criminal violence incurring 32 times greater losses. In spite of this, the economic costs of terrorism continue to increase, having risen by 61% in 2014, reaching a total of $52.9 billion, a ten-fold increase since 2000 (Global Terrorism Database, 2015).

Though there have been increasing economic costs, terrorist groups lack the power to engage in armed conflict or challenge the state head-on and must engage in subversive tactics. In comparison, insurgencies possess military power to challenge the target directly. Unlike insurgencies, terrorist groups do not control any territory. They also do not have the ability to administer and rule (de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca, 2012). Terror groups were usually not territorial and the individuals never wore uniforms like an army. Terror groups usually do not have recognized war zones; operations can be carried out anywhere. They may be able to establish a safe haven, but this is distinct from controlling territory. In the former, the terrorist group is given some free rein to exist because the state is either looking the other way or deliberately providing a home base. The safe haven is due to state willingness or state carelessness – not because the terrorist group has overpowered the host state. Though some terrorist groups may have territorial ambitions to create their own state, they lack the capabilities to do so (Schneckener, 2006).

Once terrorist groups begin controlling and administering territory, they can be classified as insurgencies. Groups that have control over territory operate differently than groups that have no control over territory (Schneckener, 2006). Control of autonomous territory allows the group to establish an extensive military infrastructure, training bases, offices and more. It also means that they can bring volunteers from around the world to train there. On the other hand, controlling territory makes it more vulnerable to attacks from the state (Schneckener, 2006). It is also much more expensive.

The actual death toll caused by terrorist groups is much lower than all of the other violent groups. They are simply not powerful enough to inflict much damage. Even so, terrorist groups have become more deadly. In 2014 there was an 80% increase in terrorist activity, with the death toll rising from

18,111 in 2013 to 32,685 in 2014. The total number of people who have died from a terrorist attack has increased nine-fold since 2000 (Global Terrorism Index, n.d.).

As the following section illustrates, one of the most deadly groups is al-Qaeda. From 1998 to 2008, al-Qaeda and its affiliates launched 84 terrorist attacks, with 16 mass assaults that resulted in 4,299 deaths and 6,300 injuries in Australia, central Asia, China, Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, North America, Russia, and South and Southeast Asia. Between 5 January 2002 and 25 August 2013, there were 307 incidents of terrorism perpetrated by al-Qaeda or its affiliates (Global Terrorism Database, 2015).[3]

3. This does not include the work of its associates such as Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades, the group responsible for the 2004 attacks on the public transport system in Madrid that killed 191 people.

Al-Qaeda, Terrorist Umbrella Organization

Al-Qaeda is a global network that provides training, financing and technical expertise for Islamic terrorists all over the world. Al-Qaeda has funded insurgencies and terror cells and is involved in organized crime. Al-Qaeda is not just nationally based; it has a global presence. It is impossible to fully understand the structure and capacity of al-Qaeda because it is constantly changing. It is best described as a global terror network.

Ideology and objectives

Unlike many terrorist organizations, al-Qaeda's ideology has often been called amorphous, though its origins are extremist, influenced by Qutubbism and Salifism. Its ideology has gained the support of different forms of Sunni Islam. In spite of its purported Islamic origins, al-Qaeda has been critiqued for mostly killing and targeting Muslims. In fact, despite Islamic terror groups' claims to support Muslims, it is the Muslim countries that suffer the most attacks and Muslim citizens who suffer the most, constituting over 80% of the casualties, though the number could be much higher (Global Research, 2016).

Origins

Al-Qaeda was established initially to serve as an auxiliary organization that helped assist volunteers coming to Afghanistan to fight against the Soviets. It provided the infrastructure to assist with tracking soldiers and sending in troops and aid (Mishal and Rosenthal, 2005: 282). Through its leader Saudi-born Osama bin Laden, it started to forge alliances with militant groups all over Egypt, Pakistan, Algeria and Tunisia. It engaged in many different types of operations such as deploying fighters to Chechnya and Tajikistan. It also established satellite offices in many different countries. It operated 'horizontally' with about 24 different constituent terror organizations.

Originally, al-Qaeda focused on internal jihad or overthrowing authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. In the late 1990s, it shifted its strategy to external jihad in an attempt to draw in the United States. Several attacks on US targets would ensue with the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which killed 225 and injured 5,000 (most of whom were local), followed by the 2000 attack on the USS Cole in Yemen, which killed 17 marines. None of these attacks helped to attract the mass following that the organization was hoping for.

By late 1996, after being forced to leave Sudan, bin Laden was able to create, with the help of the Taliban in Afghanistan, a headquarters to train fighters. Over 70,000 recruits travelled to Afghanistan when the Taliban was in power to take part in military training camps run by al-Qaeda. While based there, al-Qaeda developed several parallel structures that functioned like militias. Brigade 055 was a guerrilla army with an elite force of about 2,000 men who were trained to fight alongside the Taliban. Because it had a massive base to work with, it could use the territory to recruit, train and house fighters, developing the capacity of an insurgency.

Structure and organization

At this point, the base of al-Qaeda's organization was mostly hierarchical. Each unit was subordinated into a pyramid structure into the organization's leadership. Bin Laden was at the top, with a consultative or command

council below, directing four key committees (military, finance, Islamic study and media), whose members were hand-picked by senior leadership (Gunaratna and Oreg, 2010: 1054). By mid-2001, the group merged with Egyptian Islamic Jihad, which was led by Ayman al-Zawahiri (al-Qaeda's current leader and former deputy leader). An additional five people were added to the core membership, including Mohammed Atef, who served as the military chief. The core members helped set general policies and approve large-scale attacks, constantly consulting the leader (Gunaratna and Oreg, 2010: 1056). The military committee was especially important in the planning of 9/11. The military committee conducted surveillance, gathered intelligence and helped with military training, but it was bin Laden who also played a hands-on role in planning the attacks. He hand-picked operatives and ultimately rejected recommendations to abort the attacks (Dishman, 2005).

Meanwhile, al-Qaeda remained well networked with other like-minded groups, providing training and expertise. It acted like a large charity organization for terrorist projects that were affiliated with it. Al-Qaeda worked to establish a connection with indigenous Islamic terrorist groups. It also penetrated Islamic NGOs so that the organization was enmeshed with Muslim communities worldwide. In some cases, al-Qaeda was very hands-off – just giving some guidance but encouraging the group to raise its own funds.

Umbrella organization

Al-Qaeda was forced to decentralize after the war on terror began in 2001. It lost 70% of its leadership and lost its safe haven in Afghanistan. In the words of a high-ranking British intelligence official, 'Al-Qaeda has split like a piece of mercury into different groups in different countries' (Rudner, 2013: 957). The international financial crackdown also affected its finances. Communication between the centralized command and its operatives was disrupted, which has meant that the central staff plays a less direct role in planning attacks. Al-Qaeda is now a system of systems (Rudner, 2013: 957). Operational commanders and cell leaders exert more influence, though cells should be less able to carry out spectacular attacks (Dishman, 2005). Cell leaders are often veterans from Afghanistan who had received advanced

training on how to establish and lead terror cells of 2–15 members. They were encouraged to show initiative in their operations. A promising operation might receive some funding and support and technical assistance.

Today there is no agreement on the exact structure of al-Qaeda. Some scholars claim that al-Qaeda no longer exists as an organizational entity – that it is more of an ideology without an organization (Sageman, 2004). Though there were many cells fuelled by its ideology, it lacks a central authority. Cohesion was mostly achieved through members' personal relationships and exchanges. The main threat to al-Qaeda was bottom-up, not top-down. Local cells and networks were carrying out their attacks with little coordination from the top, though the top still provided a general agenda to help maintain some appearance of unity. Al-Qaeda is now decentralized and de-territorialized.

Others, however, claim that al-Qaeda has regrouped in the tribal areas of Pakistan, Iraq and Syria. It was argued that every major terrorist attack against the US, the UK and most European countries emanated from al-Qaeda or from allies acting on its behalf. Once the war in Iraq started, al-Qaeda had another centralized base to work with, offering logistical support for the Sunni insurgency in Iraq. Most fighters that were entering and exiting Iraq went through al-Qaeda; many were Syrian jihadis (Hoffman, 2013: 637).

The reality may be, however, that al-Qaeda has both top-down and bottom-up planning capabilities. There have been many plots that were generated by independent, home-grown groups in Europe. These local cells of home-grown terrorists have formed loose associations with al-Qaeda and have orchestrated attacks from the bottom up.

In addition to being associated with and inspiring many groups around the globe, al-Qaeda comprises affiliates or local branches such as AQIM and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Although they have a relationship with al-Qaeda, they have their own infrastructure, base of operations and chains of command. A group can partner with al-Qaeda and not abandon its own agenda. The affiliates are usually required to seek approval before conducting attacks outside their assigned regions, and when attacks are conducted outside their region, the group must adhere to parameters

designated by al-Qaeda. Franchises must also seek approval before assisting other groups with external operations.

Al-Qaeda had grandiose vision, pulling off the most deadly terrorist attack in history, but today it is comparatively much weaker, with al-Qaeda central consisting of fewer than 200 people (Mueller and Stewart, 2016). Today we focus more attention on the groups that have spun off from al-Qaeda than al-Qaeda itself.

The Emergence of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQi) and the Islamic State

One of the most powerful affiliates to emerge that has now taken a life of its own is AQI, which has since mutated into the IS. Because the IS holds territory and even administers over territory, it is not a terrorist group but an insurgency/de facto state (Cronin, 2015). AQI was originally founded in 1999 under the leadership of Jordanian Abu Musab al Zarqawi whose aim was to topple the Jordanian monarchy, build an Islamic state and purge the world of Muslims who were not staunch believers. Initially called Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, the group changed its name to al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) in 2004 when it began to participate in the Iraqi insurgency. Zarqawi at this time pledged allegiance to bin Laden in return for assistance with funding and forging contacts. Zarqawi had multiple contacts in senior leadership positions in Afghanistan. Zarqawi convinced the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) to merge with central al-Qaeda. The group that emerged has been one of the most brutal and effective insurgent groups, controlling the resources and flows of foreign fighters into Iraq.

From the beginning, the alliance between Zarqawi and bin Laden was fraught with tensions. Zarqawi had little respect for bin Laden because he believed that legitimacy was derived from the battlefield, not ruling from behind the scenes. In turn, al-Qaeda was concerned with Zarqawi's excesses, over-the-top violence such as beheadings, and campaigns against both Shiites and Sunnis. For example, when AQI bombed three hotels in Amman, Jordan, in 2005, it was strongly rebuked by al-Qaeda. Zawahiri warned Zarqawi that his group's actions would alienate moderate Sunnis.

In June 2006 Zarqawi was killed and the group changed its name in October to the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). By 2013 it changed its name again to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and in June 2014 it officially declared a caliphate in Iraq and Syria and changed its name to the Islamic State (IS). From August 2011, the IS was led by Abu Bakr al'Baghdadi. His brash actions deepened the rift between the IS and al-Qaeda. The official split of the two organizations came in February 2014.

Though the IS originated from al-Qaeda, the two groups are distinct in many ways. The first major difference is the leadership. Al-Qaeda's leadership has come from the upper middle classes and is much better educated than the IS's. Members from al-Qaeda have come from all over the world, but have been mostly recruited from 'Afghan Arabs', or men from Arab countries who went to Afghanistan to fight against the Soviet Union. Some of al-Qaeda's top leaders are Egyptian. In contrast, the IS is primarily comprised of ex-Saddam Hussein militants, Syrians as well as some other Salafist jihadists. The core comes from Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard and intelligence units. The IS has three deputy leaders, who are ethnic Turkmen, but the leadership is dominated by Iraqis.

Al-Qaeda still remains more clandestine than the IS; it is more of an umbrella organization to help support other terrorist cells (Farrell, 2010). Al-Qaeda does not have a clear base of operation, though it is probably somewhere in Pakistan. Al-Qaeda has been mostly effective in supporting affiliates in Iraq, Yemen and Nigeria. The IS's base today is clearly Mosul (where it may have some genuine support due to high levels of dissatisfaction with the Iraqi government), in Iraq, though it also has a base in Raqqa in Syria. Once the IS took over Mosul in June 2014, the organization became a state and was no longer a shadowy terrorist group.

The IS also differs from al-Qaeda because it has a semi-conventional military, with units divided into brigades, regiments and platoons (Warren, 2015). It has access to heavy weaponry, confiscated from the US military after winning battles in Iraq. As such, the IS has had more military victories. The head of security and intelligence for the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq, Masrour Barzani, claimed that it is their knowledge of conventional war that makes them so powerful. He added, 'They know

how to plan, how to attack, how to defend….Otherwise they'd be no more than a terrorist organizations' (Muir, BBC, 2016). Though the strength of the IS's military has been disputed more recently (see Chapter 12), it has been more powerful than the Iraqi military. When the IS does engage in acts of terrorism, they are more brazen and not as thoughtfully planned. The IS is more willing to take credit for any act of brutality against the West regardless of what the backlash might be, whereas al-Qaeda appears to be more concerned with not alienating Muslims.

As the name denotes, the IS has set up a state that is highly structured. There are councils that work on finance, military matters, security and intelligence, foreign fighters' assistance, media and legal matters. Unlike al-Qaeda, it aims to establish a caliphate and a single transnational Islamic state based on Sharia law. A Shura council is set up to ensure that all decisions comply with the group's interpretation of Sharia (Stern and Berger, 2015).

After capturing territory, the IS was able to generate massive revenues through the sale of oil (see Chapter 2). This in turn, has enabled the group to provide some meagre administrative services such as welfare, healthcare, food kitchens, road maintainance, electricity and water (Napoleoni, 2014). It also keeps annual reports and tracking statistics of the cities that it has taken over. But much of its emphasis is on security and maintaining intelligence on all of its residents. Checkpoints were erected and individuals are constantly checked against databases. Moral police cruised around IS captured territory trying to find individuals violating rules of conduct, such as playing music, having satellite TV, and not covering up, etc. (Muir, BBC, 2016). In contrast, al-Qaeda has not tried to control much territory on its own. Most of its funding allegedly comes from private donations and ransoms, which it uses to offer logistical support to terror cells and affiliates.

Because the IS has a bureaucracy, it has had to develop a payroll system with clearly defined salaries. Though the pay scale is egalitarian, fighters are not necessarily paid competitive wages compared to what the average illiterate Iraqi male would earn. Oddly, pay was lower for riskier jobs, illustrating the importance of martyrdom for the organization in its recruitment. Members seem to be driven by the need to have value in their lives more than monetary compensation (Shapiro and Jung, 2014).

Although few thought any group could be more deadly than al-Qaeda, the IS has proven to be more brutal and violent. Between 2002 and 2015, the IS, its affiliates and its precursor organization, AQI, were responsible for the death of 33,000 people by terrorist attacks. In that period, it was responsible for 26% of all terrorist attack deaths and for 24% of all kidnapping victims (Global Terrorism Database, 2015). In total, some 70 terrorist attacks have been committed by or on behalf of the IS in 20 countries, with over 1,200 victims. The group has stepped up suicide bombings due to recent pressures on its front lines. Since the height of its power in 2014, the IS has lost as much as 20% of the territory it held in Syria and 40% of the territory it held in Iraq. According to the US, air strikes have killed about 20,000–25,000 IS combatants (BBC, 2016).

The IS has had no qualms about using child soldiers. According to its propaganda, in 2014 it used 89 boys, some as young as eight. Researchers also found that in 2015, 39% of boy child soldiers were killed in suicide car bombings and 33% were killed in combat (Longman, 2016). As the following chapter will explain, many terrorist groups and insurgencies are now comporting themselves like warlords.

Conclusion

Terrorist groups have become more networked and more resilient. Many terrorist groups no longer resemble small tightly knit organizations filled with zealots. Instead, many terrorist groups today consist of a loose conglomeration of cells, which are engaged in organized crime. Terrorist groups today and the networks they are a part of are more lethal and violent than past terrorist groups; there are fewer classical terrorist groups engaged in low-casualty, urban guerrilla warfare campaigns. Though they are increasingly linked with various different types of groups, they are actually the weakest of all violent non-state actors; in spite of the media attention and fear they generate, terrorist groups are the least deadly.

Summary Points

- Terrorism and insurgencies have often been conflated, but terrorist groups are not as powerful and they do not last as long.

