POLICY PAPER
Number 12, March 2009

The Violent Drug Market in Mexico and Lessons from Colombia

Vanda Felbab-Brown





POLICY PAPER
Number 12, March 2009

# The Violent Drug Market in Mexico and Lessons from Colombia

VANDA FELBAB-BROWN

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank Carlos Pascual, Theodore Piccone, Michael O'Hanlon, Mauricio Cardenas, Carol Graham, Gail Chalef, Chappell Lawson, and Seyom Brown for their insightful comments and suggestions. Any omissions or errors in the paper are my own.

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: The Context and Goals of Counternarcotics Policy in Mexico	1
The Highly Violent Mexican Drug Market	5
The Colombia Analogy and Its Limits	9
A Better Analogy for Mexico: Colombia Before Plan Colombia	.15
The Existing Mexican Strategy and the Mérida Initiative	.19
RECOMMENDATIONS	2.2

## Introduction: The Context and Goals of Counternarcotics Policy in Mexico

The drug-related violence and the breakdown in ▲ security in Mexico have escalated to extraordinary levels over the past two years. According to publicly available data, 6,290 people died in Mexico due to drug-related violence in 2008.1 In private, some Mexican officials give a number as high as 9,000 deaths, but even the lower figure is more than the total number of casualties in Iraq during 2008, more than in Afghanistan, and six times more than the average number for a civil war, about 1,000 people per year. During the first eight weeks of 2009, over 1,000 people have already been killed in Mexico.<sup>2</sup> In the level of casualties, if not in the type of targets and means, the violence in Mexico is greater even than the violence that plagued Colombia in the 1980s and early 1990s when Colombia went through a similar confrontation between its drug-trafficking organizations (DTOs) and the state.

Even though the majority of those killed are people involved in the drug trade, the violence has come to affect the lives of both ordinary people who do not dare venture out of their houses at night (or even during the day) for fear of getting caught in the cross-fire, and of elites who have become targets of extortion.<sup>3</sup> Kidnapping is markedly on the rise. While most of the kidnapping is linked to the drug trade—to intimidate and coerce recruits and involuntary participants

to ensure that they deliver promised services—kidnapping for even rather meager pecuniary profits also appears to be growing, indicating a spiral of violence and criminality. Armed robbery has also increased dramatically, along with the murder rates. The cost of violence has become cheap since the state is overwhelmed, the deterrent effect of punishment by law enforcement has declined, and social and cultural restraints on violence have been degraded.

Civil society has come under serious threat with murders of journalists in Mexico among the highest in the world. The law enforcement and judicial apparatus has been similarly threatened with public officials facing the same awful choice that public officials in areas of high crime and violence often face: plata o plomo, i.e., accept a bribe or face murder. Given the existing high levels of corruption in the Mexican law enforcement apparatus, such pressure becomes all the more intense. In some areas of Mexico, the security situation has deteriorated so significantly that there is anecdotal evidence that average Mexicans, not only the upper-class, are leaving Mexico for the United States because of the lack of security in their own country—this despite the economic downturn in the U.S. and the resulting loss of job opportunities north of the border.<sup>4</sup> Although most of the violence is highly localized along critical drug smuggling routes, few

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Associated Press, "Mexico Prez Hoped to Quell Drug Violence by 2012," New York Times, February 27, 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Mexican officials insist that 90% of the dead are involved in the drug trade, another 6% are police officers and soldiers, and only 4% innocent bystanders. See, ibid. Because of underreporting by victims as well as institutional pressures to prevent panic, there are reasons to maintain a wide confidence interval for such numbers. But even if this breakdown is, in fact, accurate, the preponderance of people linked to the drug trade among the victims does not eliminate the fact that the sense of insecurity in Mexico has greatly increased and is affecting the general population.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> While the levels of outflows of Mexican and Latinos from the United States due to the economic downturn remains far higher, such inflows are nonetheless indicative of the localized collapse of elemental public safety in Mexico.

areas of Mexico are now immune from some drugrelated violence.

The economic costs for Mexico also have been substantial. Mexican states most significantly affected by violence appear to have begun experiencing reduced economic activity in terms of reduced investment, tourism, and the dramatic escalation in transaction costs such as protection rents, ransoms, and costs of bodyguards. Yet it is in the domain of public safety where the drug trade is most pernicious and where the Mexican situation is most serious.

Some of the violence is also spilling across the border to the United States. Border patrol officers are increasingly confronted by drug traffickers with firepower. Perhaps as much as 90% of the firearms used by Mexican drug trafficking organizations<sup>5</sup> have been purchased in the United States. Murders and kidnapping of U.S. residents who (or whose relatives) are caught up in the drug trade have increased dramatically. So has the kidnapping of illegal immigrants who, sometimes snatched en masse from coyotes (people smugglers), are held for ransom to be extorted from their relatives in the United States. More and more, coyotes force illegal immigrants to carry drugs (mainly marijuana) as a payment. Because of their involvement in illegality, both groups are likely to significantly underreport abductions and kidnappings. Increasingly, such crime is leaking from border communities deeper into the U.S. border states. The number of kidnappings in Phoenix, Arizona, for example, tripled from 48 in 2004 to 241 in 2008.6 Drug turf wars among the drug trafficking organizations are beginning to occur in major cities in the U.S., such as Dallas, Texas. Still, the violence and criminality on the U.S. side of the border remain relatively low, and nowhere close to their levels in Mexico.

The policy debate about how to address the drug trade and the violence in Mexico frequently conflates

three distinct policy issues. Addressing these issues suggest different strategies.

The three distinct policy questions are:

- 1) how to significantly disrupt drug supply to the U.S., reduce consumption of illicit substances in the U.S., and reduce the global drug trade;
- 2) how to reroute drug trafficking from Mexico;
- how to reduce violence in the drug market in Mexico and suppress crime in Mexico to manageable levels.

Goal One: Reducing Consumption in the U.S. and Globally - The key to success in achieving Goal One is, of course, a significant reduction in demand for drugs in the U.S., Europe, and increasingly elsewhere in the world. Beyond the drug-consuming countries that have traditionally been identified as loci of consumption, such as West European countries and the United States, Iran and Pakistan have long been significant consumption countries. New large consuming markets have emerged in Russia and Asia. In Latin America, countries that formerly had been source and transit countries only, such as Brazil, have become robust and significant consuming markets as well. Mexico itself is now experiencing increases in consumption, as drug supply has increased, drugs have become a form of payment in the illicit trade, and prevention and treatment policies are lacking. In fact, just like the traditional consuming countries in the West and North and perhaps much more so the new consuming countries have frequently abdicated the responsibility to undertake robust prevention, treatment and demandreduction approaches. Further, the new markets receive minimum attention and resources.

#### Goal Two: Rerouting the Drug Trade from Mexi-

**co** – Goal Two is extremely difficult to achieve given that the U.S. is such a dominant consumption mar-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The drug trafficking organizations frequently are referred to as cartels. Rarely, however, do DTOs exercise enough control over the market to set prices. Even the larger drug trafficking organizations in Colombia during the 1980s—the so-called Medellín and Cali "cartels"—did not have this capacity, and Mexican drug trafficking organizations certainly do not have it today.

<sup>6</sup> Randal Archibold, "Wave of Drug Violence Is Creeping into Arizona from Mexico, Officials Say," New York Times, February 24, 2009, A12.

ket globally and for Latin American illicit substances specifically. From the drug trafficking organizations' perspective, the Mexico border is too strategic to give up. Moreover, the border is long and its desert, mountain, and river terrain too difficult to permit its easy sealing off outside of legal crossings, even with the border fence that is currently under construction. At the same time, the level of flows of goods and people across the border is too high and economically important to permit inspection of the majority of vehicles at legal crossings.

The possibility always exists of a reopening of the Caribbean route through which most drugs were channeled to the United States during the 1980s and early 1990s before the U.S. undertook extensive aerial and maritime interdiction efforts in the Caribbean. The increasing use of semi-submersibles to transport cocaine from Colombia's shore or Central America's coast to the United States is an early indication of the DTOs' resumed interest in the Caribbean route. However, the existing levels of enforcement there and, most significantly, the proximity of the Mexican border with the United States makes the Mexico route too convenient for traffickers to abandon. Furthermore, if such a rerouting through the Caribbean were to take place, it would likely result in increased levels of corruption and violence along the new corridor, displacing the problems from Mexico into the more vulnerable states of Central America and the Caribbean.

Goal Three: Reducing the Level of Violence in Mexico and Suppressing Crime to Manageable Levels – Goal three is where the Mexican state has potentially the greatest ability to influence developments. It is also in this

domain where action by the Mexican state is absolutely critical since the provision of public safety is the irreducible function of the state.

Paradoxically, strategies for accomplishing Goals Two and Three may be somewhat contradictory, at least in the short term. A very violent illicit market, as in Mexico today, is bad not only for the legal economy, but also bad for the illegal economy. Persistent fights among the drug trafficking organizations and a lasting violent confrontation between those organizations and the state may well generate a scramble among the DTOs for a more peaceful and less enforced route. But such an outcome would not necessarily enhance public safety in Mexico. On the other hand, a global reduction in demand is critical not only for Goal One, but it will also be of enormous help with Goals Two and Three. Clearly, demand reduction needs to become the centerpiece of U.S. counternarcotics policy both at home and abroad.