- Terrorist groups of the past are structurally different than terror networks today.
- Terrorist groups have a massive psychological impact but a minimal impact to our overall security.
- Suicide terrorism has been both secular and religiously motivated.
- Al-Qaeda was an insurgency, but today it is a terror umbrella organization.
- Most suicide terrorism was secular.

Key Questions

1. What are the key factors that differentiate a terrorist group from an insurgency?
2. How have terrorist groups changed over time?
3. Why are terrorist groups so much more resilient than in the past?
4. Do terrorist groups have a major impact on the state and society? What are the ways in which this is the case?
5. In what ways does al-Qaeda constitute an umbrella organization more than a traditional terrorist group? Why is the IS not a terrorist organization?
6. Theory: Is terrorism a rational strategy for violent groups? According to realists, should states respond to terrorism? Do terror groups threaten security according to realists?

Further Reading

Enders, W. and Sandler, T. (2011) *The Political Economy of Terrorism* (Cambridge University Press). Provides both a qualitative and quantitative investigation of terrorism, examining its economic effects and economic reasons that may drive terrorism.

Hoffman, B. (2006) *Inside Terrorism* (Columbia University Press). An essential book, focusing on what drives terrorism, the interaction between terrorist groups and the media, and the tactics, targets and technologies used by terrorist groups.

Martin, G. (2015) *Understanding Terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues* (SAGE). A useful starting point for understanding terrorism.

Pape, R. (2005) *Dying to Win: the Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (Random House). Presents a rational choice approach for understanding why there has been an increase in suicide terrorism, showcasing its utility as a tactic.

Rapoport, D.C. (ed.) (2013) *Inside Terrorist Organizations* (Routledge). Edited volume on the structure of terrorist organizations and their motivations to use violence.

Sageman, M. (2004) *Understanding Terror Networks* (University of Pennsylvania Press). Excellent overview of the new types of terror organizations, how they are structured, function and recruit.

8 Warlords and Marauders

Key Terms

- Charles Taylor
- Child soldiers
- Kalashnikov culture
- National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)
- Neo-warlord
- Resource wars
- Revolutionary United Front (RUF)
- Sobels
- Warlord militia

In a departure from the previous chapters which have focused on organizations with largely political goals, this and subsequent chapters focus on organizations with primarily economic goals. Chapter 8 introduces the concept of warlords and rebel marauders, which have become notable for their role in delegitimizing and weakening the state in countries like Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Somalia, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Though these groups aim to control territory and people, their motivations are primarily economic rather than political.

Definition

Warlords are leaders of armed groups that control local territory. They are motivated by greed – they aim to acquire territory, money and resources through the use and threat of violence, while keeping a weak central authority at bay (Duffield, 1998: 81). Warlords emerge in collapsing and collapsed states and where the security institutions, in particular, are weak or non-existent. Scholars have argued that when the state's power is fragmented, localized power may emerge (Freeman, 2015; Hills, 1997: 35). Sometimes they originate in the military, with a faction leader defecting and setting up an alternative power base (Freeman, 2015).

After the security institutions have fallen apart, warlords aim to maximize their profits from state disorder. In contrast to organized criminal groups, warlords have an interest in sustaining state collapse. While organized criminal groups need some semblance of stability and regulations in order to have an environment where high profit margins are likely, warlords prefer total chaos. The criminal, in contrast, depends on the stability of the state for his commercial gains.

Warlords also emerge in post-conflict zones, where power, law and civil order have disappeared (Freeman, 2015; Hills, 1997: 35). Max Weber noted that warlords are permanent figures in a chronic state of conflict. The warlord often has some form of professional or paramilitary experience, but he is much more selfish than heroic. The warlord can take advantage of war or post-war economies by exploiting local resources and the local population through looting or levying taxes.

Warlords appear to provide security, but they also manufacture insecurity to justify their existence. Warlords and their militias need insecurity in order to flourish. Those living in war zones fear constant attacks from armed looters. As physical security decreases and society breaks down, individuals need local protection in order to survive. This makes them more dependent on local warlords (Hills, 1997). Thus physical force provides limited stability instead of moral or legitimate authority.

Warlords are distinct from insurgents – insurgents draw support from the population, whereas warlords prey on the population and recruit from the local community (Mackinlay, 2000: 56). The warlord does not depend on any popular support; the only service they provide, if any, is security. Waging military campaigns may be necessary to maintain some legitimacy, but overall they are not committed to a higher cause. They often target the population rather than protect it from harm.

Insurgents and warlords do have in common the possession of an armed fighting force.[1] Though warlords' militias are not well trained or disciplined, warlord militias constitute a fighting force with access to arms. An organized criminal group usually does not have an armed militia, though they may have access to guns for hire. Even the most simple and barbaric warlord still

institutes some form of training and indoctrination for the fighters. New fighters in the Lord Resistance Army in Uganda were given a spiritual education and indoctrinated into the organization with formal processes such as spreading shea butter on them.

1. When warlords offer some sort of pseudo-political agenda, they control rebel groups. When they have no pretence of a political agenda, their fighting force is just referred to as a warlord militia.

Warlords seek control over resources and thus some control over territory where resources exist. They want political power over a territory in order to exploit resources. In Sierra Leone, warlords were involved in the diamond trade, while in Burma and Afghanistan, warlords were involved in the opium economies. Warlords make revenues from exploiting resources and in setting up a quasi-taxation regime, extracting capital from business activities of their subjects. They target minerals, drug producers, drug traffickers and other smugglers. Commercial insurgencies are possible in countries that have something to loot such as drugs, mineral deposits, timber or rubber. Warlords in Tajikistan have taken control over key resources; an example is the warlord Ibodullo Boimatov, who once controlled the country's only aluminium smelter. Makhmud Khudayberdiev also ruled over the agricultural area of Kurgan-Tubbe as an independent city state.

Warlords are not entrepreneurial. Their economic objectives drive them to avoid acquiring any kind of fixed economic asset. They rarely invest in the territory under their control because it entails great risk to their power. They are governed by their access to resources which generates hard currency, which they use to purchase arms. A warlord's power is often dependent on his ability to govern the war economy (Le Billon, 2001).

Marauding rebels

Marauding rebels are groups of ad hoc fighting units, usually controlled by warlords, factional demagogues and political entrepreneurs. They are demobilized or scattered fighters who often engage in looting, pillaging and terrorizing defenceless civilians. They have been described by scholars as violent thugs who use their access to weapons to loot (Azam, 2006). They

plunder property and threaten security and do not aim to offer anything to citizens. They have very little loyalty to the state; they are loyal only to the leader who directs them, yet they are not just a self-defence militia to protect the warlord. They see themselves as being part of a political-military organization, though their main activity is looting. In Iraq, the Fadhila party, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (SIIC) Badr organization and the Mahdi army are mostly fighting for the control of oil both for legal exports and smuggling. The Fadhila party used to control the Iraq oil ministry until 2006 but is challenged by other militias. These groups behave like criminal gangs, though armed clashes have taken place (Williams, 2009).

Scholars have noted that it is the prevalence of resources that helps explain why rebel groups form instead of insurgencies. The latter consists of an organization that typically depends on the local population for support. Therefore, it will employ a ‘stationary bandit’ approach, and attract high-commitment recruits who believe in the organization’s ideology and will employ violence selectively. Rebel groups have access to natural resources, making them more likely to attract low-commitment recruits who are primarily interested in profit and who have little regard for the lives or livelihoods of civilians, or in establishing a stable system of long-term tax collection (Weinstein, 2005).

Like warlords, marauding rebels also emerge during and after conflicts have taken place or after the security institutions of a state have completely disintegrated. They benefit from chaotic situations and where the government has lost control over specific areas. The M-23 Movement, for instance, has taken control over Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo because government forces all but disappeared and UN soldiers were unable to offer much resistance. The movement forced Congolese to abandon their homes to escape the brutal attacks (Vinci, 2007). Marauding rebels also emerge after a more organized and recognized force has broken up. They may consist of a particular ethnic group or clan, but are often composed of young men, even teenagers and children. Though there are some skilled unconventional fighters, most are not well trained.

These forces are irregular and the individuals involved may engage in dual activities. Some may have actual day jobs, possibly even working for the

regular military. In the case of Sierra Leone, some individuals were soldiers by day and rebels by night. There were 30–50 groups of 50–80 fighters each that were referred to as ‘sobels’. Sobels consisted of members of underfunded armies who would engage in criminal activities such as looting, robbery and protection. In Somalia, access to weapons for young unemployed fighters granted many of them new-found power. Their main purpose became setting up roadblocks and looting. As a result, these fighters were referred to as ‘Moorjans’ (looters) (Marchal, 2007).

Political Ideology and Objectives

Warlords do not have political motivations, though they sometimes may pretend to. Their main motivation is self-enrichment, not state-building or any sort of collective interest. Jean-Germain Gros writes that they have the ‘emotional immaturity of teenage fighters’ (Gros, 1996: 459). Other scholars concur that warlords are one-dimensional and mostly engage in indiscriminate violence against the population under their control (Lezhnev, 2006). They are devoid of any ideology and, unlike leaders of insurgencies, they do not have to constantly reinforce some sort of ideology.

Because the warlord controls some territory, they sometimes provide some governance structures, but they do not have anything that even comes close to resembling a bureaucracy. The warlord organization has no distinction between the political and military organizations. The militia intervenes in all aspects of political life and the civilian/military balance is dysfunctional (Rich, 1999: 6).

Warlords usually do not provide any sort of public good or service, and if they do, the recipients are carefully chosen. The most they usually offer as a public good are distributions of cash, gifts and arms to their supporters. Any goods that the warlord provides only cement their clientelistic networks (Giustozzi, 2004). In the rare cases in which a warlord has provided some public goods, the net benefits are still low. One example is Mutiullah Khan, a warlord who operated in the Oruzgan Province of Afghanistan. He built 70 mosques on his territory and provided scholarships to local students to study in Kabul (Filkins, 2010). However, the highway in his territory was unsafe to pass, making trade on the highway limited. Moreover, very little economic

growth was allowed to take place outside of businesses that he controlled. In general, warlords do not care if the territory they control deteriorates.

In contrast, the insurgent has no interest in the decline of the area that they are operating. Insurgencies are also not always overthrowing a collapsing state. The motivation of the insurgent is political, not commercial. The insurgency also actually wants to govern. The warlord wants to maintain a low-intensity conflict, while the insurgent wants to attain power to provide a political good. Insurgents may seek to replace an existing government, gain more autonomy or secede from a state. For example, the Chechens wanted to secede from Russia. Though they committed terrible atrocities against the Russians (and vice versa), some of the Chechen violent non-state actors had a legitimate political agenda.

In spite of their lack of ideological agenda, most warlords operate under the pretence of having a political agenda. In fact, many warlords pretend to helm some sort of political organization, such as Charles Taylor in Liberia, Joseph Kony in Uganda and Foday Sankoh in Sierra Leone. They only aim to control territory and defy the state. The militia that works under their command may not operate under the assumption that they are fighting on behalf of a political movement, however.

In spite of this lack of political interest, nearly all warlords in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo and Liberia held high office at one point prior to emerging as warlords. In Somalia, Mohammed Aidid was the defence minister for Somali president Siad Barre (1979–91). Through his position he was able to acquire arms clandestinely prior to the civil war. Charles Taylor was able to do the same when he ran the state procurement agency under President Samuel Doe (1980–90). Though many warlords do not pretend to have any political aims, some warlords seize opportunities to take high positions of power.

Marauding rebel groups also attempt to disguise their profit-oriented motivations behind a political discourse (Osorio, 2013: 17). This is what distinguishes a marauding rebel group from a warlord militia. Marauding rebel groups often claim to have a political objective and they may have been originally motivated by some sort of political grievance such as discrimination. A warlord militia is just the army that a warlord uses for

protection and does not pretend to have any political objective. In contrast, a marauding rebel group may have a loose mantra that binds them; they may legitimately detest the regime. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone claimed to believe in putting arms and power in the hands of the people. RUF soldiers maintained that they wanted to build a fairer society, where education was more widely available, though they offered no explanation as to how this would be achieved.

The initial grievance provides political justification for their illegal profits, however (Kaldor, 2013: 113). But the warring factions in Africa are more aptly described as racketeering enterprises rather than political groups. Many scholars have noted that rebels within these fighting groups have a nihilistic outlook on life and have become focused on a life of plunder and violence. They do not consistently adhere to some ideological principle. In the Liberian war, no one knew exactly who the armed combatants were. Though they had uniforms, they do little to politicize the villages or leave any impression beyond terror. They made no effort to put their message across to the outside world.

In some cases, marauding rebel groups have a shared ethnic group or history, but often they are mixed groups with weak ideological connections. Taylor attracted groups that had been oppressed, such as the Mano and Gio ethnic groups under Samuel Doe. He encouraged them to attack rival groups such as the Krahn and Mandigo (Reno, 1997: 498). But ethnicity was a tool to mobilize groups of people and camouflage other ambitions. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) had few if any ideological benefits.

Once these groups take power, they do little to provide any sort of administration. They offer no compelling ideological plan and are devoid of ideas of how to govern. The main interest is to replace the old patronage network with their own network. While the insurgent is focused on taking over the state and administering, the warlord does not have such objectives. Remedying local injustices is secondary to reaping the benefits of the chaos. They join groups that permit them to access loot. The RUF’s main interest was in mining diamonds in the territory they held. Marauding rebel groups have an interest in maintaining the conflict to maintain their position of power and access to resources (Makarenko, 2004: 140).

Structure and Recruitment

Structure

Warlord rule is based on personal networks that are informal. The militias that they control are organized around their frightening behaviour and appearance or due to high levels of personal charisma (Marten, 2012: 47). Their legitimacy is rooted in this charisma and patronage ties. The warlord can use this charisma to motivate militias to hate their opponents. Much of the warlord's popularity is based on his own charisma rather than his military abilities or venerable characteristics. In Somalia, warlord Mohammed Aidid ran his fiefdom with hired guns that were partially paid in drugs. Some groups in Liberia were led by drunks such as Prince Yormi Johnson. Warlords usually do not reward those loyal to them; they prefer to rely on force.

Warlords operate at the top, exercising hierarchical forms of leadership. They have some trusted subordinates but generally do not rely on any formal structure. The rank structures within warlord armies are ambiguous (Thomas et al., 2005: 125). For this reason, warlord systems do not survive the death or decline in power of the warlord. The entire system is based on one person, which leaves favoured individuals in the lurch. The warlord's power relies on force, charisma and patronage.

Marauding rebel groups may have started off with some hierarchy, but fragmentation usually takes place in which local army commanders act as local warlords, such as in the case of Tajikistan. Most positions were ad hoc with the exception of the key appointments. There may also be an abundance of generals and field officers who do not have a real command status.

Marauding rebel groups do not have the attitude or structure of a professional army, as an insurgency might. Smaller subunits would form, disperse, form new configurations and command structures. Factions were made to seem larger than they were due to the flow of transient local fighters who fought part-time. They display a relatively low level of organizational cohesion and move from one place to another. They tend to have low levels of discipline

and a breakdown of any sort of military hierarchy. Much of the lack of discipline is due to the fact that often rebels and marauders are not given a cash salary. They are given food but are forced to fend for themselves by looting.

In the case of the 15,000 combatants involved in the conflict in Somalia in 1991, fewer than 1,500 were organized in any sort of classic military formation. The groups had no clear lines of authority or structure (Pérouse de Montclos, 2003: 42). In contrast, Afghan fighters during the war against the Soviets were organized and relatively cohesive. They demonstrated discipline and tenacity. Afterwards, warlords emerged and groups disintegrated without much discipline, plundering the population they had once fought to defend. The warlord militia member avoids battle, picks on unarmed civilians and focuses on making money (Keen, 2000: 26).

Recruitment

Recruitment for warlord militias and rebel groups is lax, with low entry requirements. Some marauders used to be part of the previous regime, possibly working as border guards, presidential guards or internal security forces. A former faction leader of the military can create his own militia, tapping into the frustration of other poorly paid, poorly educated soldiers (Freeman, 2015). Many of those recruited lack basic skills, but covet access to food and services (Kaldor, 2013: 113). Recruits are often very young and unaware of what political goals the group may have originally had. Once they gain access to loot, this further fuels their motivation.

In the case of marauding rebel groups in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the units were mostly young, with low levels of education, experience and motivation. Many were displaced youth while some others were deserters from the armed forces. Ethnic background is sometimes a common bond of fighting groups, but it is not always the case that the warlord and his militia are co-ethnics. Charles Taylor was an educated and urban Americo-Liberian whereas most of his initial army were from the Gio and Mano people who were reacting against the brutality of the Doe regime. By 1994, Taylor was recruiting from larger demographic zones.