However, in the rest of the paper, I will concentrate primarily on Goal Three—reducing violence in Mexico—and on the direct strategy toward accomplishing this goal. I will first describe the illegal drug economy in Mexico today. Second, I will contrast the situation in Mexico with Colombia and with Plan Colombia, to which Mexico is frequently being compared. I will argue that although public policy analyses center comparisons on and draw lessons from Plan Colombia, the better analogy for Mexico is Colombia before Plan Colombia, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Fourth, I will provide a brief description of the Mexican response and the Mérida Initiative. I will end with recommendations for a new strategy in Mexico.

#### THE HIGHLY VIOLENT MEXICAN DRUG MARKET

The level of violence present in Mexico for the past two or three years is not at all typical for illegal markets. Nor is it common to drug markets. Rather, it represents an aberration and indicates great market instability.

Some of the violence is turf warfare between the current largest DTOs-the Tijuana DTO, also known as Arellano Félix Organization; the Federation, at the core of which is the Sinaloa DTO; the Juarez DTO; and the Gulf DTO. Smaller organizations include, for example, La Familia which operates in Michoacán. Some of this inter-organization violence had been set off by state intervention against the drug trafficking organizations in 2001 which particularly targeted the Tijuana DTO and consequently inadvertently advantaged the Sinaloa group. The subsequent competition over territory and smuggling routes accounts for some of the current violence as well. Moreover, further arrests of traffickers under Presidents Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón not only further destabilized the market and set off an even fiercer competition, but also pitted the drug trafficking organizations against the state. Some of the violence is also within individual organizations, such as infighting between the Alfredo Beltrán Leyva faction of the Sinaloa drug trafficking organization and their rivals from the faction led by Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán. Such periods of violent outbreak periodically take place in illicit markets where peaceful channels of dispute resolution and judicial arbitration are frequently lacking, the lack of trust undermines transactions, and the chance of betrayal to illegal rivals and the state runs high. Nor are they unprecedented in Mexico; in the mid-1990s, for example, the Tijuana and the Carillo Fuentes drug

trafficking organizations were engaged in a war, to some extent triggered by law enforcement actions against the drug trade. This violent episode left hundreds of dead in Nuevo Laredo and was characterized by law enforcement corruption and participation in the violence reminiscent of today.

But the contemporary level of violence in Mexico and its duration over several years clearly represent a break with typical illegal markets. Moreover, the level of savagery accompanying the violence is also atypical. Some of it is strategic savagery meant to intimidate competing crime organizations, the state, and the local population to accept authority of the local DTO and prevent defections and intelligence provision to opponents. However, some of the savagery likely represents an out-of-control escalation of violence: a loss of strategic control by the drug trafficking organizations themselves over violence and a removal of social restraints on violence—a sign of how much both violence and life have become cheap in Mexico.

Indeed, this level of violence—among the trafficking organizations, within them, and the between them and the state—is bad for the drug business. The turmoil in the Mexican drug market is in many ways analogous to the level of chaos and violence in deeply disturbed markets, such as in Afghanistan in the early 1990s prior to the emergence of the Taliban or in Somalia. The analogy here is not meant to suggest that the state has failed to the same extent as in these countries. The Mexican state is clearly far stronger and its resource-base and institutional core are far more robust. The analogy applies to the Mexican il-

legal market, which is so disorganized and its transactions costs so high that it undermines the illegal business itself. In fact, the illegal market in Mexico is in prime need of an arbitrator or regulator to emerge.

What form such a regulator and such stabilization will take depends on several factors, one of which is the response of the state. There are several possibilities:

• First, the illegal market could become regulated internally as a result of the emergence of one or several trafficking organizations that can impose adequate control throughout their territories and secure their territorial boundaries. Their control would be sufficient and stable for them to impose regulation to reduce transaction costs, facilitate business, and reduce violence. In other words, under this scenario, the drug trafficking organizations in Mexico would simply battle it out and reach a new modus vivendi, with newly delineated boundaries and newly established control mechanisms. Such division of the trade, including of smuggling routes and territories, generally characterizes drug markets. Such a territorial division existed in Mexico prior to the 2000s.

When such a stable power distribution among crime organizations fails to materialize in illicit markets, other belligerent actors, such as insurgent and terrorist groups, can and frequently do step in. They then assure stability and reduce transaction costs. The Taliban, for example, performed such a regulatory function in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s for general smuggling and for drugs, and its capacity to do so greatly facilitated its takeover of Afghanistan.

One atypical aspect of the evolution of the drug trade in Mexico has been the inability of Mexican insurgent groups—like the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) or the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) and its splinters groups, such as the Revolutionary Party of Insurgent People (EPRI)—to significantly penetrate the drug trade. They do participate in some trafficking, but their participation is not very robust or substantial, and they lack

the capacity to act as such a regulator on the illicit market. During the 1970s, the Mexican authorities were clearly concerned about such a penetration of the drug trade by leftist guerrillas. In fact, the fear of the guerrilla participation in the drug trade was one reason why they consented to U.S. pressures at that time for an intense eradication campaign, including aerial spraying, against opium poppy and cannabis cultivation in Mexico. Whether as a result of the anti-guerrilla policies or the guerrillas' own internal weaknesses, the guerrilla groups failed to significantly penetrate the drug trade then and have not managed to robustly participate in it since. In this respect, the evolution of the drug-conflict nexus in Mexico differs with the trends in Peru, Colombia, Thailand, Afghanistan, Burma, and other locations of the drug-conflict nexus.

• Second, the state could prevail and succeed in breaking down the DTOs into a number of smaller and weaker crime groups that would continue conducting illicit business, but would not be able to generate great levels of violence. Such a state-crime relationship would resemble the U.S. or Western Europe today—crime, including drug-trafficking exists, but it is not associated with paralyzing levels of violence, and state penetration by crime organizations remains limited. This scenario represents the optimal outcome, and it is the goal of President Calderón's efforts. It remains to be seen whether the Mexican strategy as currently undertaken succeeds. Paradoxically, however, in the short term at least, the current strategy of the Mexican government will likely be associated with high levels of violence, since every state intervention against the DTOs further destabilizes the market and generates new competition among and within the organizations to fill the vacuum as well as more opposition to the state.

The very high levels of corruption among the 400,000-strong Mexican police, and the law enforcement and judicial institutions more broadly, represent a formidable obstacle to the state to succeed. Police forces in Mexico consist of local police, state police, and federal police. The local police are by far the largest in numbers, and also the most

corrupt. But higher-levels of the law enforcement apparatus, including top specialized anti-crime units, have not escaped serious corruption. For decades, Mexico has struggled to root out the corruption and reform the institutions, with old institutions being abolished or renamed. The revelations in November 2008 about the DTOs' penetration of Mexico's law enforcement reaching the highest levels of the supposedly reformed institutions, including Mexico's Federal Agency of Investigation (Agencia Federal de Investigación or AFI) and the Special Organized Crime Investigation Division, were damning and reveal the enormous challenges for the state in conducting an effective offensive against the DTOs.

• Third, a failure of the state to rapidly diminish the power of the drug trafficking organizations and improve public safety could well give rise to the reemergence in Mexico of the corporatist model of **state-crime accommodation** typical of the 1960s and 1970s. As Luis Astorga, a prominent Mexican expert, argues, under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional or PRI) rule in the 1960s and 1970s, the former Federal Security Directorate (Dirección Federal de Seguridad or DFS) and the Federal Judicial Police (Policía Judicial Federal or PJF)<sup>7</sup> regulated the drug trafficking organizations, mediated between them as well as protected them.8 Some analysts further suggest that DFS developed particularly strong relations to the drug trafficking organizations during the 1970s when it tolerated their activities in exchange for their assistance with paramilitary operations against a leftist urban terrorist group, the 23rd of September Communist League. After the leftist group was wiped out in the late 1970s, DFS personnel went into business with the traffickers.

The fact that DFS was one of the institutions in charge of drug eradication gave it a critical advantage in becoming such a regulator, as it often does to institutions in charge of suppressing illicit crop cultivation as well as interdiction against DTOs. Indeed, the DFS was suspected of corruption by drug traffickers as soon as it was established in the late 1940s and put in charge of the first wave of poppy eradication to placate the United States.<sup>10</sup>

Although the army has also conducted eradication since the 1940s, it has remained less corrupt by the drug trade than the police and the top domestic law enforcement institutions. During periods of intense eradication, up to one quarter of the army's active duty men—between 22,000 and 26,000, according to statements by Mexican government officials—were assigned to eradication.<sup>11</sup> One reason why the Mexican army experienced lower levels of corruption was the fact that while it participated in interdiction and detention of traffickers, its participation in this aspect of the counternarcotics effort was limited. Its role in counternarcotics intelligence was even more constrained by the Mexican police, including the DFS, that used its privileged position and principal responsibility for counternarcotics to regulate the trade and extract rents. As a result, the most vulnerable participants of the trade, Mexican cultivators of illicit crops, bore the brunt of counternarcotics policies to appease the United States' concerns about Mexican narcotics, while the traffickers maintained a close relationship with the police and other branches of the law enforcement apparatus. In fact, a characteristic of Mexican counternarcotics policies at least until the late 1980s had been a dominant focus on destroying plants and an unwillingness to arrest and prosecute traffickers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Because of notorious corruption, the PJF was replaced by the AFI in 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Luis Astorga, "El Tráfico de Fármacos Ilícitos en México: Organizaciones de traficantes, corrupción y violencia," paper presented at a WOLA conference on *Drogas y Democracia en Mexico: El Impacto de Narcotráfico y de las Políticas Antidrogas*, Mexico City, June 21, 2005, cited in Laurie Freeman, "State of Siege: Drug-Related Violence and Corruption in Mexico: Unintended Consequences of the War on Drugs," WOLA Special Report, June 2006.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> See, Peter Reuter and David Ronfeldt, "Quest for Integrity: The Mexican-US Drug Issues in the 1980s," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 34(3), Autumn 1992, p. 102-103.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Sergio Aguayo, "Los usos, abusos, y retos de la seguridad nacional Mexicana: 1946-1990," in Sergio Aguayo and Bruce Bagley, eds., En busca de la seguridad pérdida: aproximaciones a la seguridad nacional Mexicana (Mexico: Singlo Veinturo Editores, 1990), pp. 107-145.

<sup>11</sup> Reuter and Ronfeldt, pp. 108-109.

By the late 1980s, drug-related corruption also penetrated Mexico's political institutions. By then, all major political parties at the time, including PRI, the Democratic Revolutionary Party (Partido de la Revolución Democrática, PRD), and the National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional, PAN) had all been accused of having leaders and influential backers with ties to the drug trade. The 1985 death in Mexico of a U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent, Enrique Camarena, in which high-level Mexican law enforcement officials were implicated, also revealed "the intricate ties relating the drug trafficking with police and political power in Mexico."

Could such a corporatist accommodation between the state and the drug trafficking organizations emerge again in Mexico? Mexican DTOs today are both more fragmented and more powerful than their counterparts in the 1960s and 1970s, a crime structure that decreases the chances of such an accommodation. Moreover, Mexico today is also a democratic country whose political leadership appears determined to confront the DTOs and whose citizens demand public accountability. Further, the United States is critically focused on developments in Mexico and would strongly disapprove of any such evident corporatist accommodation. All these conditions push against such an accommodation. At the same, however, the confrontation between the DTOs and the Mexican state and the associated levels of violence are deeply controversial within Mexico. Unless the state can deliver improvements in security quickly, public support could well evaporate among both the general public and the elites in Mexico for the continuing confrontation, giving rise to calls for such an accommodation.

A more benign version of the state-crime accommodation—more benign because crime would not penetrate the highest levels of the state—would resemble the Thomas Schelling model of organized crime in the U.S. in the 1960s. Schelling argued that the U.S. mafia at the time was best conceived of as a licensed collector of the rents associated with the franchise held by the police departments in individual U.S. cities. <sup>14</sup> The current level of corruption of the local police especially in Mexico could easily provide a platform for such a relationship. Ironically, however, without a thorough police reform in Mexico, such an accommodation may well put the crime organizations in the position of handing out the licenses to the local police in reverse of the Schelling model.

• Fourth, and very dangerously, the state could retract, providing public safety to only segments of the Mexican population and to only parts of its territory. Such a shrunken state would be consistent with the historical developments in Latin America where the scope of the state's dominance has frequently been minimal. In the existing security and administrative vacuums, alternative forms of governance would emerge. While upper-class elites could resort to private legal security providers in the form of bodyguards, the non-elite segments of the population would likely face far less benign security and order providers. The maras (youth gangs) in Central America, chimères (street thugs) in Haiti, drug gangs in Brazil's favelas (shanty towns), and possibly even expanded insurgent groups come to mind as such alternative governance structures.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> See, for example, Sergio Mastretta, "Tierra Caliente: La cuenca cardenista," Nexos. 154 (October 1990), pp. 47-64.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> C. Ramírez, "El Caso Camarena y las Relaciones Bilaterales," La Opinión, May 25, 1990, p. 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Thomas Schelling, "Economic Analysis of Organized Crime," in President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, Task Force Report: Organized Crime (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1967).

#### THE COLOMBIA ANALOGY AND ITS LIMITS

noth in popular discourse and in public policy Danalysis, Mexico is increasingly compared with Colombia in the 1990s and 2000s, and the appropriateness of adopting a "Plan Mexico," a policy modeled on Plan Colombia, is debated. Analysts frequently talk of the "Colombianization" of Mexico. Some use it to imply that the drug-related violence in Mexico now resembles the drug-related violence in Colombia. Others criticize the U.S. aid package to Mexico, the Mérida Initiative, for imposing U.S. strong-fisted source-country and interdiction counternarcotics policies on Mexico and for exporting its drug wars. Such criticism echoes the criticism in Mexico of U.S. counternarcotics policies in the 1980s when many Mexicans felt that the United States was deliberately exaggerating the drug problem in Mexico to the detriment of Mexico's sovereignty and security. But while Colombia does provide some useful lessons, the situation in the two countries is also different in important ways.

In 2000, when Plan Colombia was adopted, the Colombian state faced very severe security threats. By then, Colombia had long been the major processing and transshipment center for cocaine. During the 1990s, it also became the key locus of coca cultivation. By 2000, the cultivation of coca increased to 136,000 hectares, equaling peak levels in Peru during the 1980s. Both the leftist guerrillas, especially the Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC), and the rightist paramilitaries who opposed them had

experienced dramatic growth throughout the 1990s. Profiting from the drug trade as well as other illegal economies, they expanded throughout the territory of Colombia. By the early 2000s, the FARC reached about 17,000 combatants, the second leftist guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN) almost 5,000, and the paramilitaries about 30,000.15 In many areas, including close to the capital Bogotá and to other major cities, the belligerent actors prevented normal economic, political, and social activity and sometimes completely displaced the Colombian state. In large swaths of the rural areas, the state absence was even more pronounced. Great insecurity prevailed throughout the country. Attacks by armed groups along major roads paralyzed land travel. Colombia also experienced very high levels of crime, with some of the highest kidnapping and homicide rates in the world. At the same time, Colombia's security apparatus was weak. The number of professional soldiers, for example, reached only 20,000 in 1998, less than the total number of the leftist guerrillas. The military's counterinsurgency skills were poor, and it lacked mobility. In many areas, the police were absent, and where they were present, they were frequently corrupt and intimidated.

After failed negotiations with the FARC in the 1990s, Colombia's President Andrés Pastrana mobilized the state to challenge the guerrillas and the paramilitaries and establish security and state presence throughout the territory. His successor, President Álvaro Uribe undertook a strong military offensive against the

<sup>15</sup> Peter DeShazo, Tanya Primiani, Phillip McLean, "Back from the Brink: Evaluating Progress in Colombia, 1999-2007," CSIS, November 2007, p. 5.

FARC, the so-called Democratic Security policy. The United States supported this effort with generous financial, hardware, and training assistance—called Plan Colombia—that between 2000 when it was adopted and 2008 has reached over \$4.5 billion. 16 The U.S. aid package specified several key objectives: neutralizing the drug economy and providing alternative development opportunities to coca cultivation; strengthening state presence and improving security; strengthening the judiciary and fighting corruption; bolstering the economy; and improving governance. However, the counternarcotics and counterinsurgency focus dominated the U.S. assistance. Training and equipment for Colombian armed forces and for drug eradication and interdiction lay at the core of Plan Colombia, with illicit crop eradication seen as a critical tool for weakening the guerrillas. After 2002, when U.S. aid could be applied directly to counterinsurgency purposes without a need to demonstrate a drug link, Plan Colombia became more openly a counterinsurgency plan.

The Plan substantially succeeded in the counterinsurgency/security objectives, while it fared considerably worse in its socio-economic objectives and failed in its stated counternarcotics goals:

• In the design of Plan Colombia, neutralization of the narcotics economy was defined as "reducing the cultivation, processing, and distribution of narcotics by 50 percent in six years", through 2006. This goal has clearly not been achieved. Although the cultivation of poppy and production of heroin in Colombia have declined by 50%, this illicit crop and drug have been a marginal activity within Colombia's drug economy.

The principal illicit crop, coca, and the principal drug, cocaine, have, in fact, not been reduced by 50%. In 2000, at the beginning of Plan Colombia,

136,200 hectares (ha) of coca were cultivated in Colombia, with the estimated cocaine HCl potential of 580 metric tons (mt) according to U.S. Department of State.<sup>17</sup> In 2001, these numbers peaked at 169,800 ha of coca and 839 mt of cocaine.18 Despite the largest aerial spraying ever and increasingly substantial manual eradication, in 2006, at the end of the designated six-year period, 157,200 ha of coca were cultivated in Colombia with the estimated cocaine potential of 610mt. 19 Although both numbers are smaller than the peak levels of 2001, they represent neither a 50% reduction nor in effect any decrease when compared to 2000, the baseline year when Plan Colombia was launched. Rather, both coca cultivation and cocaine production were higher in 2006 than in 2000. The 2007 statistics show an even greater failure to achieve the stated goals and make a significant dent into Colombia's drug production and trafficking.

• However, the clear and great accomplishment of Plan Colombia has been in the security sphere. Security has greatly improved throughout Colombia, and the power and size of illegal armed groups has been significantly degraded. Good security is not only important on its own; it is also a necessary precondition for the success of counternarcotics policies. Achieving strong and comprehensive security is thus a vital step toward the success of counternarcotics policies.