Taylor's NPFL could call on 12,000 soldiers of different levels of ability. They were an array of troops who had been trained in the US, and those with no education or experience. Many were only semi-literate villagers who were frustrated by their lack of opportunities and access to food. Most did not even receive a cash salary. Their food and essential survival needs had to be looted from local sources. The RUF in Sierra Leone recruited disaffected youth and those that had been arrested by Taylor in Liberia. More recruits to the RUF came from abductions conducted at refugee camps.

A study that examined recruits in the RUF found that only 10% of those recruited claimed to have any sort of ideological motivation for joining. Nearly half of all recruits claimed that they joined out of fear, and as many as 88% claimed that they were abducted and forced to join (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2008: 436). Most of those who joined had very low levels of education and could barely eke out a living in logging and mining camps (Peters and Richards, 1998). For the M-23 Movement in the Democratic Republic of Congo, most of the recruitment was forced. The group forcibly recruited army soldiers, medical officers, police and civilians into its ranks. Those that join willingly reason that it is safer to be part of a rebel organization than to become a victim of one (Keen, 1998).

The recruitment of child soldiers has also been commonplace among marauding rebel groups. In at least 20 countries, children are direct participants in war (Antonio Ocampo, 2005). Child soldiers have been used in countries such as the Central African Republic, Chad, Somalia, Uganda, Myanmar (Burma), Sudan, Iraq, Colombia, Serbia and Sri Lanka. Child soldiers are cheap and only have to be paid in food and basic essentials, yet they can be deadly once equipped with heavy weaponry.

When Charles Taylor invaded Sierra Leone in December 1989, 30% of the soldiers were under the age of 17, with about 6,000 child soldiers in total. Taylor even created a Boys Own Unit with some as young as eight. Many of those in the Boys Unit were recruited from the streets of Freetown in Sierra Leone, who, prior to recruitment, had been involved in petty theft for survival. Children were handed semi-automatic weapons such as AK-47s, giving them the opportunity to engage in theft and violence on a larger scale (Denov, 2010; Small Arms, 2008).

In total, there were 11,000 child soldiers recruited for the Sierra Leone Civil war, mostly for the RUF. They were most often used to attack villages and to guard diamond mines and weapons stockpiles. Recruited children were often forced to murder their parents (Zack-Williams, 2001). To make the children more maniacal and fearless, they would rub cocaine into open cuts. It has been common for other groups to also force children to use cocaine, crack, methamphetamines and 'brown-brown' – cocaine mixed with gun powder (Betancourt et al., 2008).

Strategy and Tactics

There are no clear tactics or strategy for warlord militias and rebel groups. Marauding rebels are often fuelled by alcohol or drugs. The strategy is marauding terror. Warlord violence is usually also very savage. The military objective is unclear and lacks a political purpose. The military units have no discipline in the actions that they commit. Units are mostly unreliable and the violence is very unpredictable, with random shootings. The Liberian war was characterized by sudden attacks by armoured gangs who emerged from the bush to destroy villages, ambush roads and murder, rape and steal.

For both groups, violence against civilians takes place indiscriminately. They spend no time trying to develop an underground movement, since their main aim is to rob the local people (Mackinlay, 1998). Compliance is ensured through threats of violence. They rely on the use of fear of barbaric force. As a result, the warlord and rebel groups are very careless of the civilian population. Unlike in the case of insurgents, in the case of marauding groups, widespread indiscriminate violence against civilians takes place as well as looting of civilians by warlord militias and rebel groups (Azam, 2006).

Because marauding rebel groups have no political agenda, they do not have a politically sensitive path to navigate or need to adhere to an ideology. They do not need to persuade a constituency since threats of violence are enough to ensure compliance. They prey on civilians rather than attempt to represent them. This contrasts with insurgencies, which have a connection to society. This connection with society for the insurgency prevents too much looting and barbaric acts of violence against their own constituency. Marauding

rebel groups, however, may ambush citizens, and locations known to be populated by civilians are targeted (Hoffman, 2004: 212). The tactics used in the war in Tajikistan were mostly terror rather than engaging in combat. Hostage-taking, kidnapping, murder and looting were common during the war. Much of the violence was fuelled by retaliation against previous acts of violence.

The violence can also be especially brutal (Gberie, 2005; Hills, 1997: 42). There are usually no moral restrictions for the warlord or the rebel army. They avoid the conventional moral burdens of power. They can use the justification of self-preservation to excuse extreme measures. For example, in the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, rebels acted with recklessness, indiscriminately shooting with automatic weapons. Amputations and rape of women were common, a practice that started in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in 1999 (Gberie, 2005: 182). Warlords such as Sam Bockerie introduced chopping off limbs of men, women and children, as well as other forms of mutilation and rape.

Much of the brutality can also be explained by the levels of education of the fighters. Those that had some military training and professional experience may discourage looting and savagery against civilians. Less educated ones indulge their reputations for brutality. They adopt crazy nicknames, piratical dress and use human remains as warning symbols at roadblocks (Mackinlay, 1998). Drugs and alcohol fuelled the barbaric behaviour of recruits. Not surprisingly, an estimated 25%–30% of those who emerged from the war had a serious drug problem (Mueller, 2013: 19).

In contrast to the warlord and marauding rebel group, insurgencies are constantly engaged in wars against a much stronger opponent. Warlords and marauding rebel groups rarely engage in conflict with government forces or other warlords in open battle (Thomas et al., 2005: 125). They would rarely confront an opposing armed faction of equal strength. Weapons are fired, but high-intensity fighting is not the norm (Mackinlay, 1998). Battles are fought that consist of shots being fired for 15 minutes, followed by fleeing. The warlord often withdraws when an opponent comes within fighting distance. The warlord usually focuses on seizing lands that are outside the control of the government and that have potential value for its raw materials. Thus, the

main battlegrounds are unmanned trade and aid routes, ports and diamond mines.

Funding and Support

Funding

Like other economically motivated violent non-state actors, warlords and rebel groups fund themselves. However, unlike organized crime, the funding is not generated by sophisticated organized criminal operations but through different forms of looting and predation. Warlords in African states have gotten rich from looting and taxing territory under their control.

For individual rebel group members, looting is not necessarily a lucrative job but is necessary for survival. In some cases, militaries that have not been paid begin to engage in criminal behaviour such as looting, as was the case in Joseph Mobutu's Zaire. The disintegrating military's access to weapons facilitates this behaviour. In other cases, the warlord may encourage looting (Allen, 1999). The M-23 Movement has engaged in constant looting of homes, offices and cars.

In the case of the NPFL under Charles Taylor, looting was the main source of income for individual soldiers. Looting houses that had been captured was seen as a generous reward (Alao et al., 1999: 46). One of the more egregious cases of looting took place in Somalia under the direction of warlord Mohammed Aidid. Aidid's officials told UNICEF that there were 25,000 starving Bardera people instead of the actual 6,000. A few days later, the figure was inflated to 56,000 people needing food. The food aid was then siphoned off by Aidid's group (Duyvesteyn, 2000).

Warlords manipulate scarcity and access to goods to extend their authority. Mutiullah Khan of Afghanistan provided protection to US military convoys and owned a rock-crushing company that sold gravel to the US military, employing over 15,000 people with these businesses, but the area that he controlled suffered from high levels of insecurity.

Warlords can control some simple criminal networks but often favour business enterprises such as protection. Warlords want protection to be seen as a scarce and valuable commodity. Warlords also like to offer protection from economic competition and force their rivals out of business. They limit the range of commercial activities in their areas.

When the government is weak or non-existent, warlords can tax goods in transit and create checkpoints to extract cash from passing trade (Hills, 1997: 41). Because of this, warlords are often associated with illegal border activity. They smuggle weapons, narcotics and people across borders, and avoid customs duties. They can also just rob or extort from the local population, such as was the case in Somalia. When foreign aid or relief comes in, warlords can intercept this and directly pocket it.

In spite of the lack of a complex organization, if a warlord or rebel group gets control over an area of the state where there are valuable natural resources or a key asset, they can become very wealthy. For this reason, many conflicts involving warlords and rebels are often referred to as 'resource wars'. Warlords are often able to sell local resources on the international market and develop export trade with foreign firms, which brings in hard currency that can be used to buy weapons or to enrich themselves. Thus warlords can sustain themselves by selling primary commodities under the table.

Charles Taylor of Liberia offers a good example. Taylor had no elaborate infrastructure, just raw materials that he sold for hard currency on the international market. Taylor's 'businesses' were run by loyal partners, mostly relatives. For example, Taylor's brother, Gbatu, organized the plunder of the abandoned German-owned Bong Iron Ore Company. Taylor supported himself through his involvement in illicit trade of diamonds, other minerals and agricultural products and timber (Reno, 1995: 28). Through the vast networks he created with foreign investors and regional commercial networks, he was able to net himself an income of over $400 million per year (Reno, 1995: 10). A British mining company paid Taylor as much as $10 million a month just to keep a railroad site to a port operational (Reno, 1993: 181). This provided him with access to foreign exchange which he could use to buy weapons.

Support

Warlords and marauding rebel groups sometimes receive international support. Warlords may offer their territory as a safe haven for access to resources to other states, groups or businesses. Alliances can be made with PSCs, organized criminal groups and terrorist groups (Mair, 2005: 50). But these alliances are always temporary. Collaborations are also subject to fluctuations in response to threats and opportunities.

Foreign states may opportunistically offer support for warlords. Border states can use warlords to challenge the domestic sovereignty of weak neighbours (Marten, 2012: 12). Local warlords were supported by states bordering Afghanistan, such as Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan. Warlords also may receive support from bureaucrats and state leaders who link up with local strongmen out of necessity, but for the most part, the warlord is completely independent from the state. The state needs the warlord's compliance more than the warlord needs the state.

In general, warlords lack deep political relationships or allies. Allies are usually bought and have a similar interest in destabilization (Mackinlay, 1998). When warlords do make alliances, they still manage to maintain their independence. In the conflict in Somalia, warlords tried to strengthen their power position by mobilizing alliances with other clan groups in order to fight against a common enemy, but these alliances were mostly short-lived.

Warlords do not require an underground movement to generate power. Popular support is not necessary for the warlord. They just need to muster enough followers to bear arms alongside them and gain access to local resources. In contrast, insurgents are more dependent on society and rely on some popular support, which they use as their base to combat the government.

Power and Impact on the State and Society

As a previous section illustrated, warlords and their militias and marauding rebel groups often emerge in countries where the state has already disintegrated or is experiencing a conflict. The chances of stability in post-

conflict zones lessen when warlords emerge. The main problem is that warlords have an interest in maintaining state collapse and insecurity. They care little about saving the infrastructure of the state since they will never control it. Warlords use the resources they have for parochial interests and defy centralized authority.

These groups also present a significant obstacle to the reconstruction of society. Warlords and marauding rebel groups have fostered the emergence of a 'Kalashnikov culture', where political disputes are settled through the use of arms. This culture has been especially notable in the Pakistan and Afghanistan border areas, where some people own more than one automatic weapon.

Compared to the states where they operate, warlords are very powerful. They may have access to powerful weapons. Marauding rebel groups are also often equipped with weaponry that is potent, such as Piranha armoured personnel carriers, rocket launchers (M-116s), mortars and major aircraft.

Box 8.1 Small Arms

Small arms are weapons that are intended for use by an individual. They include pistols, rifles, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light machine guns. For warlords and rebel groups, small arms are widely accessible. They are widely produced, cheap, easily transportable and widespread and are difficult to trace and monitor.

There are over half a billion small arms (640 million) and light weapons, enough for one in every 11 people, and causing 11 deaths per day (hazen, 2008). More than eight million small arms circulate in West Africa. Some eight million new guns are being manufactured every year by at least 1,249 companies in 92 countries. In Uganda, an AK-47 can be produced for the same cost as a chicken. Inside Mozambique and Angola, an AK-47 complete with a couple of clips of ammunition can be bought for less than $15.00, or for a bag of maize (Small Arms Survey, 2008). They are also easy to use. They can be used by children and informal militias. They require no form of training. Because small arms are so easy to use, wars can be more likely to involve children as recruits.

Small arms are also easily transportable. They are light and easy to hide. They have been moved in South Asia using mules and camels. Small arms are difficult to trace because, although much of the trade in small arms is legitimate and accounted for, most of the weapons are assembled with components sourced from many countries (Small Arms Survey, 2013). They are also easy to ship or smuggle into areas of conflict. They can be easily hidden in legitimate cargo or warehouses. They are hard to monitor and easily stolen, with more than one million firearms being stolen or lost worldwide.

War-torn countries and countries with poor border security are flooded with surplus weapons. Weapons are easily stolen and can end up in the hands of violent non-state actors. During the Somali conflict, most of the heavy weapons in Somalia were inoperable. However, 30,000 people were killed by light weapons in 1991 and 1992. Some 500,000 weapons that were abandoned by the Somali army fell into the hands of General Mohamed Farah Aidid and Ali Mahdi. Weapons also flooded into Somalia after the collapse of the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia in 1991. The US also donated 5,000 M-16 rifles and 5,000 handguns to the Somali police, an unnecessary move to a country already flooded with weapons. Soon after, brand-new M-16s were sighted in the hands of criminals (Ezrow and Frantz, 2013: 74).

The proliferation of small arms has had a long-lasting effect on human security. In countries considered to be at peace, the level of violence due to small arms is considered to be as high as in war zones. In 90% of conflicts since 1990, small arms have been the primary weapons used in fighting, and have contributed to the increased proportion of civilian deaths in those conflicts (Bourne, 2007). The proliferation of small arms has also made it easier for rebel groups and warlords to continue to threaten stability and defy a collapsing state (Boutwell and Klare, 1998).

The areas that are under the control of warlords and marauding rebel groups are rarely safe for citizens. There may be some security for those loyal or able to pay off the warlord, but for everyone else the area becomes more risky and dangerous. In the case of Somalia, the warlord-controlled areas were supposed to be safer, to protect businessmen and their goods. Warlord militias were supposed to ensure the safe passage of goods from numerous checkpoints and roadblocks, but robbery and looting still prevailed. In the case of Tajikistan, some areas are still under warlord control. Though the civil war ended decades ago, some territories are no-go zones unless you have a prior arrangement to enter the territory. Though warlords are usually not powerful to take over an entire state, their militias are strong enough to seize a large piece of territory.

In rare cases, warlords and marauding rebel groups are able to take control over not only large territories in the countries they originate from, but also from neighbouring weak countries as well. In the case of Liberia, with the help of his 50-man NPFL, Taylor was able to control parts of Liberia but also parts of Sierra Leone and frontier zones of Guinea and the Ivory Coast, referred to as ‘Taylorland’. His soldiers were perfectly at east in the Ivory Coast. With the complicity of the Ivoirian army, they did as they saw fit (Reno, 1997: 498–500). Taylorland had its own currency, banking system, TV and radio station, international airfield and deep-water port.

Box 8.2 War Economies

The war economy is defined as 'the production, mobilization and allocation of economic resources to sustain a conflict' (Goodhand, 2004: 157). It is based on the economic interactions that directly sustain combat. Violence emerges as a good that is marketable and the means of force becomes more and more privatized and decentralized. The few actors involved benefit from the status quo and have a vested interest in the continuation of the conflict and instability.

Some of the activities of the war economy include control over natural resources, which is important for funding the purchase of weapons (or the sale of resource exploitation rights to foreign companies). Controlling resources and other assets to fund the war effort is a violent process that involves pillaging, predation and extortion against citizens (Goodhand, 2004).

Another activity in war economies is providing security checkpoints. In most cases this comes in the form of bribes at security checkpoints and roadblocks (Goodhand, 2004).

The effects of the war economy overall are very negative, not just because the citizens are forced to live in an environment of heightened insecurity and violence, but also because all legal forms of entrepreneurship are discouraged, which leads to a mass exodus of the entrepreneurial and upper and middle classes. Neighbouring economies are also often affected by the instability and violence.

States with warlord-controlled areas are negatively affected by their operations. They cause economic inefficiency and stunt economic growth. They disrupt free trade, and make any sort of commerce and investment unpredictable and risky. They make economic transactions more inefficient, expensive and insecure. This leads to capital flight and low levels of other forms of investment. People must focus on short-term profits while they can. The future can change rapidly with warlords, which makes it difficult to make long-term deals. To illustrate the instability caused by warlords in Tajikistan, in November 1992, in the town of Kolkhozobod, the centre of cotton production changed hands six times due to infighting amongst warlord militias.