As a result of U.S. training, equipment, and signal intelligence, the fighting skills, mobility, and intelligence-gathering capacity of the Colombian forces have greatly improved. The Colombian military has been able to strike at the FARC and seal off individual *frentes* (the FARC's organizational units). Since 2003, the FARC has been largely in retreat. Its capacity to mount large-scale offensive actions has

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> United States Government Accountability Office, Plan Colombia: Drug Reduction Goals Were Not Fully Met, but Security Has Improved; U.S. Agencies Need More Detailed Plans for Reducing Assistance, October 2008, pp. 15, 28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of State, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), March 2008, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/102583.pdf, p. 129.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Ibid. The United Nations on Drugs and Crime has considerably lower estimates for both current and past-year production and considerable controversy exist among the accuracy of the two sets of data. See, UNODC, Coca Cultivation in the Andean Region, June 2008, http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Andean\_report\_2008.pdf.

been significantly degraded. As a result of its battlefield losses, the number of deserters has increased dramatically since 2000. At the same time, as a result of technical and signal intelligence provided to the Colombian military by the United States as well as intelligence provided by FARC deserters, the military has scored important hits against both the top leadership of the FARC and its medium-level frente commanders. The expansion of the military through the territory and its ability to pin down FARC columns have severely hampered the group's logistics channels and its ability to communicate, resupply, and redistribute resources among the various frentes that are frequently spread throughout vast territory. Consequently, the number of active FARC combatants has been reduced to perhaps 9,000.20 The FARC is facing a serious threat of internal disintegration and potential fracturing. The government also has been able to retake critical long-term strongholds of the FARC, such as Meta. The ELN has been weakened even further than the FARC, to perhaps 2,500 combatants.<sup>21</sup> The Colombian government also struck a demobilization deal with the paramilitary groups.

The substantial weakening of the leftist guerrillas and the demobilization of the paramilitary groups have translated into palpable improvements in security. Highway traffic has increased by 64% between 2003 and 2006. The numbers of homicides has declined by 40% between 2002 and 2006,<sup>22</sup> even if from some of the highest in the world and from peak numbers even for Colombia. Kidnapping has declined even more impressively by 80%, once again from some of the highest levels in the world.<sup>23</sup> Overall, according to the Colombian Ministry of Defense, by 2008, the government was in full or partial control of 90% of the country, up from 70% in 2003.<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, challenges in the security sphere persist, with illegal armed groups not fully defeated, and overall security remaining spotty and tenuous in many areas. Partial control does not necessarily amount to sufficient control. The FARC and the ELN still operate in large swaths of the rural areas of the country, frequently in high, steep mountains and jungles where the state struggles to reach them, but from which they nonetheless intimidate local populations, prevent normal life, and undermine the government. New paramilitary groups, whether they are called paras or bandas criminales, such as Aguilas Negras and Organización Nueva Generación, and others are emerging.<sup>25</sup> Formed from both previously demobilized paramilitary members as well as from fresh recruits, these groups total as many as 5000-6000 combatants.<sup>26</sup> Some estimates put the number at as much as 10,000.27 In some areas, these groups compete and fight with the FARC. In others, they carve up territory and reach a modus vivendi with the FARC. Still in others, they collude with the FARC and local DTOs in the drug trade. The lack of sustained and full security in those areas hampers both efforts to improve public safety and extend other socio-economic functions of the state and the effectiveness of counternarcotics policies. While the expansion of police to every municipality, frequently stressed by Colombian officials as a key improvement, is important, the coverage of the police frequently remains thin, with one or two policemen in charge of a territory of several hundred square kilometers.

The socio-economic aspects of state presence continue to be lacking in vast parts of the country, including in areas that the Colombian government defined as areas of major importance, such as the Macarena region of Meta. The lack of government focus on the social and economic development of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Author's interviews in Bogotá, Summer and Fall 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> DeShazo et all, p. 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Author's interviews in Bogotá, Summer and Fall 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> See, for example, International Crisis Group, *Colombia's New Armed Groups*, Latin America Report N. 20, May 10, 2007.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Author's interviews with Colombian government officials, Fall 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Author's interviews with Colombian think tank experts, Fall 2008.

the rural areas and on inequality reduction threatens to undermine the security accomplishments of Plan Colombia, leaving root causes of violence unaddressed.

 Alternative development efforts for coca farmers or populations vulnerable to coca cultivation are improving lives of those to whom they are available, but they reach only a small percentage of the population in need. Critical structural drivers of coca cultivation and obstacles to licit livelihoods, such as profound rural underdevelopment and structural inequality, persist. The global economic crisis will only compound the existing challenges.

Yet the challenges that Mexico faces today are substantially different from Colombia's travails both in the conflict/violence sphere and in the narcotics sphere.

In the conflict sphere, the actors that the Colombian state encountered from the mid-1990s and after the adoption of Plan Colombia are quite unlike Mexico's violent actors today. The FARC was and is an organized, hierarchical irregular army, a visible one even if hiding in jungles. As such, it can be targeted through regular counterinsurgency kinetic operations. Moreover, despite its vast expansion in the 1990s, until the 2000s, the FARC was not exposed to difficult military confrontations—Colombia's military forces were very poor and frequently offered only minimal resistance to FARC's advancement in the rural areas. More often than not, the Colombian military relied on the paramilitaries to counter the guerrillas, instead of engaging them directly.

Despite the emergence of militias fighting on behalf of some of the Mexican drug organizations, such as the Zetas of the Gulf "cartel" and the Negros of the Sinaloa "cartel", Mexican DTOs are organized rather differently than Colombia's guerilla groups. Although the narcocorridos (songs) glorify the traffickers' status as warriors, most of the violent actions are carried out by individuals or bands of hitmen, rather than anything approaching the FARC or ELN

armies. The traffickers and their hitmen also number in the hundreds, rather than tens of thousands, thus making detection by the state far more difficult.

A better analogy for the challenge that Mexico faces today are Colombia's paramilitaries. Until the mid-1990s, when the then-leader of the paramilitaries, Carlos Castaño, sought to cloak the paras with political legitimacy by presenting them as a regular army and creating their umbrella organization, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, or AUC), the paras were less visible and less organized like an army, frequently being just a band of hitmen. In fact, many of the paras were just drug dealers and neighborhood thugs whose leaders bought themselves positions of power in Castaño's AUC as a way of avoiding extradition to the United States on drug-trafficking charges. Prominent examples of such traffickers include Jorge 40, Macaco, Don Berna.

In many ways, they are quite similar to Mexico's Zetas and Negros, despite the Zetas different origin. While many of the paras in Colombia emerged spontaneously (or with help from the Colombian military) and later cooperated with the Colombian military in fighting the leftist guerrillas, the Zetas were first elite law enforcement officers and defected to the Gulf "cartel" as its hired mercenary militia. They are the most violent, feared, skilled, and technologically advanced among Mexican hitmen. Increasingly, they are becoming independent of their Gulf DTO overlords, themselves taking over aspects of the trade. Now numbering as many as 500 with perhaps hundreds more in a support network throughout Mexico, the group, led by Heriberto "The Executioner" Lazcano, is mostly composed of ex-elite-soldiers and counternarcotics officers. Many were originally members of the Mexican Army's elite unit, Grupo Aeromóvil de Fuerzas Especiales, trained in arresting drug traffickers. It is believed that some even received training at the U.S. Army's School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia.<sup>28</sup> Certainly, Zeta members have been trained by foreign specialists, including Americans,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Ginger Thompson, "Mexico Fears Its Drug Traffickers Get Help from Guatemalans," New York Times, September 30, 2005. See also, Freeman.

French, and Israelis, in special operations, such as rapid deployment, aerial assault, intelligence-gathering, countersurveillance, ambushes, etc. In addition to former Mexican policemen and soldiers, they also appear to have hired former Guatemalan troops known as Kaibiles. They have been engaged not only in a violent confrontation with the Mexican state, but also in turf wars with their rivals, such as the Sinaloa DTO. They have now become deeply entrenched in Nuevo Laredo, in many areas functioning as a shadow government, and their reach extends through Mexico. They are expanding their activities from illicit trade to extortion of legitimate businesses. In response, the Sinaloa group created its own militia, the Negros. The Zetas and the Negros pose some of the most serious security threats to the Mexican state.

It is important to recognize that the Colombian state has never really defeated the paramilitaries or even seriously engaged them militarily. The paras took advantage of President Álvaro Uribe's overtures for amnesty, which crystallized in the Justice and Peace Law of 2005. This deal allowed the paramilitaries to avoid a full confrontation with the state as well as extradition to the United States. In exchange for their demobilization and disarmament, the Justice and Peace Law imposed minimal penalties on the AUC leaders and none for most rank-and-file soldiers. (In 2008, thirteen of the most notorious paramilitary leaderscum-drug-traffickers were extradited to the U.S. in for violating the terms of the amnesty and continuing with their drug business.)

But the structural conditions that gave rise to the paras—a continuing security challenge by the guerrillas and persistent state weakness in the security, administrative, and socio-economic domains—have not been addressed. As detailed above, new paramilitary groups or *bandas criminales* have emerged. The Colombian

state today is more capable and motivated to fight the new paras—a positive development. But whether its will and resources will be sufficient to eliminate this resurgent threat remains to be seen. Moreover, little effort by the Colombian government has been put into addressing the paras' penetration of the political and administrative structures of Colombia and the resulting corruption and distortion of the political processes. In some parts of Colombia, such as along the Atlantic coast, such parapenetration of public and political institutions is pervasive.

In the narcotics sphere too, there are some fundamental differences between Mexico and Colombia. From the 1990s on, cultivation of illicit crops in Colombia was the most visible manifestation of the drug trade, and hence eradication became the dominant policy. Trafficking, no doubt, was and continues to be pervasive and important, and a lot of resources have been devoted to interdiction. In fact, the current interdiction rates by the Colombian government are very high, with about a third or more of the cocaine flows captured within Colombia. Unfortunately, the supply-side efforts have resulted in only very small increases in the price of cocaine in the US, indicating that supply has not really been significantly decreased.<sup>29</sup>

In Mexico too, there is cultivation of illicit crops: of opium poppy and cannabis. Over the past 10 years, between 20,000-25,000 ha were cultivated with opium poppy each year. This rather substantial level of poppy cultivation is on par with Burma today and higher than Thailand at its peak in the 1960s. At the same time, about 15,000-20,000 ha of opium poppy have been eradicated in Mexico each year for the past ten years. With respect to cannabis, the numbers are even higher—30,000-40,000 ha have been cultivated each year and 20,000-30,000 ha

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the retail price of cocaine per gram was \$161.28 in 2000 and \$168.39 in 2001, then declining to \$106.54 in 2003. In November 2007, ONDCP announced an increase in cocaine retail prices to \$136.93 per gram. Given that in January 2007, the cocaine retail price was a mere \$95.35, one of the lowest recorded levels, the yearly average for 2007 was likely smaller than \$136.93. Nonetheless, even using the highest September 2007 data point, the cocaine price is still below both 2000 and 2001 and only 25% in nominal terms of cocaine retail prices in 1981 when it was \$544.59. See, Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), "Data Show Record Low Prices for Cocaine and Heroin," http://www.wola.org/index.php?option=com\_content&task=viewp&id=397, requested from ONDCP under the Freedom of Information Act; and ONDCP, "White House Drug Czar, DEA Administrator Release New Data Showing Significant Disruptions in U.S. Cocaine and Methamphetamine Markets," Press Release, November 8, 2007, http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/pressrel/pr110807a.html.

have been eradicated.<sup>30</sup> The cultivation of illicit crops employs thousands of people. In some areas, such as in the state of Michoacán, the drug economy—both cultivation and trafficking—represent a substantial portion of the local economy.

Overall, however, the dominant aspect of the drug market in Mexico is trafficking, not cultivation. This difference has critical implications for counternarcotics and law enforcement strategies, facilitating state actions against the drug trade in Mexico. While fields cultivated with illicit crops may be easier to detect than trafficking routes and eradication policies against illicit crops may seem easier to conduct than interdiction against traffickers, the political costs of attacking the fields and the farmers are frequently higher than the political costs of targeting traffickers, especially violent traffickers. There is a fundamental difference between labor-intensive illicit economies, such as coca and poppy cultivation, which provide employment for hundreds of thousands of people in a particular locale, and labor-non-intensive illicit economies, such as trafficking, which employ perhaps thousands of people at most. All things being equal, in poor countries with a paucity of legal economic alternatives, populations are usually much more willing to tolerate and support state actions against labor-non-intensive economies, such as interdiction against trafficking, rather than actions against laborintensive illicit economies, such as illicit crop eradication. This difference in support for counternarcotics policies comes from the fact that labor-intensive illicit economies assure subsistence and sometimes enable social mobility for a far greater number of people and a larger segment of the population than labornon-intensive economies do.31

The analytical distinction is not meant to imply that traffickers and belligerents cannot derive any support (or what I call political capital) from labor-non-intensive economies. Even labor-non-intensive economies can generate robust spillover effects for the overall

economy, which benefit the population. For example, according to a Mexican economist Guillermo Ibara, twenty percent of Sinaloa's economic activity is related to drugs—profits from drug smuggling underlie sales in real estate, durables, and non-durables (such as restaurant activity).<sup>32</sup> When the drug trade constitutes such a large portion of the local GDP, it generates significant economic benefits for the local population and its loss would cause substantial economic pain in the state.

Moreover, Mexican traffickers are engaging at least to some extent in the same patronage distribution that crime organizations have conducted for decades all over the world. Just like their notorious Colombian counterparts, such as Pablo Escobar and Carlos Lehder, or the dons of the Italian Mafia and Camorra, they give money to churches and community projects, such as public lighting, communications, and roads, thus buying political capital.

Still, the intense level of violence that accompanies the drug trade in Mexico, its increasingly indiscriminate character, and the serious threat to the elemental safety needs of the population it causes will likely limit the amount of political capital the Mexican narcos can buy among even the poor population. In fact, the escalating violence against the general population itself suggests great limits to the narcos' political capital. Public anger at the violence, coupled with the relatively small economic benefits that even marginalized populations can derive from labor-non-intensive illicit economies, will likely result in greater support for counternarcotics policies in Mexico than the state has enjoyed in Colombia, Afghanistan, or Peru, for example. Public support will also be enhanced if the state concentrates on drug interdiction and law enforcement policies, rather than on eradication of illicit crops. Nonetheless, the public support for the Mexican strategy against the DTOs is not unlimited and, as discussed below, is already exhibiting cracks.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> For exact figures, see, U.S. Department of State, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report,* March 2008, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/102583.pdf, p. 182.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> See, Vanda Felbab-Brown, Shooting Up: Illicit Economies and Conflict (Brookings Press, 2009), forthcoming.

<sup>32</sup> Cited in Manuel Roig-Franzia, "Mexico's Drug Trafficking Organizations Take Barbarous Turn: Targeting Bystanders," Washington Post, July 30, 2008, p. A9.

## A BETTER ANALOGY FOR MEXICO: COLOMBIA BEFORE PLAN COLOMBIA

A closer analogy to the situation in Mexico today is Colombia in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the Medellín "cartel" was engaged in an all-out-confrontation with the Colombian state and subsequently also with the Cali "cartel." In response to the pressure from the Colombian state against the drug trade and the traffickers in the 1980s, the Colombian traffickers alternated their strategy between attempting to negotiate an amnesty with the state and intimidating the state through terrorism and violence.

At first, in the early 1980s, several of the prominent drug traffickers, including Pablo Escobar, Carlos Lehder, and Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha created political parties and ran in local elections to obtain immunity from legal prosecution and to secure acceptance among Colombia's traditional elites. They also aspired to run in national elections. Their efforts, backed by money handouts to the poor, met with only small successes, and the state responded by ultimately disqualifying them from the political process. In order to avoid prosecution, the traffickers also offered to pay Colombia's then-large external debt, dismantle their cocaine laboratories and trafficking networks, and repatriate their off-shore assets, thus injecting \$3 billion into the Colombian economy.

The state refused, threatening instead to extradite them to the United States, and a first round of violence initiated by the traffickers ensued. In order to deter the government from extraditing them, the traffickers ordered the murder of judges and policemen, offering the justice and law enforcement officials a choice of *plata y plomo* (bribe or bullet), and effectively paralyzing the justice system. After the traffickers ordered the assassination of Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, the Justice Minister, the state crackdown against the traffickers intensified. In addition to being behind the extradition policy, Lara Bonilla had helped end Escobar's political career by revealing Escobar's prominent role in the drug trade.

In November 1985, the day that Colombia's Supreme Court was supposed to rule on the extradition of a number of prominent drug traffickers, an urban leftist guerrilla group, the M-19, stormed the Supreme Court's building in Bogotá, the Palace of Justice. During the attack, M-19 took almost 400 people hostage, including the President of the Supreme Court, Alfonso Reyes Echandía, and nine Supreme Court Justices. The Colombian government replied with heavy force and after a 28-hour siege defeated the guerrillas. However, approximately one hundred people died, including nine of the Supreme Court justices and most of the 60 M-19 guerrillas. During the siege, the M-19 burned up incriminating materials on the traffickers.<sup>33</sup> The M-19 denied that it undertook the attack as a pay job for the Medellín DTO, claiming instead that it sought to denounce the government of Belisario Betancur, which it blamed for the failure of the peace negotiations between various leftist guerrillas (including the FARC and the M-19) and the government.<sup>34</sup> Whether the attack was simply a pay job ordered by the Medellín "cartel" or had

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Rex A. Hudson, "Colombia's Palace of Justice Tragedy Revisited: A Critique of the Conspiracy Theory," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 7 (3), Summer 1995, pp. 100-121.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Scott B. MacDonald, *Mountain High, White Avalanche* (New York: Praeger, 1989), pp. 42-3.

larger political goals, the M-19 clearly went out of its way to destroy the evidence against the traffickers, in addition to publicly denouncing the extradition policy.<sup>35</sup> Former M-19 members subsequently admitted to receiving general assistance from Escobar later on;<sup>36</sup> and in 1988 the group was reportedly hired by the Medellín drug trafficking organization to murder Attorney General Carlos Mauro Hoyos.<sup>37</sup>