Warlords and marauding rebel groups generate revenues in a parasitic manner. They extort, tax and create the need for protection (Thomas et al., 2005). They tap into the resources of the state and its people and siphon off what they want. In Somalia, where warlord rule was the norm, very little investment took place. Business contracts could only be enforced through informal protection pacts, and business owners had to rely on warlord

militia. Small business owners could not afford the costs of security which priced them out of the market.

Warlords not only cause irreparable damage to security, the economy and the state, but also to future prospects for democracy. Warlords have no democratic mandate and usually have no interest in democracy. They also do not adhere to international and human rights laws (Robinson, 2001). It was the frustration and disgust with warlords in Afghanistan that led to the emergence of the Taliban in the mid- to late-1990s.

Warlords also negatively affect peace processes. On the one hand, they do not have the power to make peace. On the other hand, they routinely disrupt and destroy peace. They have no interest in a settlement because it would diminish their power (Hansen, 2006). A post-conflict situation is very complicated when warlords have gained power. They may agree to be incorporated into the state, but they thrive on an insecure environment and may serve a dual role of using their new position in the state to serve their own financial interests while also continuing to ensure that the country remains insecure to justify their provision of protection. Civil war in Tajikistan (1992–97) led to the development of warlord militias and bands of vigilantes and other illegally armed formations. Once they became involved, these groups had an interest in protracting the conflict. There were several attempts at a ceasefire early in the conflict that were undermined by warlords. Warlords violated the truce due to their desire to maintain control over lucrative enterprises such as cotton plantations and oil refineries. Marauding rebel groups are usually fairly easy to disband once the warlords who led them have been dealt with. They are often made up of members who are too young and inexperienced to challenge a peace process once it has been initiated.

Case Study Warlords in Afghanistan

Warlords in Afghanistan have constantly threatened state sovereignty. The state has rarely exercised a monopoly over the legitimate use of force, giving ample room for non-state actors to take control over small territory and provide 'protection'. The power of warlords has been so great that they have even been incorporated *into* the state. The Hamid Karzai (2001–14) government placed warlords in key positions of the government regardless of their expertise or

experience. According to a delegate, at one point in the Loya Jirga, '85% of the elected were with the warlords or were warlords' (Kolhatkar, 2003).

Warlordism in Afghanistan became more notable after initial uprisings took place against the Soviet-backed state government in the late 1970s (and against the actual Soviet invasion in 1979). This instability led to the rise of independent commanders. After the war began, refugee camps spawned new insurgent groups. In regions where the insurgents successfully fought off the state and Soviet forces, their commanders planted opium poppies as a source of independent income and took control over transportation checkpoints to collect unofficial taxes from travellers. Many warlords emerged more powerful than ever after the conflict with the Soviet Union ended.

Warlords have undermined the capacity and legitimacy of the state in Afghanistan because they have usurped revenues that could be collected by the government. For example, all of the revenues from the transit trade in the region of Herat (one of the richest regions in the country) have gone directly to warlord Ismail Khan, who emerged after being a prominent military commander in the war against the Soviets. Ismael Khan is sometimes referred to as a 'neo-warlord' – one who provides some form of public good over the territory under his control. Earning millions in revenues due to his control over international trade that passed through his region, he was able to provide tight security and even some economic opportunities. The Afghan government tried to incorporate him into the state, and he has served as the Minister of Water and Energy since 2005, though he has favoured Herat at the expense of other regions.

Attempts to incorporate other warlords into the army have mostly backfired. Warlords have paid lip service to the Afghan government but have been able to exercise power more or less autonomously.

Conclusion

Warlords and marauding rebels are comparatively more powerful than the state, but that is only because they emerge in states that are either completely collapsed or in the process of failing. They have no interest in state-building or ending low-intensity conflicts. They are also difficult to negotiate with. Because they are often emerging in post-conflict zones, the prospects for peace are that much more difficult when powerful warlords are involved. Nevertheless, their lack of political objectives means that they are more easily bought off. But buying off these groups is only a temporary fix. The long-term solutions to preventing the strengthening and emergence of these types of groups necessitate increasing the capacity of the states they emerge in.

Summary Points

- Warlords and rebels emerge in states that are failing or have collapsed; they emerge in post-conflict zones.
- Warlords and rebels offer few political benefits and mostly prey on their populations.
- Warlords and rebels undermine state legitimacy but have no ability to administer.
- Warlords and rebels create tremendous security and instability though they claim to offer protection.
- Warlords and rebels have an interest in prolonging a low-intensity conflict to take advantage of the war economy.

Key Questions

1. In what ways do warlords and rebels differ from organized criminal groups?
2. In what ways do warlords and rebels differ from insurgencies?
3. What are the conditions where these groups are most likely to emerge?
4. Why are warlords and rebels so detrimental to stability?
5. In what ways do the proliferation of small arms and the abundance of resources facilitate these groups?
6. Theory: How do rational choice approaches explain conflict?

Further Reading

Ballentine, K. (ed.) (2003) *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance* (Lynne Rienner Publishers). An in-depth explanation of the economic factors that drive conflicts. It offers case studies on the role of resources that have driven many of the conflicts in Africa.

Berdal, M.R. and Malone, D. (2000) *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* (Lynne Rienner Publishers) Similar to the Ballentine book, provides an overview of the literature on economic motives that drive wars.

Burgis, T. (2016) *The Looting Machine: Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers, and the Theft of Africa's Wealth* (PublicAffairs) Offers an in depth overview of the looting that has taken place on the continent.

Reno, W. (1999) *Warlord Politics and African States* (Lynne Rienner Publishers). Excellent book on warlords in Africa and how they maintain

themselves in power.

Smillie, I. (2013) ‘Blood diamonds and non-state actors’, *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, 46: 1003–1024. Excellent overview of how diamonds funded warlords and what has been done to regulate the industry.

Thomas, T.S., Kiser, S.D. and Casebeer, W.D. (2005) *Warlords Rising: Confronting Violent Non-state Actors* (Lexington Books). Examines warlords mostly in the region of greater Central Asia.

9 Organized Crime and Gangs

Key Terms

- Associational networks
- Cartelitos
- Decapitation
- Enforcer gangs
- Mafia
- Maras
- Third-generation gangs

Organized criminal groups and gangs are the most ubiquitous of all of the violent non-state actors and exert the biggest threat to security. Most criminal organizations operate across borders and have links and presence in a number of countries. Today organized crime networks are more fluid and interested in striking new alliances with other networks. This chapter discusses the role of gangs and organized criminal groups in destabilizing the state and society.

Definition

Organized criminal groups are structured groups of three or more people that exist for a period of time and aim to regularly commit more serious crimes in order to obtain material benefit. Though the group may be constantly evolving to evade detection, the basic structure remains the same. In contrast, sporadic crime is more isolated and ephemeral. Sporadic criminals have low skills and knowledge and cannot manage a complex and risk-laden environment. Organized crime involves enduring networks of actors engaged in making money illegally.

Most organized criminal groups are involved in multiple illegal businesses to achieve their earnings, though they aim to gain a monopoly (Abadinsky, 2012). The crimes include smuggling, robbery, fraud, blackmail, piracy,

contract killing, money laundering, and trafficking of drugs, weapons and humans, along with other illegal or counterfeit goods. Though they often use bribery, organized criminal groups are violent non-state actors because they are willing to use illegal violence to achieve their objectives.

Organized criminal groups are frequently based on family ties and ethnic networks. For example, the major organized criminal groups are the Italian, Chechen and Russian mafias, the Japanese Yakuza, the Chinese Triads and the Colombian and Mexican cartels (Rotman, 2000). When organized crime is based on a code of conduct where local fraternities have been created, it is often referred to as a 'mafia'. The Mafia is better known for certain types of criminal activities, such as protection, arbitration and contract enforcement. They may also be involved in loan-sharking, gambling, drug trafficking and fraud.

Gangs

Gangs are a group of three or more persons that have a common identifying sign, symbol or name, and who individually or collectively engage in criminal activity which creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation (Barker, 2010). Gangs have existed for centuries, but they received more attention during the 1980s. Many gangs do not have a clear hierarchy; they vary in terms of their level of organization. Gangs and organized crime differ mostly in terms of progression and sophistication. In comparison to organized criminal groups, gangs may not hold regular meetings or have clear written rules about the organization and their businesses. Gangs are not as well organized, complex or capable. Gangs have a very young membership compared to organized criminal groups. In fact, it is the youth of gang members that is one of the key defining characteristics, compared to organized criminals (Esbensen et al., 2001). Additionally, the members of gangs are comparatively less educated and less skilled (Klein and Maxson, 2010). Gangs also offer different enticements from organized crime groups, providing much less in terms of economic rewards and financial gain. They may appeal to those who have few economic opportunities and feel disenfranchised. Gang members often come from difficult family backgrounds, and are often alienated from school. Gangs provide a social setting that their family and economic status cannot provide (Vigil, 2010:

168). Though gangs are not as well organized as organized criminal groups, they do provide group members with a strong sense of solidarity and a distinct identity (Esbensen et al., 2001).

Gang evolution

Scholars have noted that there has been an evolution of gangs over time, though most gangs still remain fairly unsophisticated (Bunker and Sullivan, 2013). First-generation gangs don't engage in high levels of violence and have a loose leadership. Violence never extends outside the boundaries of their turf. They focus their attention on maintaining gang loyalty and protecting their turf, which is often just a few blocks in a neighbourhood. Any criminal activity is opportunistic rather than well planned because they have limited scope and sophistication. Gang soldiers made very little per hour in the 1990s (Forst et al., 2011: 105). First-generation gangs were not involved in any sort of trafficking. Gang homicides were likely to be turf-related rather than drug-related. For example, gangs were only minor players in crack sales in California. They did not get involved with the major cartels, but some were recruited to become hitmen. They were primarily used as lookout enforcers (Sullivan and Bunker, 2002: 41).

Second-generation gangs are engaged in businesses, such as drugs, though this usually entailed whatever the drug cartels did not already control. The appearance of cocaine and crack in Central America changed things. The lucrative nature of the cocaine and crack trade forced gangs to better organize themselves to take advantage of new profits (Cruz, 2010: 390). For example, gangs in Guatemala are able to obtain cocaine in powder form, which they reprocess into pebble-sized tabs and sell (Dudley, 2011: 898). They protect markets and use violence to control any competition. They have a broader area that they operate out of. Their operations may involve multiple countries. Their leadership is more centralized and their operations are more sophisticated. These gangs were better funded and organized. The more responsible and reliable members of these gangs would be recruited to work as foot soldiers or bodyguards (Sullivan and Bunker, 2002: 41).

Third-generation gangs have their own power and are interested in controlling their economic apparatuses. They have transnational links and are

much better networked. About 28% of gang members interviewed in El Salvador in 2006 claimed that they kept contacts with gang members in other countries (Franco, 2007). These gangs can engage in mercenary activity and work as cartel enforcers (Sullivan and Bunker, 2002: 36). 'Enforcer' gangs are specialists in violence that are hired by larger organizations such as drug cartels to provide security and ensure protection of the group. They engage in contract killings, assassinations, kidnappings and threats of violence. Gangs are often a labour force for crime groups. Enforcer gangs change in composition and membership constantly. Many are killed, disabled or arrested. There is a constant need for new recruits, but enforcer gangs are becoming more widespread.

Today many gang members from the Central American Mara Salvatrucha and the 18th Street Gang are working as mercenaries for Mexican drug cartels. Some Maras have even gained control of illegal immigrant and drug trafficking through Mexico and to the US. They can also provide prison protection for important Mexican cartel members if they are incarcerated. Guatemalan gangs have begun to work as spotters and enforcers for larger criminal groups, but they have not reached this mercenary phase yet. They are assassins for hire, but not in any systematic way (Dudley, 2010).

Third-generation gangs may have some political and social objectives. They may even extract taxes and provide limited services. They are not just interested in protecting markets but in acquiring power. Because of their capabilities, they strain government capacity more than other gangs. They may even establish small businesses and use violence to compete unfairly with legitimate businesses. They have much more sophisticated and powerful weapons and more prone to violence (Sullivan and Bunker, 2002: 41).

The case of Nicaraguan gangs illustrates how gangs can transform from first-generation gangs to much more sophisticated entities. Nicaraguan gangs (*pandillas*) initially had mainly operated traditionally in close groups. They consisted of individuals who wanted to create a sense of cohesion, solidarity and respect. They were not involved in violence and had only limited participation in criminal activities, with the exception of minor robberies. They were primarily aiming to gain resources to buy drugs and alcohol. Unfortunately, they have now become more involved in drug trafficking,

distributing drugs locally and providing arms for drug-trafficking groups (Rodgers, 2006).

Case Study Evolution of Los Zetas

Los Zetas was one of the most powerful and violent enforcer gangs to emerge in Mexico, with its operations extending into Central America. Though it no longer wields much power today after a series of successful counter-narcotics efforts, it set a new bar for how violent an organization could be.

Los Zetas originally worked as the enforcer gang for the Gulf cartel and later for the Beltran Leyva organization. They engaged in cross-border killing sprees on behalf of the Gulf cartel in 2004–5 in the Laredo–Nuevo Laredo along the US border. The group eventually transformed into its own independent drug cartel, almost becoming an insurgency, holding territory, but having no political agenda. Instead, the group used the territory it controlled to monopolize criminal activities. The group was originally organized along military lines, but eventually flattened its structure. It is also run surprisingly like a business with quarterly meetings, business records and a voting procedure for key assassinations.

The origin of Los Zetas is similar to the foundation of many paramilitary groups; it drew from a pool of already trained professionals. Los Zetas was primarily composed of former members of the Mexican special forces known as GAFE (Airmobile Special Forces Group). To fight the big drug cartels, the Mexican Army and Air Force Development Plan designated the fight to be a military task. The state then created drug-fighting units and provided them with advanced specialized training. Though they were well trained, they were poorly paid, and none of the individuals were thoroughly vetted. These groups were easily recruited by the drug cartels that had either been purged due to corruption or were attracted to better pay. In 2000–3, nearly 50,000 soldiers had deserted, though it could have been has high as 150,000 (Turbiville, 2010).

One noted defector from GAFE was Arturo Guzmán Decena. He left GAFE in the late 1990s and brought with him over 30 fellow GAFE members. Originally recruited by the Gulf cartel, he was asked to help recruit the most vicious hit squad for the cartel. Guzmán revealed that the best place to recruit was the army (Grillo, 2012). Along with other military and police recruits and civilian thugs, he formed Los Zetas, a reference to Guzmán’s code name in 1997. Some cells spun off and served as enforcer gangs or other cartels, while others worked as drug-trafficking factions in their own right.

The former GAFE men had acquired training in desert, mountain and jungle operations. They were trained in using weapons (such as firearms and explosives), intelligence gathering and surveillance, intimidation and coercion. They had extensive knowledge of tactics, techniques and procedures of the police and the military. They had means of communication, including mobile phones, satellite phones and other radios and computers.

They had knowledge in deception and information management. They were equipped with transportation resources such as SUVs and had training in offensive and defensive driving. They knew effective recruitment methods. They were also well disciplined, enabling the group to

execute complex plans (Turbiville, 2010: 132). They were easier to train and had tactical advantages during battles.

Los Zetas not only demonstrated expertise in complex assaults, but also possessed massive firepower. Los Zetas was the first drug cartel to employ military arsenal, moving from AK-47s to shoulder-fired missiles, armour-piercing ammunition and heavy machine guns. Like insurgencies, they also have used fragmentation grenades and improvised explosive devices.

While some of these weapons were stolen from the Mexican military, most were simply bought legally in the US and just smuggled into Mexico (Kan, 2012: 46).

The knowledge, expertise and brazenness of Los Zetas led to an escalation of violence in Mexico since 2007. The violence is reminiscent of the type of violence taking place in a brutal civil war. Los Zetas were also willing to take on the military in direct firefights, but eventually key arrests caused a major setback for the cartel. As of December 2015, it has begun to identify itself as 'Cartel del Norte', or Cartel of the North, and is considered to be much weaker than it once was.

Political Ideology and Objectives

Organized criminal groups do not have an ideology or political agenda that drives them. They may serve on behalf of politicians or political groups, but they are not usually politically motivated, except supporting politicians or actors that can help their businesses become more lucrative. Many gang members in El Salvador may have been the sons of leftist guerrillas, but they have little knowledge or passion for socialism. They are mostly interested in profits and becoming embedded in a social network. In contrast to terrorists who believe that they are altruistic and serving a good cause in order to achieve support from a wider constituency, criminals are interested only in their own 'personal aggrandizement and material satiation' (Hoffman, 1998: 43).