In the late 1980s, the Colombian government once again authorized extradition of drug traffickers to the United States. In response, the Medellín traffickers unleashed extraordinary levels of violence.<sup>38</sup> Under indictment, they created an association, Los Extraditables, and initiated what Escobar called an all-out war against the Colombian state. Scores of journalists and judges were assassinated or threatened, paralyzing the judicial system. Between 1981 and 1991, 242 judges were killed and many more were forced into exile abroad to avoid assassination. Politicians, especially those embracing extradition, were equally targeted. In 1989, the Medellín "cartel" assassinated the Liberal Party presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán, a strong supporter of extradition and the man who disqualified Escobar from participating in the 1990 presidential elections, along with four other presidential candidates. The traffickers also resorted to indiscriminate violence, placing bombs in Bogotá and other cities, and attacking hotels, banks, and political offices. One bomb destroyed the building of the Department of Administrative Security (DAS), killing 100 people. A bomb aboard an Avianca flight between Bogotá and Cali killed 119.39

In response, the Colombian government extradited more than twenty suspected drug traffickers to the United States between August 1989 and December 1990 and seized \$125 million of their assets. 40 José Gonzales Rodríguez Gacha was shot by the police in December 1989. Still, the violent retaliation by the traffickers persisted, and the administration of President César Gaviria finally caved in 1991 and negotiated a surrender policy with most of the Medellín traffickers in exchange for light sentences. Escobar turned himself in, on condition that he would be placed in a special prison to be constructed by him near Medellín. For thirteen months, Escobar stayed in the prison, continuing to conduct his drug business from there and even leaving the prison on occasion. Ultimately, Escobar escaped the prison for good in 1993.

After Escobar's escape, the Medellín drug trafficking organization was defeated by a systematic decapitation strategy. This decapitation strategy was undertaken by the Colombian state with U.S. assistance and with critical help from the Cali drug trafficking organization and Los Pepes (Los Perseguidos por Pablo Escobar, People Prosecuted by Pablo Escobar). Los Pepes were a militia put together by enemies of Escobar at the instigation of Fidel Castaño, one of the top leaders of Colombia's paramilitaries. They and the Cali "cartel" systematically eliminated the medium commanders of Escobar's organization and many of the rank and file foot soldiers and ultimately provided intelligence on Escobar himself. The Cali DTO also contributed an estimated \$50 million to the PEPES to pay informers and assassins and buy weapons to hunt down Escobar.<sup>41</sup> The PEPES did kill forty of Escobar's people, gave evidence on about six of the Medellín DTO members, and destroyed several of Escobar's properties, including his car park worth

<sup>35</sup> The M-19 was not unique in denouncing extradition. Apart from many political leaders, other guerrilla groups, including the FARC and its political branch, the UP, also denounced extradition.

<sup>36</sup> Alonso Salazar, J., *La Parábola de Pablo: Auge y Caída de Un Gran Capo del Narcotráfico* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2001).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Scott B. MacDonald, Dancing on a Volcano: The Latin American Drug Trade (New Praeger, 1988), p. 35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> The Cali drug trafficking organization was considerably more restrained in its use of violence or its effort to achieve visible political power. Its kingpin Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela remarked that unlike the Medellín drug trafficking organization, the Cali drug trafficking organization did not kill judges and others, but bought them. Cited in Francisco Thoumi, *Illegal Drugs, Economy, and Society in the Andes* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 203. The Cali drug trafficking organization also perfected a "support your local police" policy, not only putting large numbers of officers on its payroll, but also helping rid the city of social "undesirables."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> The Medellín DTO also attempted to buy 120 Stinger missiles in Florida in April 1990, but its effort was foiled by the FBI.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Patrick L. Clawson and Rensselaer W. Lee III, *The Andean Cocaine Industry* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), p. 99.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Robin Kirk, More Terrible Than Death (New York: Public Affairs, 2003), p. 156.

\$5 million.<sup>42</sup> The Cali drug trafficking organization cooperated with the Pepes and with the Colombian state because it believed that after the elimination of the Medellín DTO it would be able to take over Colombia's drug market. However, when in the mid-1990s, President Ernesto Samper's dealings with the Cali drug trafficking organization were revealed, the Colombian state under U.S. pressure was forced to move against the Cali DTO and did, in fact, succeed in breaking it up.

Could the Mexican state play such a divide-and-rule strategy among the trafficking organizations in Mexico? Already under former President Vicente Fox, extradition of Mexican traffickers to the United States was instituted to prevent their efforts to continue running their trafficking organizations from Mexican jails. The ensuing violence has been both in retaliation against the state and a result of subsequent turf wars. The ability of the Mexican state to play such a divide-and-rule strategy is undermined by the fact that the Mexican drug market is much more violent and fluid and the complexity and fragmentation of its actors is

far higher than in Colombia in the 1980s and early 1990s when two DTOs dominated the market.

Moreover, the destruction of the Colombian drug trafficking organizations did not have a fully happy ending. Instead of the two big trafficking organizations, many smaller boutique drug trafficking organizations emerged. Their smaller size guaranteed that they could not wield the same power, including violent coercion, against the state that their predecessors could. This weakening of their power and reach was an important accomplishment of the strategy against the groups. But the fragmentation and smaller size of the new DTOs also made further state actions against them, including detection and intelligence-gathering, far harder. More ominously, the demise of the drug trafficking organizations enabled the expansion of the paramilitaries, who took over the drug trade and later incorporated many drug traffickers into their ranks. Los Pepes themselves constituted a key organizational platform for the paras/ AUC formation. And, as indicated previously, both trafficking and cultivation of coca subsequently greatly expanded in Colombia.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Harvey F. Kline, State Building and Conflict Resolution in Colombia, 1986-1994 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), p. 137.

## THE EXISTING MEXICAN STRATEGY AND THE MÉRIDA INITIATIVE

In addition to extraditing traffickers to the United ■ States, the Mexican state response to the violence of the Mexican drug market and to the traffickers' retaliation against the state has been to beef up the law enforcement apparatus, primarily by deploying the Mexican military to take on the drug trafficking organizations. Since 2006, President Felipe Calderón has deployed 45,000 soldiers to eight Mexican states from Guerrero to Baja California as well as 5,000 extra Federales (federal police). A new 5,000 soldiers are slated for Ciudad Juarez, a city particularly badly hit by the drug violence with 1,600 killed there last year and whose police is paralyzed by fear of the DTOs. 43 To tackle the pervasive corruption, especially among the police and the law enforcement apparatus, the Mexican government has also sought to purge corrupt policemen and law enforcement officials and to undertake institutional reorganization of the law enforcement apparatus. As of February 2009, it has removed more than 25 high-level officials and many more lower-level ones. Since 2006, the Mexican government has spent \$6.5 billion on top of its normal security budget on fighting the cartels.<sup>44</sup> In February 2009, President Calderón announced that he hoped that by 2012, the DTOs would be beaten down enough to permit the withdrawal of the army and federal police and hand law enforcement back to local police.

As a result of the strategy undertaken so far, thousands of "drug traffickers" have been arrested. By

some accounts, the number of arrests since 2001 has reached as many as 90,000, though this number includes predominantly low-level peddlers. At the same time, only 400 hitmen have been arrested. This disparity in the focus of the counternarcotics effort, at least in terms of the arrest record, is astounding, but not surprising. The institutional propensity often pushes toward such a skewed outcome since capturing actual and supposed low-level dealers is safer and easier than targeting higher echelons of the drug trade and their hitmen. But such a dominant focus on the low-level actors in the drug trade is unlikely to either calm the violence in Mexico or weaken the crime organizations. Instead, it is likely to flood and paralyze the judicial and prison systems, both already under enormous strain.

However, as argued above, the arrests of top level traffickers destabilized the drug market in Mexico in the first place and helped spark the violence. Unlike the Colombian drug market of the 1980s and early 1990s where two groups dominated, the Mexican market had at least four major and several smaller, but significant DTOs. As a result, the propensity toward complex turf wars was far greater in Mexico than in Colombia. The Mexican state was neither prepared for their intensity nor the level of violence the DTOs were willing to inflict on the state. Moreover, the law enforcement effort against the Colombian cartels proceeded in a phased manner: the state first targeted the Medellín group and only then, under pressure from

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> The police chief of Cuidad Juarez, for example, resigned after several policemen were killed there and he was threatened that more would be killed if he remained in office. See, Ken Ellingwood, "Mexico to Send Up to 5,000 More Troops to Cuidad Juarez," *Los Angeles Times*, February 27, 2009.
<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

the United States, the Cali DTO. Crucially, in the first phase, the Cali DTO cooperated with the state in the anticipation that it would be able to take over the Medellín share of the market. Whether intentionally or not, the Colombian state played a divide-and-rule strategy.

Moreover, while Mexican citizens clearly desire a reduction in violence and have little tolerance for the drug trafficking organizations, their support for the military strategy of President Calderón has been equivocal. With good reason, concerns have been raised about human rights abuses by the Mexican military and the state encroachments on civil liberties in the name of the war on the DTOs. Although Mexico did not experience a military coup and a military dictatorship in the latter half of the 20th century like other Latin American countries (but not Colombia), its armed forces have not been free of human rights abuse problems. For the past two years, allegations of civilian deaths (even if occasionally compensated by the state), long-term detentions incommunicado and without charge, and house searches without warrant keep surfacing. Given Mexico's recent transition to democracy and the lack of institutionalized public accountability, such complaints, while not surprising, are worrisome.

Furthermore, the deployment of the military to counter the traffickers has so far failed to quell the violence. In fact, the military is drawing armed attacks by the drug trafficking organizations, making public support for the policy waver. In February 2009, public protests against the use of the military temporarily blocked border crossings in Reynosa, Nuevo Laredo, Matamoros, and Cuidad Juárez and shut down parts of Monterey. Although Mexican authorities alleged that the demonstrations were organized by the DTOs, most likely the Zetas, and Mexican newspapers labeled the demonstrations "narco-protests," they are nonetheless indicative of the public ambivalence toward the military strategy and the state's inability to rapidly improve public safety and quell violence. The question is whether the state can, by the use of the military, sufficiently improve security fast enough to maintain public support. Or whether the persistent insecurity and its escalation will motivate Mexican society to call for accommodation with the trafficking organizations and thus weaken the resolve of the state

U.S. assistance to the Mexican state, through the Mérida Initiative, has been consistent with the approach of the Mexican government, with the bulk of the resources going for military and police support and technical assistance and training. Out of the total package of \$1.6 billion to be distributed over three years, the U.S. Congress authorized \$400 million in 2008, with the majority of the money directed toward counternarcotics, counterterrorism, and border security, specifically helicopters and fixed-winged interdiction aircraft. Approximately another third of the \$400 million is allocated for institution-building and rule of law (including police, court, and prison personnel training), and for public security and law enforcement. In both of these categories, most of the money is designated for hardware—for updating the forensics database in Mexico, for example, or for buying inspection equipment for the border. This allocation of the assistance package corresponds to the preferences of the Mexican government, which has great sensitivities about any encroachment on its sovereignty by the United States and feels much more comfortable in accepting U.S. hardware, than in accepting U.S. technical advice on intelligence gathering and institution building and reform. This allocation of U.S. aid also is broadly consistent with U.S. counternarcotics aid to Mexico through the 1990s when U.S. funds went almost exclusively to crop eradication, particularly to support spraying planes, with some additional resources for in-country and crossborder interdiction. Then, as now, no funds went to alternative livelihoods programs and socio-economic approaches for addressing crime. Nonetheless, the basis for U.S. military and law enforcement training for Mexico's forces has already been established. Since the mid-1990s, the United States has provided training to Mexican soldiers at the School of the Americas. The U.S.-Mexico military cooperation through the U.S. International Military Education and Training (IMET) program also has increased, after decades of virtually no military-to-military contacts due to the hostility of the Mexican military toward the U.S. armed forces.

Enhanced military and law enforcement mobility, as facilitated by helicopters, for example, is clearly beneficial and frequently makes an important difference in counternarcotics operations. Technology can be of great help. Nonetheless, many of the challenges facing Mexico are not highly susceptible to technological fixes. The hardest task, though possibly one where the U.S. does not have a very successful record both in Mexico and across the world, is in police training and reform.

That is not to say that the United States has had no successes in assisting law enforcement and institutional reform abroad. Notwithstanding the recent revelations about the Colombian military killing poor Colombian civilians and presenting them as killed FARC guerrillas, the military in Colombia is not only more competent, but also appears less corrupt and more respectful of human rights than before

U.S. aid in the 1990s and 2000s. The judicial system in Colombia has improved greatly, and the police also seem to be less corrupt than previously, in no small part as a result of U.S. efforts.

Nonetheless, the focus on hardware and technology in the Mérida Initiative (instead of on processes and capacity-building) raises concerns about the effectiveness of the aid package. Moreover, the United States is transferring the aid without detailed specification on the part of the Mexican government of its strategy for defeating the trafficking organizations or reducing violence, and with little transparency and accountability on the Mexican part. This lack of specification, transparency, and accountability for the use of U.S. aid once again reflects Mexican concerns over sovereignty, but it also reflects a lack of articulation (and arguably of formulation) by the Mexican government of a strategy toward the drug-related violence.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The violence in Mexico has escalated to such Levels that it is doubtful whether the current approach by the Mexican state to simply flood the most affected states and areas with military forces in a reactive mode can be effective in quickly reducing violence and substantially weakening the drug trafficking organizations. Yet the need to maintain public support and rapidly reduce the death toll puts a strong premium on quick and visible improvements in public safety. Therefore, this paper proposes an alternative strategy for Mexico that includes several components: a phased ink-spot law enforcement model; institutionalization of protection for human rights and civil liberties; police and justice reform; and the establishment of strategic and tactical intelligence capacity against organized crime. On the U.S. side of the border, the proposed strategy calls for a beefing up of U.S. law enforcement via additional law enforcement units, not via efforts to seal off the border, as well as stepped up efforts to control arms trafficking.

The objectives of the strategy detailed below are not to end trafficking in Mexico, drug consumption in the U.S., or eliminate crime. Rather, the objectives of the strategy are to substantially reduce violence in Mexico so that the state can once again provide its irreducible function of assuring public safety and to bring crime down to manageable levels, comparable to those in the United States or Western Europe.

 A phased "ink-spot" law enforcement approach is a first element of the strategy. Notwithstanding the serious concerns of human rights and civil liberties violations by the Mexican military, the use of military forces remains necessary because of the weakness and corruption of the Mexican police forces and other domestic law enforcement agencies. Given the coercive capacity of the Mexican drug trafficking organizations, including their fire-power, and given the weakness and pervasive corruption of the Mexican police, relying on standard law enforcement agencies in Mexico will leave the police too vulnerable and susceptible to the traffickers' offer of a bullet or a bribe.

But unlike the current blanket military reaction to the violence, the strategy recommended here argues for a "Phase One" redeployment and massing of the military forces to focus initially on strategic areas, establish firm control there, and then gradually increase the areas of state predominance vis-à-vis the drug trafficking organizations. Such a strategy is analogous to, though not necessarily identical to, an urban counterinsurgency "ink-spot" strategy. This "ink-spot law enforcement" approach does not call for increases of military forces, but a different form of their deployment. Phase One does not necessarily imply a great level of violence by the military forces or many kills or arrests of the traffickers and their hitmen. But it does imply a preponderance of the state's coercive capacity so that the state has the ability to establish firm public safety.

Once the military has been able to impose order, clear an area of the most violent traffickers that terrorize a particular area, and hold the area in Phase One, a second phase can, hopefully rather quickly after the initial entrance of the robust

military forces, be undertaken. In Phase Two, the military presence would be transformed into a combined model of constabulary approach and community policing. This would permit dispersing smaller units of the military/constabulary forces among the population and the building up of a relationship with the population. The ability to assure the population's safety and to demonstrate responsiveness and accountability to the citizens' needs would increase intelligence flows. This would enable further strategic hits against the trafficking organizations, especially the most violent ones. The Italian carabinieri could perhaps be one model for such a constabulary force. Interjecting reformed and capable police forces into the constabulary units will be essential, both as a transition mechanism to Phase Three and because the Mexican military clearly currently lacks an investigative capacity. It is thus unable to capitalize on any short-term security improvements to make sustainable strategic hits against the drug trafficking organizations and its efforts are frequently consumed by problematic arrests of low-level dealers.

In *Phase Three*, as police reform is undertaken and honest and capable policemen become available, the police would replace the constabulary forces, eventually completely eliminating the use of military forces for domestic law enforcement and public safety administration.

The Brazilian law enforcement approach toward the favelas that has developed into a de facto urban counterinsurgency approach, provides one possible model for such an ink-spot approach. In fact, the current Brazilian strategy is being praised as gaining results and improving the security in the favelas. But it is premature to declare victory in the favelas, and the verdict is still out on how sustainable and scalable the apparent successes are. More significantly, a transition toward a less heavy military presence and toward regular police law enforcement has yet to be implemented in the supposedly-secured favelas. Not to mention the fact that Brazil's police remain deeply corrupt and frequently violate human rights and that police

reform in Brazil remains an immense challenge. Such police reform, however, is an indispensible component of the strategy proposed here, and is detailed below.

The difficulties and costs of such a phased inkspot law enforcement approach that involves the use of Mexican military forces are not small. The public in Mexico, while clearly suffering from and outraged by the violence, is questioning the need to deploy the military forces. Sensing the limits to pubic support, President Calderón has indicated at least a tentative end date for the deployment of the military forces as 2012. The call in the strategy proposed here for concentrating forces also generates new public image problems for the government because the massing of military forces will make their presence all the more visible and because state cannot give the impression that it is abandoning portions of the territory and its population or ceding it to the trafficking organizations.

The need for interagency cooperation in the outlined strategy is great. Such cooperation is frequently extremely difficult to achieve in any country and Mexico has a history of problematic interagency relations in the counternarcotics sphere and law enforcement. Moreover, the Mexican military is currently unprepared for Phase One or Phase Two and a combined constabulary and community policing model would require large-scale training of the Mexican military. In fact, there are good reasons to doubt the effectiveness of the Mexican military even for Phase One and to wonder whether its failures to establish security has been only due to the dispersion of the forces and its insufficient massing or due to structural shortcomings of the Mexican military for the kind of urban constabulary operations that the struggle against the drug trafficking organizations requires. Although the Mexican army is constructed more like a national guard (analogous to the carabinieri), it has clearly been struggling in its current mission in the cities. In the hot zones which they are asked to secure and where they are asked to deliver public safety, they frequently live in fort-like barracks, removed from the population.