Some cartel leaders have had political aspirations and have run for public office. Drug lords like Carlos Lehder of the Medellin cartel actually wanted to achieve political power. He organized a political party named the Latin Nationalist Movement and ran for the Colombian Senate. Pablo Escobar of Colombia was elected as an alternative deputy to the Congress in 1982. Drug lords also spent huge sums of money financing campaigns, such as the Ernesto Samper presidential campaign, which was assisted by major contributions from the Cali cartel in the mid-1990s. Tajik organized criminals are current members of the parliament (Engvall, 2006). Tajikistan's

former deputy defence minister was imprisoned after using a military helicopter to smuggle drugs. The country's trade representative was caught with 24 kilograms of heroin. The secretary of Tajikistan's Security Council admitted that many of the representatives of Tajik state agencies are involved in drug cartels (Engvall, 2006). Kazakhstan's ambassador was twice caught transporting drugs.

Organized criminal groups and gangs usually do not care about influencing public opinion, but there have been plenty of examples of organized criminal groups wanting to gain some legitimate support from the population. Once an organization is powerful enough to control some territory, they can provide public goods. Because the drug trade is so lucrative, successful traffickers are able to make investments in infrastructure to maintain roads and build landing strips and tunnels (Shelley, 2014: 220).

Organized criminal groups from time to time have had a populist agenda that includes providing some social services. Drug lords such as Escobar and Juan Matta Ballesteros of Honduras started to provide public goods to the local population to generate goodwill. Escobar provided a local welfare system in his home town and built a housing development in a slum, where he gave away 1,000 houses to low-income residents. Roberto Suarez, the drug kingpin from Bolivia, used some of his immense wealth to underwrite most of the education costs for an entire district. He also regularly provided technical or college education abroad for young people in the area he was from. Some scholars have claimed that many organized criminal groups are highly nationalistic. The Latin American crime groups have claimed that they are hiring thousands of poor individuals and challenging Northern imperialism. But rational choice theorists would counter that criminal groups can operate with greater ease if they have the support of the population (Albertson and Fox, 2011).

Structure and Recruitment

Structure

Criminal organizations are often organized with some degree of hierarchy. With a standard hierarchy, there is a single leader, strong internal discipline and strict rules for regulation with a strong social and ethnic identity. Organized crime is complex enough to have a clear division of labour. Members are specialized in certain types of crimes. They may use chemists, pilots, drivers, accountants, lawyers and architects, in addition to assassins.

Today there are only some organizations that are highly organized and bureaucratic where the decision-making is centrally concentrated and subordinates executive activities. These groups are anomalies in the global underworld, since it takes years to develop such complex structures. Thus, it is only groups that have been around for hundreds of years that may have these structures (Cheloukhine and Haberfeld, 2011). This is representative of the Italian, Chinese, Colombian and some eastern European crime groups. In comparison, Russian mafia groups are more decentralized.

More and more criminal organizations are networked (Pearson and Hobbs, 2003). Network organization refers to horizontal organizations with few hierarchical levels and a high degree of flexibility. The network structure is more adaptable, more resilient and harder to target, making them more resilient to law enforcement and intervention (Morselli, 2009). In hierarchical groups, communication from top to bottom can be intercepted. Furthermore, death or incarceration of top personnel can leave the group with big gaps and any sort of infiltration at the upper levels jeopardizes the group.

Structurally, Chinese Triads (organized crime) have a clear division of labour, with the upper levels functioning as resolvers of disputes. They follow a Confucian code of conduct, respecting elders, but those on the low end of the ladder have much more lateral movement. Members do not need permission from a head of a Triad to engage in a criminal act, even if this may mean partnering with someone outside the group. Profits will go to the gang, not to the entire organization. Thus the hierarchy is not as strict as the Italian mafia.

Yakuza groups are very centralized and bonded by elaborate hierarchies, composed of groups in pyramid structures. Members once initiated must subvert all other allegiances in favour of the Yakuza. These hierarchical

relationships are cemented by the creation of father/son or brother relationships that are not actually based on bloodlines.

In Mexico, the Gulf cartel was also hierarchical, which made it easier for the Mexican government to target it, compared to El Chapo's Sinaloa cartel which was more networked. In Colombian drug cartels today, flexible networks are the norm (Kenney, 2007). With the fall of the big cartels, smaller cartels with flatter hierarchies are more adaptable and efficient (Mair, 2005).

Due to successful 'decapitation' strategies (eliminating the leadership), Mexican cartels have been forced to decentralize. As a result, Mexican drug trafficking leaders are pushed further away from their traditional centre, being forced to maintain distance from their members to avoid law enforcement (Dishman, 2001). The issue with the new cellular structure is that they can begin to act independently without regard for the organization. Organized criminal groups may also want to retain some hierarchy in order to train, monitor, reward and punish members. They want to prevent defection and too much fragmentation, to preserve the organization. Sometimes these networked groups have a loose structure, but there is still a core group of a limited number of individuals that is tightly organized with strong internal discipline.

A regional hierarchy has a single leadership structure and line of command from the centre, but with a degree of autonomy at the regional level, such as Hells Angels, with chapters in different countries. Some groups may also have a clustered hierarchy, where there are a number of criminal groups that have a governing arrangement but the cluster has a stronger identity than the constituent groups.

There is no clear consensus in the literature on the exact structure of gangs (Windle and Briggs, 2015). Early research claimed that gangs of the past were only loosely organized, subject to constant changes in structure, composition and purpose (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Hagedorn, 1998; Klein and Maxson, 2010). Studies argued that gangs did not have the organization or the discipline to engage in effective drug trafficking (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Forst et al., 2011; Reiner, 1992). However, other authors countered that gangs cannot be characterized as loose social

networks (Ruble and Turner, 2000). Gangs can be hierarchical with clear leadership, which are organized and governed by a set of rules and roles (Sánchez-Jankowski, 1991, 2003; Venkatesh and Levitt, 2000). But these perfectly well-organized gangs may be the exception rather than the norm. Gangs with some hierarchy at the top, but with looser social networks may be the most common structure (Curry, 2015; Decker and Curry, 2000). Though more sophisticated gangs (third-generation gangs) have emerged that have been able to make inroads in the drug trade, many gangs still have very loose coordination when it comes to drug sales (Decker et al., 1998; Dell, 2015).

Recruitment

Organized crime has a limited or 'exclusive' membership. In contrast to politically motivated violent non-state actors, organized crime is not trying to actively recruit as many people as possible. The Yakuza mainly recruit from juvenile delinquents, though sometimes there are university graduates within the ranks. Some are also boxers and martial artists. Training lasts six months to a year. Once initiated, gang members pay monthly fees, in the hope that their membership will bring lucrative opportunities.

Members of organized crime share high levels of risks. They may not be as cohesive as political groups, which should make them vulnerable to state infiltration. Criminal groups get around this problem by creating a unique sub-culture and clear identity, such as having elaborate induction rituals (Gambetta, 1996). For the Yakuza, members must subvert all other allegiances after they have been initiated. Ceremonies are ornate traditions which go on for hours. Members are subject to a code of discipline that is backed by punishments, such as amputating the smallest finger (yubitsume) (Kaplan and Dubro, 2012).[1] Members of organized criminal groups emphasize their membership and closeness through the use of specific colours, clothing, language, tattoos and initiation rites (Finckenauer, 2012: 8). The Chinese triads also have very intricate and fixed rituals for initiation that can last several days; symbols and ceremony are important. Triads may make use of secret signs, code names and tattoos. Taking an oath is also important. As generating high levels of trust is critical, one of the worst offences is ratting out another member (Bolz, 1995). The triads also use

rituals, oaths, secret ceremonies and incentives to secure personal loyalty, and individual membership provides credibility and influence. For Latin American crime groups, a narco-culture has developed that distinguishes each group from the other (Kalyvas, 2015).

1. In 1993, 45% of Yakuza members had undergone this form of punishment. However, now this practice is being phased out to fit in with society more, with the exception of more serious offences. Common punishments today include shaving off one's hair, monetary fines and temporary imprisonment and expulsion (Bosmia et al., 2014: 1–2).

Another way of ensuring high levels of loyalty is to recruit based on ethnicity. The Aryan Brotherhood and Black Guerrilla Family depend on racial and criminal considerations (Finckenauer, 2005). Groups that do not share a close ethnic connection may have some other form of pre-existing ties to prevent betrayals. Rarely do individuals join criminal groups as complete outsiders, though more recently former members of elite security forces and militaries have been recruited to serve as mercenaries in enforcer gangs. This has been the case of Los Zetas in Mexico, recruiting from the Mexican government's special forces and (see the case study on Los Zetas in this chapter), even recruiting former members of the elite special forces (Kaibiles) in Guatemala (Manwaring, 2011: 862). As Chapter 5 explained, individuals usually join organized crime groups by establishing criminal relations with persons who are already involved in criminal acts. The Colombian drug organizations recruited individuals who had experience in other areas of crime. Prisons are also important places for criminal networking. Detainees have the proper credentials and track record in crime (Albanese and Reichel, 2013). The case of Russian organized crime illustrates this.

In contrast to Colombian, Italian, Mexican, and Chechen organized crime groups, Russian organized crime is not based on ethnic or family structures. In the former Soviet Union the connections were based on the need for mutual participation in criminal activities, not ethnic or familial bonds. These are known as associational networks. With associational networks shared participation in prison or youth crimes leads to bonding, communication, mutual support and the creation of a code of conduct (von Lampe, 2016).

Organized criminal groups in the Soviet Union formed in prison, where a professional criminal class developed, some of which started during the era of the gulag in 1924. Criminals in prison together adopted clear values and rules which helped bond them tightly together, living according to the 'thieves in law' codes. This helped the Russian criminal groups maintain the bonds and trust necessary to carry out organized crime (Abadinsky, 2012).

In contrast, members of Chechen crime groups are very socially cohesive and bound by kinship. The Chechen mafia does not adhere to the 'thieves in law' codes of their Russian counterparts. Instead they have a tribal structure (Galeotti, 2002). These bonds are so strong that it has been near impossible for Russian agents to infiltrate their groups. There have rarely if ever been turf wars between Chechen crime groups and insurgencies. Chechen crime groups have rarely cooperated with other crime groups, though they have been located across the globe. There were many instances of cooperation between Chechen separatists and Chechen criminal rings, especially in the counterfeit and illegal arms trade (Bovenkerk et al., 2003). They have also cooperated with each other in diverting oil to boost earnings. But Chechen groups lack the flexibility of Russian crime gangs due to their emphasis on tribal loyalty (Williams, 2014).

For gangs, recruitment takes place at a very young age. In Central American gangs, the average age of initiation is 14.5 years. Often gangs are able to lure potential members by offering very little. Mexican cartels offer street gang members money, mobile phones and guns (Grillo, 2012: 166). In contrast to organized criminal organizations, most gangs don't have a huge vetting process. In the case of the El Salvadoran gangs, Mara Salvatrucha and the 18th Street Gang, the gang member needed to endure a 13-second or 18-second beating, respectively, by five or six members of a clique. More recently, both gangs have been ordering recruits to execute a violent mission as part of their initiation (Boeri, 2014; Starita, 2007).

The 18th Street Gang in El Salvador changed their recruitment strategy in response to the government after it passed a series of draconian policies known as Mano Dura. To avoid detection from the government, the gang suspended recruiting youth with criminal records. The Mara Salvatrucha Gang responded to the policies by being more aggressive in their

recruitment, swelling the membership to about 30,000 members, compared to the 18th Street Gang that has about 18,000.

A study of gangs in the UK revealed that recruitment takes place through peer influence, with vulnerable individuals targeted, particularly those who have been excluded from mainstream school (Windle and Briggs, 2015: 1176). Another study in the UK found that having a prior relationship with an existing gang member is important, because being a gang member requires high levels of trust. Those who do not have a pre-existing relationship are 'beaten in' as a way of earning trust (Densley and Stevens, 2014).

Strategy and Tactics

Organized criminals use violence in order to achieve their financial objectives. In contrast to terrorist groups specifically, organized criminal groups usually do not want a lot of media attention if that is going to undermine their ability to make money. Because of this, their use of violence is often selective so as to not attract too much attention. These groups usually prefer to remain under the radar and want to conceal all of their profits.

In spite of this, the level of violence associated with organized crime groups has intensified, with the violence escalating into war-like levels.[2] The rate of homicides along the northern and southern borders of Mexico is considered epidemic, even worse than Iraq. In Guatemala and El Salvador, death tolls are higher than during the civil wars (Kalyvas, 2015: 13). In Guatemala, gang members are responsible for 10%–13% of the homicides committed each year. The rest of the homicides are committed mainly by a number of organized groups such as narco-traffickers and rough groups related to the state security apparatus (Richani, 2010: 447).

2. Firearms, grenades and explosives are often used where many innocent bystanders are now being killed.

The traditional norms governing violence have completely eroded. Killings take place in broad daylight, victims are displayed publicly and the violence is more gruesome (such as beheadings and mutilations). Machine guns, grenades and barrels of acid are now used. Women and children are also the

victims of violence. Doctors treating the wounded have also been killed as have prominent journalists, teachers and bureaucrats. Drug lords today prefer to have impunity to operate and will opt for wide-scale levels of violence to attain this. Violent tactics are designed to shock and instil fear. Cartels are more willing to take the state head-on. Police radios are hacked so that police can hear death threats delivered to them. These campaigns have taken their toll on police morale. They have to go against both the cartels and their corrupt colleagues. Many police have quit due to low morale (Sullivan and Elkus, 2008).

The Chechen-organized criminal groups are especially noted for their use of violence as a means to shape attitudes as part of a long-term strategy. Chechen gangs have eclipsed the violence exercised by Russian gangs, operating outside of the norms regulating behaviour among criminal groups. This distinguished the Chechens from other criminal groups. The excessive violence was a warning to anyone who attempted to take them on. Even the Sicilian Cosa Nostra has been alarmed by the Chechens: one Italian criminal reportedly noted that ‘where we would first threaten someone, the Russians would kill him. The Chechens would kill his whole family, too’ (Galeotti, 2002: 3).

In general, organized crime is at its most violent when there are periods of uncertainty. Though the major drug cartels have been dismantled in Colombia, the smaller cartels or cartelitos are incredibly violent. Russian-organized crime was at its most violent when groups were vying over spheres of influence. Violence was generated by personal vendettas being settled. Russian-organized crime was particularly violent during the 1990s, when it was characterized by hundreds of contract killings. After agreements were reached on spheres of control and influence, the violence decreased.

Box 9.1 Mexico’s War on Drugs

The most recent drug wars in Mexico have caused in excess of 120,000 deaths. About 10,000 homicides a year can be attributed to Mexican organized crime from between 2006 and 2011(Molzahn, et al., 2012: 11). What explains the increased violence? In addition to the use of former military personnel to serve as enforcer gangs, violence is at its height among criminal groups when there is more fragmentation and uncertainty. Splintering of criminal groups has led to more violence to overwhelm new challengers (Carpenter, 2010). The violence has been over the top as groups try to outdo one another. Murders are

accompanied by a message to try to intimidate civilians and rival groups. The violence by Los Zetas has led to copycats. Many old drug lords have been put in prison and replaced by a new breed that is more callous and reckless. Groups are also trying to minimize civilian defection by engaging in more violence.

The fragmentation of the cartels has been linked to more infighting and violence because commanders have lost control over the rank and file, giving them free rein to engage in gratuitous violence. In 2006 there were six major drug cartels in Mexico, but by 2010 there were twice as many with over 60 local criminal groups (Calderón et al., 2015). New armed groups are springing up as old cartels have been forced to splinter and evolve. The explosion of new cartels has led to a loss of equilibrium that helped to maintain some levels of stability. These newer cartels are more ruthless, more skilled in military tactics, better at psychological warfare and eager to expand into all different types of crime.

The Mexican government's decision to take on the drug cartels head-on, using its military, has also led to an increase in violence. The state response has not been discriminative, which has also caused the violence to escalate (Grillo, 2012: 128). The major cartels (Tijuana, Sinaloa, Juarez and Gulf) primarily fought amongst themselves, but now they wage a war on the security forces as well. In the case of Colombia and Italy, the state was able to effectively take on the major cartels and the Mafia. This has not happened yet in Mexico (Williams, 2008: 16). This may be due to the fact that Mexico has less capacity and is also facing a much more formidable threat. Excessive violence is also used to show how incapable the state is (Kalyvas, 2015: 14). An example of the intimidation strategy: during one week in May 2008, five police chiefs were assassinated.