- 2) In addition to the phased law-enforcement inkspot strategy recommended here and even if the current troop dispersion and the current military strategy continue, police reform in Mexico is absolutely essential. It must go beyond simply increasing police salaries. It must involve the vetting of police officers, financial disclosures, establishment of audits, including inspectors, and protection for whistle-blowers. Police training must include an emphasis on the role of the police in serving the people, protecting their safety, and enforcing their human rights. Many of such elements of police reform are already being undertaken in Mexico. Yet such comprehensive police reform inevitably takes time and, in Mexico's case, is complicated by the scale of corruption of the law enforcement apparatus as well as its size. It is not clear how such a reform could be accomplished in three years by 2012, when President Calderón hopes to hand law enforcement back to local police. This deficiency and time pressures intensify the need to move the military strategy at least to *Phase Two*. The difficulties with police reform in Mexico and the poor state of the police echo the poor state of the police forces in Latin America in general. Their ineffectiveness, capriciousness, and corruption are notorious. Overall in the Hemisphere, little progress has been made improving the state of the police forces. Mexico's difficulties will be no smaller.
- 3) Police reform needs to be accompanied by *judicial reform* and the strengthening of the judicial capacity. The change from the inquisitorial to the accusatorial system in Mexico adopted last year is an important improvement. The Mexican government established an eight-year guideline to transition the judiciary to the accusatorial system. Because of the size of the judiciary, eight years is an ambitious goal. Meanwhile, further capacity needs to be built into the system.
- 4) The capacity of the Mexican state to gather *strategic and tactical intelligence* on the trafficking organizations must be increased. This is especially imperative as even the army today, the temporary frontline against the DTOs, does not have an in-

telligence capacity. Such intelligence units must also be better insulated from penetration by the trafficking organizations—a tall order given the level of corruption in Mexico and the existing penetration of the law enforcement apparatus by criminal elements. The state needs to focus especially on the most violent organizations and strategically strike against them, and intelligence analysis must be directed toward such interventions. Such intelligence analysis must center not only on information-gathering for locating and arresting particular traffickers, but critically on how such actions by the state will reduce violence or destabilize the drug market and potentially set off new turf battles. The state needs to prepare for such developments and rapidly deploy law enforcement units to mitigate local breakdowns in public safety and to prevent the escalation of turf battles among and within criminal organizations.

Such an intelligence capacity may well consist of a fairly small unit within existing anti-crime organizations in Mexico. Its efforts may well not be visible, and its establishment and analysis provided by it will not deliver immediate political points for the government from the public, but in the medium and long term, such intelligence capacity may well be the most important element of the anti-organized crime strategy. U.S. aid in developing such an intelligence unit in Peru, for example, ultimately led to the capture of Abimael Guzmán, the head of Peru's Shining Path, and the defeat of the insurgency there.

Drug trafficking organizations are not insurgencies or terrorist organizations. Blank decapitation policies against them do not work for two reasons: First, the ability of DTOs to replenish top and medium-level managers arrested or killed by government forces is great in absolute terms, and far greater than in the case of insurgencies and terrorist organizations since the leadership and organizations skilled required of terrorist and insurgent leaders tend to be far greater than those of drug traffickers. The history of the drug trade is one of new traffickers and organizations remerging each time law enforcement had seemed to strike a decisive blow to the drug trade. However,

- while regenerative capacity of the drug trade is immense and new DTOs and traffickers always will emerge as long as the illicit drug market exist, the DTOs and their managers are not equally violent and powerful. Second, without a clear strategy and an anticipation of reverberations in the illicit market of the weakening of particular DTOs, just a blanket opportunistic decapitation strategy, implemented as information becomes available on some trafficker, will simply lead to a greater turmoil in the market and further turf battles among and within the remaining trafficking organizations. Consequently, strategic analysis by such an intelligence unit is as important as information gathering.
- 5) The above-outlined law enforcement components of the strategy need to be couched in strong and clearly annunciated government support for the institutionalization of democracy in Mexico and for protection of human rights and civil liberties. Mechanisms for addressing accusations of abuses by the military and the police must be established, resourced, and respected. Given the fledgling status of Mexico's democracy, such a focus on human rights protection and accountability is all the more necessary. Respect for human rights and democracy is in no way inconsistent with the elements of the law enforcement approach outlined above. Ultimately, no democracy can thrive if the state fails in its most elemental and irreducible function of assuring public safety.
- 6) The United States and other countries can contribute to Mexico's efforts in important ways. Beyond transfers of technology and equipment, the United States and other countries, such as Britain, Italy, and Brazil, can provide advice and training in police reform, the establishment of constabulary forces and community policing, the development of strategic intelligence capacity, and human rights and democracy promotion. In fact, **multilateralizing** assistance to Mexico and involving regional institutions, such as the OAS, will help address Mexico's concerns about sovereignty, even if introducing new challenges in coordinating the various aspects of such international assistance and partnership.
- 7) U.S. assistance to Mexico must also involve efforts on the U.S. part to strengthen gun control. Tight gun control will not end violence in Mexico. Even if no arms were flowing from the United States to Mexico (unlike the current situation where arms manufactured in the U.S. constitute 90% of the weapons used by Mexican DTOs), Mexican crime groups would find new suppliers on the extensive global market with small arms and new ways to eliminate their opponents. Moreover, given the complexity of gun control politics in the U.S. and the inherent difficulties of monitoring arms sales, including by straw purchasers, Mexico cannot rely on the U.S. stopping the gun flows. At the same time, it is important to recognize that while Mexican gun laws are far tighter than in the U.S.—a key reason why Mexican DTOs buys weapons in the U.S.—Mexico has minimal interdiction capacity against weapons smuggling. Mexican Customs have the capacity to search about 8% on a random and frequently cursory basis. A demonstrated effort on the U.S. side and a beefed-up U.S. capacity to reduce smuggling with weapons may thus reduce weapons flows. Critically, however, it will bring important diplomatic benefits, facilitating U.S.-Mexican cooperation in the struggle against the violent drug trafficking organizations. It will also enhance of the capacity of the Mexican government to mobilize public support for law enforcement against the DTOs.
- 8) On the U.S. side of the border, there is also a need to beef up law enforcement both to mitigate spillovers of current violence from Mexico and to prevent the displacement of Mexican DTOs to the U.S. territory as a result of significant successes of Mexico's strategy. While securing the border through border patrol and the use of "smart-border" technologies is important, there are limits to (and great economic costs associated with) how much the border can be sealed outside of legal crossings, with or without the fence. There are similarly great limits to how many people and goods can be inspected at legal crossings. Instead of attempting to seal off the border as some are calling for, the United States should inject supplementary law enforcement personnel in areas

particularly susceptible to spillovers from Mexico. Integration of such mobile reinforcements into the existing law enforcement structures would, no doubt, pose challenges; but nonetheless, such a strategy may be better and more cost-effective than just general permanent increases in police and law enforcement forces in the U.S. border states. U.S. law enforcement forces and border states need to take early measures to anticipate and prevent crime spillovers to the U.S. and efforts by crime organizations displaced from Mexico to establish themselves in the U.S.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Vanda Felbab-Brown is an expert on international and internal conflict issues and their management, including counterinsurgency. She focuses particularly on the interaction between illicit economies and military conflict. She has been examining these issues in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. She is a fellow in Foreign Policy at the Brookings Institution where she follows South Asia, the Andean region, Mexico, and Somalia, and an adjunct Professor in the Security Studies Program, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University. Prior to taking up her position at the Brookings Institution, she was assistant professor at Georgetown University. A frequent commentator in the media, she is the author of the forthcoming book, Shooting Up: Illicit Economies and Military Conflict (Brookings Institution Press, 2009) which examines these issues in Colombia, Peru, Afghanistan, Burma, Northern Ireland, India, and Turkey. Her Ph.D. dissertation, "Shooting Up: The Impact of Illicit Economies on Military Conflict," received the American Political Science Association's 2007 Harold D. Laswell Award for the Best Dissertation in the Field of Public Policy.

Dr. Felbab-Brown is also the author of numerous policy reports and academic articles, including "Peacekeepers Among Poppy: Counternarcotics Policy in Afghanistan," Journal of International Peacekeeping, February 2009; "Expand the Agenda in Pakistan and Afghanistan," Brookings Presidential Memo, December 2008; "Implications of Mumbai Attacks for Afghanistan," Brookings Brief, December 2008; "The Weak, the Bad, and the Ugly: Policy Options in Afghanistan, Brookings Brief, October 2008; "Tackling Transnational Crime: Adapting US National Security Policy in Latin America," National Strategy Review Forum, Spring 2008; United States National Security Policy in Latin America: Threat Assessment and Policy Recommendations for the Next Administration, the Brookings Institution, May 2008; "From Sanctuaries to Protostates," in Michael Innes, ed. Denial of Sanctuary: Understanding Terrorist Safehavens (Westport: Praeger, 2007); "The Coca Connection: Conflict and Drugs in Colombia and Peru," Journal of Conflict Studies, Winter 2005; "The Intersection of Terrorism and the Drug Trade," in James J.F. Forest, The Making of a Terrorist (Westport: Praeger, 2005); and "Afghanistan: When Counternarcotics Undermine Counterterrorism," Washington Quarterly, Fall 2005.

#### BROOKINGS

The Brookings Institution 1775 Massachusetts Ave., NW Washington, D.C. 20036 brookings.edu