The fall of the ruling PRI in 2000 also led to an increase in violence. There was a complete breakdown of government protection deals that police and judicial agents had provided to criminal organizations. This period of uncertainty led to an escalation of violence. There was more mistrust and competition (Carpenter, 2010: 410). This forced the cartels to adopt new, more aggressive, strategies to defend their own turf. It also offered them opportunities to try to conquer new territories (Trejo and Ley, 2013).

Funding and Support

Funding

Organized criminal groups are involved in many different types of enterprises that help them to earn billions. The richest organized criminal group is Solntsevskaya Bratva, which makes most of its money from the drug trade and human trafficking, earning revenues of $8.5 billion. It is very involved in the heroin trade originating in Afghanistan and sold in Russia. In total, the mafia in Italy generates revenues of $33 billion, with the top earners being the Camorra and 'Ndrangheta mafias, earning $4.9 and $4.5

billion, respectively. The Sinaloa cartel makes 60% of the $6.5 billion made by the Mexican cartels, or about $3 billion a year (Matthews, 2014).

Drug trafficking in particular is extremely lucrative, and is the largest source of profits for organized criminals. It contributes to $200–$250 billion a year to organized crime, but possibly as much as $500 billion – more than the global trade in oil. Drug trafficking accounts for 2% of the global economy and 7% of international trade (Palma, 2015: 478). Thailand's annual $85 billion made from drug trafficking is double the country's exports.

Another major source of funding is the protection racket. In El Salvador, 76% of extortions were committed by youth gangs. Nearly $4 million was demanded in 2011 and $2 million was collected in a suburban neighbourhood in Guatemala. Guatemalan maras extort money from local businesses, nearly $4 million a year (Gurney, 2014). Being in a gang has become a lucrative occupation. In countries where the per capita income is no more than $4,000 a year, a single gang member in El Salvador earns more than that in one month, while Honduran and Guatemalan gang members collect slightly less (Cruz and Durán-Martinez, 2016).[3]

3. A single Salvadoran gang member weekly collects around US $1,250, whereas a Guatemalan gang member collects $975, and a Honduran gang member makes $935. Per capita income levels are $4,023 in El Salvador, $3,886 in Guatemala and $2,365 in Honduras.

External support

Drug cartels and organized criminal groups don't need to secure financial aid, but they do need a compliant state that is willing to look the other way. It is often the organized criminal groups that do the paying up, not the other way around. There are exceptions to this, however, if the organized criminal group has a specific good that can be offered to a government.

There has long been speculation that major drug cartels and mafia groups enjoy some political support, but this was especially true for the Latin American drug cartels during the Cold War. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the US was complicit in making deals with key drug lords in

exchange for support to purchase weapons that could be funnelled to paramilitary groups, notably the Contras in Nicaragua in their fight against the left-wing guerrilla movement, the Sandinistas.

Many key drug lords were on the CIA payroll, such as Matta Ballesteros of Honduras. Like many drug lords, Matta Ballesteros was a specialist in transportation and owned a fleet of planes and airstrips. His aviation company, SETCO (Services Ejecutivos Turistas Commander), received its first contract to ship arms from the US to the Nicaraguan Contras in 1983. Matta Ballesteros's company took in about $186,000, but more importantly, the US would look the other way as he smuggled in massive amounts of narcotics into the US through Mexico. In total, the US government paid over $806,000 to known drug traffickers for 'humanitarian assistance' to the Contras (Cockburn and Clair, 1998: 303).

Power and Impact on the State and Society

Criminal organizations can have tremendous power and of all the violent non-state actors, they pose the biggest threat to security. Organized criminal groups are capable of planning sophisticated crimes and may be in possession of high-tech equipment such as military weapons. They are powerful enough that their reputation alone should be enough to generate obedience.

Organized crime does not seek to destroy the state. It is most interested in controlling or subverting the legal structures to be able to maintain their operations unbothered. It aims to undermine the state rather than destroy it completely. It wants to act with complete freedom of movement in order to achieve its financial objectives (Manwaring, 2011: 863). Nevertheless, crime groups' long-term financial interests require the preservation of state structures (Shelley, 2014: 1). A case in point is that organized crime tends to be higher in urbanized and industrialized areas that require the state's existence.

In extreme cases, organized criminal groups begin to fill the void of the government. They may assume parallel government functions. They can control the entry of businesses into the market. They can impose taxes, tariffs

and protection fees. They exert their influence often through violence and coercion, which directly challenges the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force. They also may provide public goods. This can include repairing schools and hospitals. By providing these goods, they may be able to gain the support and assistance of people in neutralizing efforts by law enforcement. In some states, because of the ineptitude and corruption of the government, groups that would normally oppose organized crime will instead support it because it may provide some stability.

For the most part, organized crime is parasitical. It aims to take from the state. To do so, organized crime co-opts and threatens. Co-optation is more common among economically violent non-state actors. Organized crime can offer huge bribes to the state that the other groups cannot. Though Mexican cartels are competing against the state violently, they are also co-opting it. For the Russian mafia, bribing politicians is a major business expense. This allows them to exert greater influence. In these cases, organized criminal groups are not just forming parallel governments which coexist with an existing one, but have captured the state (for more on this, see Chapter 4).

In the case of Colombia, the cartels directly weakened the quality of the judicial institutions. Judges were routinely threatened by the drug traffickers and offered bribes to not make rulings that would punish the drug cartels. Many principled judges were forced to go into exile. In November 1985, the guerrilla group M-19 was commissioned by the Medellin cartel to assault the Palace of Justice in Colombia while the judges were ruling on the extradition of prominent drug traffickers to the US. Over 100 people were killed in the attack, including nine Supreme Court justices. After an extradition agreement with the US was finally put in place in Colombia in 1987, the Medellin cartel responded by assassinating judges, journalists and five presidential candidates.

Brazilian criminal groups have also had a significant impact on public security. On 12 May 2006, Sao Paulo was paralyzed by warfare between police and members of the PCC, a gang with origins in the prison system (for more on the PCC, see Chapter 2). On a weekend when 10,000 prisoners were given a day pass to visit families outside of prison, the PCC was able to take advantage of the lax security conditions. In response to a plan to

transfer PCC members to a top-security penitentiary, a wave of attacks took place against police stations and other symbols of state power. Public security members were hunted down at their posts and in their homes, even in front of family members. Most of the city was shut down, bus services were cut off and businesses were closed. Almost 300 assaults took place and 215 hostages were taken in 80 prison riots. Some 82 public transport buses were burned; as many as 140 people were killed on the first day, with another 53 wounded (Sullivan, 2006).

Case Study Maras in El Salvador

Maras are a vast network of groups associated with the two major street gangs now dwelling in Central America, Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and the 18th Street Gang. They are transnational groups and have organized protection rackets. They emerged from the conflicts in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. During the conflicts, millions of people fled to the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. These immigrants found themselves unable to find work, as most were uneducated and unskilled. For many of the young men, they were discriminated against and treated poorly. Many drifted into gangs and started to develop their own gangs as a means of self-preservation.

The 18th Street Gang was formed by El Salvadoran immigrants who had originally joined Mexican gangs, who had not been accepted into existing Hispanic gangs. It was the first Hispanic gang to accept members from all races and to recruit members from other states. Mara Salvatrucha was made up of El Salvadoran immigrants who were later joined by people from other parts of Central America. From 1993 until 2003 the US enacted a policy where any immigrant who had any brush with the law was sent back to Central America, without giving their governments much warning. In total, 150,000 people were deported, and 43,000 had a criminal record. Many deportees were members of the major gangs. This helped gangs become a transnational problem and facilitated their growth. The maras overwhelmed the local governments, police and legal systems (Ribando, 2007).

These two gangs soon spread with ease in the marginal barrios of San Salvador to the two most violent areas of the city, the Sonsonate and Santa Ana departments. Active gang members claim that they were able to organize and recruit without detection, capitalizing on the limitations of the state and the poor conditions in the marginal areas (Richani, 2010: 437).

Though many gang members were deported, most of the deportees had never been members of the main maras. The deportees were young, vulnerable males that were accustomed to completely different cultures. Some barely spoke Spanish and had weak ties to their original home country. They arrived often without their family, and needing to find a sense of family quickly joined the gangs. Contacts were facilitated by the heavy presence of tattoos, particularly on the face, the dress code and the means of communication (Cruz, 2010: 388).

Initially, it was impossible to identify any sort of formal leadership within a gang. The members would deny that any internal or external structure existed. They were all members of one grand mara that comprised a federation of clikas. The structure of cohesion of gangs changed due to the Mano Dura plans that took place in several Central American countries from 2001 to 2006. The law made it illegal to be a gang member. Crackdowns were harsh. Anyone who had an ostentatious tattoo could be apprehended. The prison population swelled as the number of gang members inside the prisons went from 4,000 to 8,000, making up one-third of the prison population (Dudley, 2011: 897).

While in prisons, gangs have organized themselves better and have created more structured organizations. Gangs were separated in detention centres according to gang affiliation, with authorities reasoning that this would lessen the violence within the prisons. Gang members from the same gang federation but from different clikas came together from different places and established contact with each other. These conditions allowed gangs to set up their networks inside jails and crate national structures that could also expand outside of jails. Gangs were able to rethink their operations that took place outside of prison. They started meeting in private areas as opposed to public locations. They moved in vehicles instead of walking on the streets. They linked up with drug cartels while in prison and started to impose a protection tax to extort local businesses in zones that they controlled. As a result, some gangs have become more sophisticated and powerful.

Conclusion

Organized criminal groups and gangs are ubiquitous actors and pose the biggest threat to security. They take advantage of what the state has to offer, while also thriving off state weakness. They don't usually emerge in the weakest states in the world, but those with ungoverned spaces and failed communities. Unfortunately, the violence over time has increased from these groups. No longer held back by norms that prevented collateral damage, they use violence to send a message. Though they have little if any political motivation, they are increasingly connected to other powerful actors. Understanding how these groups emerge and thrive is thus critical to mitigating their impact.

Summary Points

- Organized criminal groups are capable and complex organizations.
- Gangs have evolved and become much more violent and powerful, but they are not as sophisticated as organized criminal groups.
- While gang members are incredibly young and seek out gangs due to a need for camaraderie, organized criminals are often older and more skilled.

- Of all the violent non-state actors, it is organized crime that has the biggest impact on the state.
- Both gangs and organized crime can emerge in strong states that have failed communities or areas of institutional weakness.

Key Questions

1. What are key differences between a gang and an organized criminal group?
2. In what ways are organized criminal groups involved in political activity? Why do they choose to do this?
3. Why have organized criminal groups and gangs become more violent?
4. What are the three generations of gangs? How have gangs evolved over time?
5. What are the major impacts of organized criminal groups and gangs on the state?
6. Theory: How do rational choice theories explain criminal behaviour?

Further Reading

Abadinsky, H. (2012) *Organized Crime* (Cengage). Textbook on organized crime, providing comprehensive analysis of its origins and structure.

Albanese, J.S. (2010) *Organized Crime in Our Times* (Routledge). Overview of all of the developments in organized crime, its history and the theories to understand organized crime. It also offers an explanation of the key organized crime figures, their transnational links and how criminal justice can respond to it.

Franzese, R.J., Covey, H.C. and Menard, S. (2016) *Youth Gangs* (Charles C. Thomas). Recent update on youth gangs, including an overview of the literature on why youth gangs form; chapters are devoted to different types of gangs, such as ethnic and female gangs.

Knox, G.W. (1994) *An Introduction to Gangs* (Wyndham Hall Press). Textbook covering everything on gangs, including the societal conditions in which they emerge, their organization, group characteristics and how they differ from organized crime.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis Statistics and data on organized crime and drug trafficking.

10 Private Security Companies and Paramilitary Units

Key Terms

- Blackwater
- Contras
- DynCorp
- Plausible deniability
- United Self-Defence Forces (AUC)

This chapter provides an introduction to private security companies (PSCs), paramilitary units and death squads. The former are hired by states to achieve stability. They are mostly motivated by profits but they are more political than they first appear. The latter two are contracted covertly by states to do their dirty work. Both usually fight at the behest of a government, but their motivations are largely economic. These actors merit attention in order to better understand how they negatively or positively contribute to security. The chapter will offer examples of US PSCs and the now defunct South African group, Executive Outcomes.

Definition

PSCs are non-state actors that are recruited by governments to fight in combat units. PSCs can provide training, consulting and planning, maintenance and technical assistance, operational and logistical support, intelligence services and post-conflict reconstruction. PSCs promise to respond to crises with armed personnel to re-establish stability. Private *military* companies are engaged in actual direct combat, whereas PSCs imply that the group could provide a range of services. Private military companies provide offensive services and are designed to have a military impact. PSCs offer defensive services and are designed to protect individuals and property. PSCs have mostly originated in rich countries with

large security industries such as the US and the UK, but have also been prevalent in countries like South Africa. Unless noted otherwise, throughout this chapter we will refer to private military and security companies both as PSCs.

In the last three decades, there has been an explosion of PSCs. In the 1991 Gulf War there was one contractor for every 50 active duty personnel. By 1999 in Kosovo, this number was one in ten. In Iraq, there may be equal number of contractors to US military personnel (Chesterman, 2016: 5). This explosion of PSCs has led to concerns that there is a privatization of violence taking place, which may bring with it negative consequences for overall stability (Chesterman and Fisher, 2009).

Box 10.1 Mercenaries

'Mercenaries' is a term that differs from PSCs only slightly. The main difference is that mercenaries are banned under international law, while private security and military companies are supposedly acting on a legalized and licensed basis. A mercenary is a soldier who is not a national of one of the groups in conflict, who is willing to sell his military skills to the highest bidder. Mercenaries are paid in excess of paid combatants of similar ranks and functions in a state military. In practice, it is not clear whether or not mercenaries only fight for monetary gain. Some have fought against communists during the Cold War and some for religious reasons in the Balkans and Afghanistan. Like PSCs, mercenaries are not just restricted to combat. They may also engage in training, organizing, equipping and gathering intelligence for their home government. They are often used to maintain stability.

In spite of this, mercenaries are associated with escalating conflicts and taking part in overthrowing governments or propping up dictatorships. Mercenaries may be less likely to adhere to international laws and human rights. But critics claim that the articles (Article 47) of the Geneva Convention which condemn mercenaries do not adequately address the role of PSCs by sovereign states, which are also engaged in combat roles (Chesterman, 2016).[1] Thus the division between what constitutes a mercenary and what constitutes a PSC is hazy.

1. This refers to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and 8 June 1977.

Paramilitary Forces

Paramilitary forces are organizations that are outside of the formal security sector and central government command that use violence to target groups that are aiming to change the status quo. Though they formally lie outside of

the state, they are often viewed as an extension of the state. They usually receive support from factions of the state and may make alliances with multiple power holders in the system, such as the economic elite (Grajales, 2011). Though they remain outside the law, they often enjoy some of the resources, access and status that is exclusive to the state. Paramilitary forces sometimes identify themselves as self-defence groups while their critics call them death squads. As a later section will illustrate, a death squad is a specific type of paramilitary unit.

Paramilitaries are often used to counter reform efforts. They are interested in defending the political and economic status quo. They emerge in settings where there is an oligarchy, which has a monopoly over the country's resources and wealth. They also emerge in states where there may be a significant degree of wealth for parts of the population. In contrast to warlords and marauders, they don't just emerge in failed states. They emerge with the complicity of the state (Mazzei, 2009). In contrast to organized criminals, they are not using violence to directly capitalize on wealth. In contrast to PSCs, they are not used in an official sense to create stability in exchange for payment. However, they are provoked and stimulated by financial factors. They want to defend the interests of the wealthy, which in turn may directly affect their own wealth. Security groups thrive from the financial support that they may gain from the state.

Death Squads

A death squad is an armed group that conducts extrajudicial killings and other violent acts against clearly defined groups of people that present a challenge to the legitimacy of the state and the elites. Death squads are usually clandestine and irregular organizations, but they often have the support of domestic or foreign governments. They emerge in states that are unable to maintain a monopoly over the legitimate use of force. They are subcontracted by the state to allow legitimate state authorities to avoid any association with the atrocities committed by death squads. They operate in areas where the government does not want to go.

The term 'death squad' denotes that military, paramilitary and irregular units are involved. They operate somewhere in between the state security

apparatus and the criminal underworld of killers and torturers (Breuil and Rozema, 2009: 415). They are a result of policing being more and more frequently subcontracted out to the highest bidder (Huggins, 2000: 204). Death squads can be found all over the world, and in the last 40 years were responsible for millions of deaths. They did not disappear with the end of the Cold War. They are not uniquely a developing world problem as there have been historical cases of death squads in the US, Europe and Asia as well.

Box 10.2 Tonton Macoutes

The Tonton Macoutes was a paramilitary death squad in Haiti set up by François Duvalier in 1959. Unlike most death squads, the group was officially part of the Duvalier regime, though it was never part of the regular armed forces (at its height, the group never had more than 10,000 members). The group wore a uniform of straw hats, denim shirts and sunglasses. Though they looked as though they were heading to a picnic, they were armed with machetes. Their official name was the Volunteers for National Security (Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale; VSN), but their nickname was derived from the Creole term for a mythological bogeyman.

The group was set up to provide information for the Duvalier regime and detect any subversion. Like other death squads, they were used to strike terror into anyone that advocated a progressive agenda. Anyone who opposed Duvalier was killed, and opponents would often disappear at night. Their methods were particularly violent. Showing no mercy towards civilians, they would often stone people and set them on fire. Dead bodies were showcased in order to terrorize the public. Even the smallest infraction could lead to a violent reprisal by the group. Because they were poorly paid, they often resorted to stealing and exacting private contributions by force (Ferguson, 1987). In total, the group slaughtered more than 600,000 Haitians (Fuller, 1991).

Unfortunately, death squads are still commonplace in Haiti today. The most feared group is the Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti (FRAPH). It attempts to mask itself as a political party, but it was responsible for terrible atrocities in targeting and killing supporters of democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide (who was deposed in a coup in 1991) and controlling the public during the de facto military rule period until 1994. The group was led by Louis Jodel Chamblain, who had been a sergeant in the Haitian Armed Forces until 1990 (Wucker, 2004). The US government originally supported the group until 1995, when the abuses became internationally known. Many members went into hiding and its leader, Chamblain, was convicted of taking part in the assassination of a noted pro-democracy businessman in absentia.

Political Ideology and Objectives

PSCs and mercenaries are supposedly motivated by profits and have no political goals. PSCs are intended to be in the business of providing security and stability. They are not supposed to represent the interests of one particular country or ideological viewpoint, and in theory will make their services available to countries that are suffering from conflict, instability or both. They may be used on both sides of a conflict. They also lend their services to NGOs and international agencies such as the United Nations and corporations.

But the apolitical nature of PSCs must be called into question. Many PSCs are made up of ex-military and government personnel. Former government officials and military officers enter the private sector and are able to exert their political influence through their connections and insider knowledge (Mathieu and Dearden, 2007). They may also have links with powerful elites in multinational corporations, such as has been the case of the American PSC Blackwater. Blackwater's vice-chair, Cofer Black, worked for the US State Department as the coordinator for counter-terrorism. He also directed the CIA's Counter-terror Centre (Isenberg, 2009). Joseph Schmitz, the chief operations officer for Blackwater's parent company, was also the Pentagon's inspector general. Employees from Titan, another American PSC, have been former senior air force officials and a Pentagon official. Thus, there is a revolving door between government and military personnel and PSCs, which poses a challenge to the notion that these organizations are entirely apolitical (Mathieu and Dearden, 2007).

The process of how contracts are awarded has been criticized for being driven by financial and political interests coinciding between the PSCs, the multinationals and the governments that solicit their services. Many of the contracts were not awarded based on full and open competition. Oversight is also complicated by the extent of subcontracting that takes place (Holmqvist, 2005).

Because PSCs are in the business of being involved in conflicts, they also have clear political preferences for who holds power. To illustrate the political nature of PSCs, in 2001, the ten leading US private military firms spent more than US $32 million on lobbying, and donated more than $12 million to political campaigns. DynCorp, yet another American PSC, donated

more than $500,000 between 1999 and 2002, with 72% of the donations going to the Republican Party. Titan spent $2.16 million from 1998 to 2004 on lobbying, which seems like money well spent: 96% of its $1.8 billion in earnings in 2003 came from contracts it had with the US government (Mathieu and Dearden, 2007). They have also tended to provide security and combat for an incumbent regime and have had a proclivity for offering support to more conservative regimes.

Because PSCs are in theory apolitical, they can be used to avoid political pitfalls. When it may be politically costly to deploy actual government troops, governments who want to intervene are able to use PSCs with fewer political costs. Sending private contractors working for profit, of their own choice, does not require the same level of political mobilization as sending national troops, serving their country. In Iraq, PSCs provided extra support to address the Iraqi insurgency without the political and bureaucratic lead time required for mobilizing military forces (Elsea et al., 2008).

Paramilitary organizations tend to have the same political views as military hardliners (Mazzei, 2009: 30). They use violence to protect the established order, and are never attempting to overthrow it. They enable the state to perpetrate violence against state enemies while still maintaining a clean international appearance. Death squads are also usually right-wing and counter-revolutionary in that they oppose any group that aims to challenge the status quo. They are more likely to emerge in societies where there is an alliance between the military and the economic elite.

For both groups, their political objectives are largely motivated by financial exigencies to enforce the status quo and maintain the economic powers of the elites. They don’t defend the interests of society as a whole, but aim to defend the interests of the established order. Paramilitary organizations are often set up to protect property rights against landless peasants and to prevent any sort of agrarian counter-reform (Grajales, 2011). Though they have strong financial factors that influence their activity, unlike PSCs, recruits join out of some grass-roots activism and not just for a salary.

In Nicaragua, the Contras (Frente Democratico Nacional; 1981–88) were one of the most notable right-wing paramilitary groups. They were made up of recruits from the former national guard of the Somoza dictatorship.

Various factions from the Somoza regime started a series of rebellions to overthrow the Sandinista government, cooperating only very loosely (Miranda and Ratliff, 1992). Their official role was to undermine the military support structure in Nicaragua from the Cuban government (Roberts, 1990: 78).

Some death squad members may also be motivated by a sense of social responsibility to maintain order which they feel the formal government is unable to do. They may believe that society needs to be socially cleansed of 'non-desirables' such as abandoned street children, prostitutes, drug addicts and petty criminals. Interviews with Brazilian policemen involved in death squads reveal the apparent motives for the violence. They view it as a more effective way of fighting crime. The operatives see themselves as purposed because the state is incapable and corrupt. The death squads in El Salvador's civil war viewed themselves similarly. They are doing what the army needed to do but could not because their hands were tied.

Box 10.3 Vigilantism

Vigilantism is a form of self-policing by a non-state actor. Vigilantes break the law in order to achieve their goals of protection, justice, order and revenge. Though there is usually no cooperation between vigilante groups and the state, often the state is completely ambivalent. Vigilantes may garner some support in the community (especially when there are low levels of trust in the police), but they deny the role of the state in providing social order, and create a parallel order that is unregulated (Haas et al., 2014). In Russia, vigilante justice has been used by organized crime and religious groups who target prostitutes and drug addicts (Tyler, 2000). In Nigeria, where crime has skyrocketed, vigilante groups such as the Bakassi Boys have emerged, taking the law into their own hands with tacit approval of the government. But while some governments may decide to look the other way, vigilantism can prolong conflicts and increase tensions between sectarian groups.

In Northern Ireland, vigilantism was a fixture of the conflict. Vigilantism was written about in the IRA training manuals, articulating that it would be part of their overall strategy (Morrison, 2015). From 1970–2000, around 115 people were killed due to vigilante attacks, with another 4,000 hospitalized (Silke and Taylor, 2000). Vigilantes in Northern Ireland used a wide range of tactics, starting with warnings and followed by curfews, fines and acts of public humiliation. In more serious cases, paramilitaries resorted to beatings, shootings, expulsions from Northern Ireland and, finally, assassination. Over 1,300 were victims to punishment beatings and over 2,000 have been victim to punishment shootings (Silke, 1998). Though beatings may inflict more bodily harm, victims of humiliation claim that the damage is more traumatic (Nicholas et al., 1993). In particular, tarring and feathering is an extreme form of public humiliation, with women being the prime targets. Victims are doused with hot asphalt and then covered with feathers, usually tied to lampposts with signs attached

> indicating their alleged crimes. The victim's hair is chopped off to add to the humiliation. Removing the tar at the hospital is also incredibly painful (Silke, 1998).
>
> Unfortunately, vigilantism in Northern Ireland has not ceased, as a host of new groups have emerged, targeting the communities that they supposedly represent (Horgan and Morrison, 2011: 651). Vigilantes claim that the victims are all getting what they deserve, but the actions of vigilantes undermines the rule of law, weakens the credibility of the state and in some cases may exacerbate tensions in a conflict (Tankebe, 2009).

Many groups have members that are motivated by the financial gain that being part of a death squad offers. In the case of the Davao Death Squad (DDS), which targets criminals in the Philippines, members are paid ten times as much as they would earn normally. Some of the members of the death squads began to offer their services as guns for hire.

Structure and Recruitment

Structure

PSCs are structured like a military with a clear chain of command, though they can deploy more quickly. They can also field the exact kind of forces that are needed and have access to military equipment. PSCs are usually composed of former soldiers who have received training and may have had experience working together. They may be more cohesive than ad hoc multinational forces, but they may not wear uniforms.

Paramilitaries are organized, trained similarly to a professional military, but they are not included as part of the state's formal armed forces. However, in contrast to insurgents, they do not aim to rebel against or overthrow the state. They use violence to move within the system, not to oppose it (Barkey, 1994: 195). They are unofficial security forces that serve a military or quasi-military function. They are structured to resemble a command or military organization and they vary in size. Unlike death squads, they are not secret organizations, but they do not always wear uniforms. They may display a symbol such as a flag or insignia on their arm band. They may dress similarly to showcase their identity and sport distinctive clothing or signs. For example, paramilitary forces in Kosovo wore black and camouflage uniforms, red bandanas, black masks and red scarves. They also had shaved

heads and wore a red insignia on their uniform (Krieger, 2001: 57). Paramilitary units in Northern Ireland often did not wear uniforms, but many received military training (Helsinki Watch Organization, 1991: 116).

As death squads are very clandestine, it is hard to know their exact structure. Death squads are a form of paramilitarism usually linked to the state's security apparatus or some rogue element of it. Because many of the members of these organizations come from the military, there is evidence that they are highly structured organizations, usually structured along military lines though they are legally autonomous from the state. Unlike vigilantism, they are not spontaneous. Their operations are well planned, financed and executed. They differ from lone assassinations that may be the work of a single individual. For example, the DDS started off with only ten members, but was composed of 500 members by 2009 (Breuil and Rozema, 2009).

Death squads have a more permanent organization and are set up to conduct ongoing operations on a fairly large scale. There may be a tiered system with a leader, higher-ranking individuals and personnel consisting of hitmen, drivers and lookouts. They may also be divided into small cells. The chain of command may start from high levels of the security forces. The head may have direct contacts with other security forces, and pays off and recruits foot soldiers, though the foot soldiers may not know who the leader of the organization is.

In the case of the El Salvadoran death squads, all activity was directed by the National Republican Alliance (ARENA) party in association with the security force members. ARENA party leader Roberto D'Aubuisson sometimes gave directives directly while at other times, underlings of the party took their own initiative. ARENA was essentially an umbrella organization for a diverse group of death squads, all controlled by the same paymaster. The prevalence of so many death squads gave the appearance of mass participation and multiple sources of responsibility (Arnson, 2000).

Death squads were well equipped with weapons, often because members already were in possession of them. To avoid being noticed, death squad members usually do not wear uniforms, though sometimes they may wear masks. In the case of the Davao death squad in the Philippines, members did not wear uniforms, only jackets, even during hot weather, and buttoned shirts,

to hide firearms and knives, and baseball caps. They did not wear masks. They rode around on motorcycles, but to conceal themselves did not have licence plates.

Recruitment

Most of the staff members of PSCs are recruited from ex-military personnel, police, civil affairs officers and special operations forces. PSCs can recruit personnel with particular skills, such as with language or area expertise. These companies recruit from databases of mostly retired military and police personnel, making it easier to hire people with particular experience. PSCs can recruit quality personnel by offering them two to four times what they could earn in their own country's forces and fielding them for (potentially) short periods of time (about six months at a time).

Recruitment is not always that thorough, however. Many PSCs do not thoroughly vet their personnel. Some companies have had slack procedures for recruitment. US and British firms often use employees from other countries, which complicates the procedures for prosecution in the case of misconduct. Individuals who have been drawn in to work in the private security sector of Iraq have not had great human rights records. Blackwater confirmed that in Iraqi contracts, commandos were recruited from former forces that were loyal to Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet (Holmqvist, 2005).

Paramilitary units are usually recruited from elite well-trained sections of a country's military and police force. Many are soldiers that have been made redundant, or even whole units of redundant or breakaway soldiers, which sometimes include common criminals. Paramilitary fighters were recruited in Colombia by luring discharged active duty military officers with generous salaries, cars, and even land (Human Rights Watch, 2015). The AUC of Colombia had a huge membership, as high as 80,000. The recruitment of death squad members also usually comes from the secret police forces, special counter-insurgency units, government soldiers and regular police members. They may be able to recruit mercenaries or expelled police officers. They may also consist of police or members of the military who need more income. Police officers could be working at a desk by day and

covertly operating as a member of a death squad at night, as has been the case in Brazil.

When the attorney general investigated the Colombian death squad Muerte a Secuestradores, which had been linked to the drug cartels, they found that 59 members accused of belonging to it were on active military service (Pearce, 1990: 177). An investigation carried out in 1991 showed that 27% (8,000 police officers) of the Rio de Janeiro police force had been invited, at one time or another, to join these groups. Another report in the 1990s claimed that half of the city's death squad members are off-duty or ex-policemen (Brookes, 1991). Reports claimed that in Brazil a death squad member could earn about $500 for killing an adult 'undesirable' and $40 to $50 for killing a street kid (Brookes, 1991). Low police salaries help to lure policemen to join the death squads.

Many of the recruits to the DDS were members of the security apparatus, most notably the police, but the death squad also recruited young men and boys who may have been petty criminals, had no job and no place to live. Many had been involved in a bit of drug pushing before joining the death squad. Individuals whose friends or relatives were members of the DDS claimed that they joined for the easy money. The payment for each operation is about $100 to $1,000 and can be as high as $2,000 (Human Rights Watch, 2009: 58).

Strategy and Tactics

What PSCs are allowed to do is not entirely clear. They do not always have well established mandates for what their tasks are supposed to be. They are not part of a long-term strategy as they are usually hired to provide a quick surge of armed personnel to increase security. Though they do not aim to combat troops, their actions are sometimes indistinguishable from military forces. Some PSC employees have detained people, erected checkpoints without authorization and confiscated identity cards.

PSCs are supposed to have defensive tasks, but they sometimes get trigger-happy. The most notable example of this was the Nisour Square Massacre in Iraq which took place on 16 September 2007, involving the Blackwater

security company. Employees of Blackwater opened fire on unarmed pedestrians and motorists in Baghdad's bustling Nisour Square. The massacre left 17 civilians dead and two dozen wounded. Blackwater mercenaries have also been accused of allegedly shooting at a taxi in Baghdad during 2005, killing the passenger and injuring the driver (Risen and Mazzetti, 2009; Scahill, 2011).

Paramilitaries are mostly offensive, not defensive in nature. The tactics used by PSCs compared to paramilitary organizations helps to illustrate one of their differences. PSCs are supposed to respect human rights, target combatants only and must adhere to the rule of law. Whether or not they are awarded a contract again may depend somewhat on how they handled the operation. A paramilitary organization's success is not dependent on being considered legitimate domestically or to the international community. Paramilitary groups are used on behalf of the political establishment to handle the dirty business of targeted kidnappings and killings, massacres, ethnic cleansing and forcible resettlements. In contrast to insurgencies, their success is also not dependent on casting a wide net of support from the local population. They do not need to appeal to the masses. Though, like insurgents, they sometimes engage in co-optation, destabilization and intimidation, they mostly engage in physical elimination of targeted groups.

In Colombia, the AUC was involved in many atrocities and organized crime such as drug trafficking, oil theft, extortion and kidnapping. The biggest victims of the AUC were ordinary Colombians. Many indigenous communities were displaced. They even taxed local citizens and regulated how they could dress (Grajales, 2011).

In Guatemala, the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes was founded by disgruntled Guatemalan army officers in 1963. They practised a scorched earth campaign, razing 626 Mayan villages. Though most of the violence took place between 1980 and 1982, selective assassinations continued up into the 1990s (Sanford, 2003). The Guatemalan paramilitaries kidnapped, tortured to death and buried peasants in hidden graves. In Nicaragua, the Contras terrorized Nicaraguan villages, bombed health clinics, schools, irrigation projects, power plants, oil pipelines, ports and bridges.

In the Colombian conflict, paramilitaries were responsible for 80% of the killings (Sanford, 2003: 76). Most of the victims were unarmed civilians, often people who worked for NGOs, churches, unions and community activists. Even as late as 2002, paramilitaries killed far more civilians than did guerrilla combatants, but were barely a target of the government.

A death squad's most common activity is murder, but they also engage in torture, rape, arson, bombing or forced disappearances. The killings are often conducted in ways meant to ensure the secrecy of the killers' identities. They are not usually targeting combatants or irregular forces. They mostly target civilians. Death squads aim to eliminate the leaders of 'subversive' movements and terrorize or kill their sympathizers (Gurr, 1988). In the case of Argentina, death squads used by the military regime (1977–1983) would kidnap the children of captured 'subversives' and torture them in front of their parents, and vice versa.

The victims are a wide array of individuals. Some death squads target those that they view as undesirable. Others target anyone who is seen as a challenge to the status quo. Trade union members are especially targeted, and have been a common target in Colombia. Colombia accounted for more than half of all unionists killed globally from January 1990 to March 1991. Community leaders are also a common target. Between 1991 and 1993, in the area of Rio de Janeiro alone, extermination squads executed 31 community leaders. In the case of El Salvador, anyone suspected of communism was killed by death squads. Before the 1982 elections in El Salvador, hundreds of unarmed peasants, including women, children, and elderly people, were massacred as they attempted to flee to Honduras (Mason and Krane, 1989: 190). Death squads have no qualms about exterminating adults, adolescents and small children alike.

Funding and Support

Funding

PSCs were formed to gain profits. They provide security in return for a lucrative contract or access to an entrepreneurial venture. The combined

revenues for all PSCs across the world have skyrocketed. British PSCs earned £1.8 billion in 2004 alone, up from £320 million in 2003 (Richards, 2006: 2). The global market for private security will reach $244 billion by 2016 (Griffin, 2013). Though proponents of these companies claim that they help cut costs of providing security, costs savings have been elusive in the case of Iraq.

In addition to the revenues that PSCs gain from lucrative contracts, they also earn money by gaining a foothold in the industries of the countries that they are offering protection for. In particular, offering protection to the extractive industry infrastructure is a key element of PSC operations. PSCs have sought out political elites of weak or failing states that were also rich in oil or mineral extraction. For weak countries, PSCs can offer protection in return for future commercial opportunities. In return for drilling or mining concessions, political leaders could afford their services to protect the country's important resources while also marginalizing threats from political opponents. Thus they finance their services through the exploitation of resources in areas they have neutralized, often to the detriment of the local population (Cilliers and Mason, 1999).

Paramilitaries and death squads may receive some government backing, but much of their income comes from wealthy supporters. Paramilitary groups are also largely self-funded. They have become involved in black market activity, illegally selling weapons, drugs or other valuable commodities such as oil and diamonds. Some have even become involved in kidnapping for profit. Once paramilitaries become established in rural areas, they start to ask for protection taxes or side payments. Some farmers who are forced to pay for protection may wind up hiring their own paramilitary forces to protect them at a lower cost (Sanchez, 2006). In the Colombian case, the AUC was very involved in criminal activities. It grew, refined and domestically moved its own cocaine, even trafficking its drugs to international markets.

Support

PSCs have various sources of support. They have support from the states that hire them to maintain security, from multinational corporations that solicit

their business, and from NGOs, humanitarian agencies and international organizations. The United Nations, for example, has made use of private security firms to provide local intelligence, logistics, transport and communications services for their mission in East Timor. PSCs are legal, and states contract them to maintain stability.

Paramilitary organizations do not operate within the state structure, but they do operate with state support and frequently work closely with the state. They are often funded, equipped and trained by state authorities. Though the state may never officially acknowledge the links with paramilitary organizations, they do little to eliminate them. Thus, unlike PSCs, these organizations are not private. They are semi-private. It is elements within the state itself that play a role in their creation and direction, though the state usually refuses to recognize any links to the group. Paramilitaries in Colombia emerged in the 1960s after legislation was passed that permitted the formation of local self-defence groups. Thus, paramilitaries like the AUC had the assistance of the Colombian government to fight left-wing insurgencies. They also had the support of the drug cartels who often used their services to provide protection from left-wing guerrilla groups.

Paramilitary organizations are also likely to receive support from foreign governments who share their goals. US President Ronald Reagan decided to offer his support to the Contras, providing millions in funding in the 1980s. The US government has also offered its support for various paramilitary organizations in Haiti in its attempt to oust democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991 (Whitney, 1996).

Death squads almost always operate with the overt support, complicity or acquiescence of the government. The violence is sanctioned by the regime either explicitly or implicitly by not trying to curtail the acts. Nevertheless, it is difficult to prove the government's role in supporting or dictating the activities of death squads. Providing proof usually comes at a great cost to local human rights organizations and monitors, who are themselves often among the prime targets of the death squads. There are some cases where the links are clearly established, such as was the case in El Salvador with the ARENA party under D'Aubuisson. Though they usually have government

support, there are death squads that have been formed and supervised by drug lords or warlords.

Officials within the US-supported unity government in Iraq had unofficial ties to the death squads that began operating in Baghdad around 2006. As the murder rate escalated in the capital city to dozens per day, evidence of the connections between the perpetrators and their organizations and officials within the government were uncovered. Members of the Iraqi police force were found to overlap with the individuals making up paramilitary groups, who were carrying out gruesome attacks and leaving a trail of corpses (Kaufmann, 2007).

Power and Impact on the State and Society

Though some PSCs may provide stability, there are several negative spillovers of having private armed groups that can challenge the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force. They affect the quality of democracy, commit human rights abuses, engage in the proliferation of weapons in conflict zones and are ineffective in long-term conflict resolution.

PSCs have a direct impact on democracy in the countries that use them. One of the most notable reasons for this is that legislative branches are often not involved in making contracts with these groups, giving the executive more power and diminishing the effects of democratic restraint. Privatization of security erodes the established tools for accountability and makes it easier to take action. When the US wanted to support the rebel Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, they awarded a contract to DynCorp as a way to avoid Congressional oversight, according to a US government official (El Tom, 2009).

States may also be more likely to use force if they face fewer political costs for doing so. States have a greater capacity to become involved in politically sensitive conflicts without facing the repercussions of risking their own troops. Using them also allows governments to circumvent legal obstacles. In 1991, a UN arms embargo prohibited the sale of weapons to, or training of, any warring party in the former Yugoslavia. The US government was able to

circumvent this embargo by having one of its PSCs forge a contract with Croatia to provide training, allowing the US to evade responsibility for the human rights abuses that took place. By using PSCs, the state can distance itself from events and create ‘plausible deniability’ (Elms and Phillips, 2009).

Moreover, because legislative branches are often not involved in the decision process, they have little information available. This reduces transparency and makes it easier for actors who are commercially interested to impact policy. It also reduces the information available to the public and obscures governmental responsibility if there are breaches of international laws and standards. In addition, there tends to be much less media coverage of contractors compared to troops. PSCs themselves provide little information, which would normally be available by state security forces (Avant and Sigelman, 2010).

PSCs are also above the law when they commit human rights abuses. Many may be liable for their actions under international law, but bringing a case against them is very difficult (Carney, 2005). This is especially true in states where the rule of law is weak and ineffective. Determining the human rights abuses taking place in conflict situations is especially difficult. The US government in particular has faced accusations of creating rules-free zones by groups such as Amnesty International. PSCs can stipulate in their contracts that they are immune from prosecution in the weak states where they operate. This is the case for all non-Iraqi military personnel under Coalition Provisional Authority CPA Order 17 for acts performed within the terms of their contracts, giving unprecedented power to foreign nationals.

Regulating PSCs is difficult. There are no real checks on their activity beyond not renewing contracts. Contracts often allow a wide range of unspecified duties to be carried out, with few standards, safeguards or monitoring mechanisms, and sometimes spanning more than one country. Oversight is further complicated by the extent of subcontracting between PSCs and the fact that many PSC staff members are actually freelance consultants. Where oversight is impossible, self-regulation is ignored. A further complicating matter of accountability is the fact that many PSC

employees do not wear uniforms, making it harder to identify when they have been involved in abuse (Avant, 2005a).

PSCs also do not contribute to conflict resolution and long-term security for all. They have an interest in ongoing conflicts. They can only end conflicts with force, not peaceful methods of resolution. These victories are only temporary and do not always lead to a lasting peace (Mathieu and Dearden, 2007). They have also been accused of channelling weapons into conflict zones. PSCs also create a false image of security, making it harder to properly assess security needs. It also further weakens the establishment of legitimate security institutions by crowding them out. The proliferation of PSCs has produced an unequal distribution of security in many weak states. Those who can afford their own security are advantaged over those who cannot, since law and order in their countries is not upheld.

The demand for all of these services undoubtedly reflects the increasing blurring of the boundaries between internal and external security. Private security guards outnumber the police in South Africa. At the height of the Iraq conflict, there were over 100,000 PSCs in Iraq (Lane, 2010).

Case Study Executive Outcomes

Executive Outcomes is one of the best-known PSCs, though it is now defunct. Unlike many PSCs, it generated a largely positive image for its work stabilizing the wars in Angola and Sierra Leone. The organization was founded in South Africa by a former lieutenant-colonel of the South African defence force, Eeben Barlow, in 1989. Executive Outcomes did not have a standing army or a major stockpile of weapons. It did, however, have very well trained soldiers who served as a stabilizing force in Africa (Howe, 1998).

Executive Outcomes was first contracted by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government to defeat Joan Savimbi's UNITA force. Ironically, many employees of Executive Outcomes had previously fought to defeat the MPLA. Due to their superior training, Executive Outcomes was able to quickly help recapture the diamond areas by mid-1994 and the oil installations. The cost of the contract was relatively low for the Angolan government. The Angolan government spent over $500 million on its military but only $41 million to contract Executive Outcomes (Howe, 1998).

In May 1995, the Sierra Leone government contracted Executive Outcomes to help combat the RUF. The war had been going on for four years, with the Sierra Leonean government unable to fight off the RUF. Executive Outcome soldiers arrived by May 1995 and trained 150 government soldiers in a few weeks. They were able to quickly push the poorly organized RUF troops out of

the capital and protected the diamond districts (Singer, 2011). They also were able to help open the roads to Freetown to ensure that food and fuel transport reached the capital. As was the case in Angola, Executive Outcome's activities were cited as critical to facilitating a ceasefire (Howe, 1998).

Executive Outcomes has remained very loyal to its employers, not switching sides or threatening the government. It also was selective about its clients and refused to work for non-sovereign states (Chesterman and Lehnardt, 2007). It has also not avoided combat when it was necessary. In spite of this positive reputation, critics claim that the company became very involved in gaining access to long-term concessions in the resource industries. For example, some resource extraction corporations may have financed the costs of Executive Outcomes when the Sierra Leone government could not pay the organization.

Paramilitaries can be highly fragmented, and once created they are often difficult to control. They can evade government control and develop their own agenda (Dasgupta, 2009). Paramilitaries usurp or delegate part of the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of violence. Many paramilitary organizations emerged in Central America during the Cold War with the encouragement of the US to help deal with communist subversion. The paramilitaries were more violent than the insurgencies that were assigned to fight and paid no attention to the notion of human rights.

Death squads also affect the legitimacy of the state and encourage a culture of impunity, though they sometimes operate with the public's consent, as has been the case with the upper and middle classes in Brazil. They operate with immunity from any sort of prosecution. They can threaten witnesses and intimidate judges. They are also not brought to trial due to inefficiencies in the judiciary. For other countries, such as in Central America, the death squads' pursuit of impoverished citizens has deeply affected the public's trust of the state.

Like paramilitaries, death squads enable the state to claim 'plausible deniability' (Sluka, 2000: 227). The state never takes responsibilities for the atrocities committed. Some of these atrocities are quite significant. In El Salvador, in 1983 alone, there were 1,259 documented killings by death squads. The Contras were responsible for killing as many as 8,000 civilians, and assassinating as many as 910 state officials (Brody, 1985).

The use of both paramilitaries and death squads also causes violence levels to escalate. They may cause the targeted group to increase its own attacks. In

the case of Spain, Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación (Anti-terrorist Liberation Groups; GAL) were death squads established illegally by officials of the Spanish government to fight ETA, the Basque terrorist group (see Chapter 7). GAL members carried out paramilitary actions in both Spain and France. Some thought that they may be mercenaries hired by the public, but it eventually emerged that the Spanish government had created them, though the prime minister at the time, Felipe Gonzales (1982–96), was never found guilty.[2]

2. The interior minister, Jose Barrionuevo, and the secretary of state for security, Rafael Vera, and the civil governor of Vizcaya, Julian Sancrisobal, were convicted in 1998 for the kidnapping of Segundo Marey and sentenced to ten years in prison.

In the end, GAL was responsible for the deaths of 27 people (Woodworth, 2001). Nine of the 27 were not even ETA members. ETA responded to GAL's activities by increasing its own activities. ETA attacks went beyond targeting the security institutions and Franco-era politicians. Young Spanish politicians and journalists were targeted, leading to a much heavier death toll (Barros et al., 2006).

Conclusion

PSCs and paramilitary groups are two sides of the same coin. PSCs appear to be apolitical, economically motivated actors, while the opposite is true of paramilitary organizations. However, a closer look reveals that both actors work on behalf of states to provide stability, and are largely focused on maintaining status-quo policies as well as profits. They are examples of how states can appear to be disengaged from politics, while avoiding culpability and responsibilities for their actions. The privatization of security – even when it is legal and sanctioned by states – is an alarming trend that poses unique challenges for ensuring transparency in how security should be achieved.

Summary Points

- Since the war on terror began, there has been an explosion of PSCs, usually American and British companies.
- The use of PSCs makes it easier for countries to deploy forces and avoid responsibility.
- Paramilitary groups and PSCs are both economically motivated; both also usually seek to maintain the status quo .
- Many paramilitary groups have committed more human rights abuses than guerrilla groups.
- Death squads are often working covertly at the behest of a government or a wealthy group.

Key Questions

1. Why do countries choose to rely on PSCs?
2. In what ways do PSCs pose a threat to democracy?
3. How do the tactics and strategies of paramilitary groups differ from PSCs?
4. Why are PSCs and paramilitary groups most likely to be used to defend conservative interests?
5. Can PSCs and paramilitary groups contribute positively to stability? Why or why not?
6. Theory: Realists are concerned with measuring power. How do PSCs and paramilitaries impact how state power is measured?

Further Reading

Avant, D. (2005) ‘Private security companies’, *New Political Economy*, 10 (1): 121–31. Explains what private security companies are and gives an overview of the array of services that they provide; analyses the pros and cons of private security forces in Iraq.

Avant, D. and Sigelman, L. (2010) ‘Private security and democracy: lessons from the US in Iraq’, *Security Studies*, 19(2): 230–65. Critiques private security forces in Iraq and how they have undermined democracy.

Chesterman, S. (2016) ‘Dogs of war or jackals of terror? Foreign fighters and mercenaries in international law’. http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2814889 (27 July 2016). Provides an overview of the evolution of mercenariness and the efforts to regulate it.

Holmqvist, C. (2005) *Private Security Companies* (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute). Extensive explanation of how private security forces emerged, how diverse they are, how much more they have been used since the war on terror began and the lack of options available to regulate them.

Mazzei, J. (2009) *Death Squads or Self-Defense Forces? How Paramilitary Groups Emerge and Challenge Democracy in Latin America* (University of North Carolina Press). Presents how paramilitaries in Latin America have challenged human rights in democracy; explains why they have emerged in the region and provides definitions of paramilitaries and death squads.

Singer, P.W. (2011) *Corporate Warriors: the Rise of the Privatized Military Industry*. (Cornell University Press). Thorough investigation of the explosion of private security companies, how they operate and what impact they may have.