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U.S.-Mexico Drug Trafficking: Globalization, Cooperation and Challenges

Tráfico de drogas en Estados Unidos y México: globalización, cooperación y desafíos

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SUMMARY: Criminal organizations have taken advantage of some of the benefits of the globalization process, have expanded their networks and have become groups that operate regionally and transnationally. The context of globalization entails the need to reform the structure of institutions and their way of operating at the domestic and regional levels. International cooperation between national institutions is not enough to face international challenges such as regional and global crime. The fight against drug trafficking networks between the U.S. and Mexico demands new institutional structures that involve the participation of state and non-state actors at a regional and global level.

KEYWORDS: Drug trafficking, Cooperation, Globalization, Organized crime.

RESUMEN: Las organizaciones criminales han aprovechado algunos beneficios del proceso de globalización, han expandido sus redes y se han convertido en grupos que operan a nivel regional y transnacional. El contexto de globalización conlleva la necesidad de reformar la estructura de las instituciones y su forma de operar a nivel doméstico y regional. La cooperación internacional entre instituciones nacionales no es suficiente para enfrentar desafíos internacionales como el crimen regional y global. El combate a las redes del narcotráfico entre EUA y México demandan nuevas estructuras institucionales que involucren la participación de actores estatales y no estatales a nivel regional y mundial.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cooperación, Crimen organizado, Globalización, Narcotráfico.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of transnational organized crime is not clear-cut or straightforward. There is no standard definition for it in criminological or criminal law theories. Moreover, transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) differ substantially from each other in terms of organizational structure, types of activities, and size, for instance. Despite this lack of consensus on the definition of transnational organized crime, several crucial elements are evident in all cases.

First, such organizations conduct *criminal* acts, violating legal frameworks and making profits outside the legitimate procedures of law enforcement. Individuals who intentionally join the groups operate under the direction of established leaders and execute their activities efficiently. These groups are well organized and their structure is more or less permanent, even when they are not composed of rigidly subordinated groups. Transnational organized crime sometimes occurs through a network of homogeneous groups linked to one another across borders by various forms of solidarity, complicity, and one hierarchical order (Fulvio, 1997).

Additionally, TCOs are active in a variety of fields. The full spectrum of their activities includes bank fraud, cybercrime, and the illegal trafficking of goods and people. Moreover, TCOs are willing to use violence, bribery, and other such means in order to achieve their goals and protect their interests. And, of course, a main characteristic of these groups is that their criminal practices are not limited by national boundaries (Voronin, 2000). The U.N. Convention against Transnational Organized Crime states that an offense is transnational in nature if:

(a) it is committed in more than one nation; (b) it is committed in one nation but a substantial part of its preparation, planning, direction, or control takes place in another; (c) it is committed in one nation but involves an organized criminal group that engages in criminal activities in more than one nation; or (d) it is committed in one nation but has substantial effects in another nation (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2004).

TRANSNATIONAL CRIME: A NEGATIVE EXTERNALITY OF GLOBALIZATION

There has been some discussion of the relationship between globalization and organized crime. According to Phil Williams, professor at the University of Pittsburgh, globalization has been beneficial to transnational organized crime. He argues that while globalization facilitates international trade and the exchange of goods, it also increases the difficulty of regulating other activities such the trade of illegal goods and of enforcing laws intended to stop them. In the same context, since the 1980s the global financial system has undergone widespread deregulation, which facilitates money laundering to hide the ill-gotten profits of organized crime. In other words, financial deregulation benefits criminal actors because it allows them to launder money through its placement, layering, and ultimately integration into the legitimate financial system. Moreover, the negative externalities of globalization may have contributed to expanding the ranks of organized crime. As Williams says:

In terms of sociological impacts, globalization has also brought about some negative effects [...]. The process of globalization generated not just winners, but also losers. Its disruptive effect, causing higher inequality and poverty for many across the globe, led some people into engaging in organized crime and criminal activities, mainly as the result of a lack of opportunities and an extreme unequal income distribution (Williams, 2012).

There has been also relevant discussion on the impact of technology and its relationship with global crime. Broude and Teichman (2008) argue that in taking advantage of globalization processes, TCOs also expanded their networks not only at regional levels but globally as well, drawing particular attention to technological developments. They state that:

illicit activities have flourished, as have legal international business transactions, due to technological advances in transportation and telecommunications that facilitate the freer movement of goods, services, money, and people. Just as there are direct links between technological progress and economic liberalization, the removal of barriers to the international trade of goods and the free flow of funds has also facilitated illicit cross-border trade (Broude and Teichman, 2008).

In other words, there is no reason to believe that these developments would exclusively benefit only legal activities and not become instruments for illegal transactions as well. Transnational networks now have access to state-of-the-art technologies for the transport of illicit drugs (planes, submarines, drones, etc.), and use complex cyber operations for money laundering and financial activities. The power of transnational crime has grown dramatically in recent years; based on available academic research, organized crime now accounts for perhaps as much as 15 percent of the world's GDP (Misha, 2009). Additionally, the transnational trade in illicit drugs also fuels organized crime and corruption across regions that are incorporated into transnational supply chains (Gomis, 2014).

ILLEGAL DRUG TRAFFIC ACROSS THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER

One of the major current challenges in U.S.-Mexico relations is the illegal trafficking of drugs and weapons across the border. This illicit trade has a significant impact on the economic, political, and social sectors of the two countries. The U.S. is the biggest consumer of illegal drugs than any other nation in the world and, as a result of sharing a border, demand is inextricably tied to Mexico (Liu and Taylor, 2012).

Criminal organizations have established binational coordinated structures. The 2018 National Drug Threat Assessment Summary published by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) states that TCOs pose the greatest threat to the United States in terms of illegal drug trafficking.

Mexican TCOs remain the greatest criminal drug threat to the United States; no other group is currently positioned to challenge them. The Sinaloa Cartel maintains the most expansive footprint in the United States, while Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generacion's (CJNG) domestic presence has significantly expanded in the past few years (DEA Strategic Intelligence Section, 2018: VI).

According to data from the U.S. Department of Justice, Mexican criminal groups control the supply and wholesale distribution of most of the illicit drugs in the United States and have a presence in more than 1,000 U.S. cities (Beittel, 2015). Such organizations are not only found in "traditional" places such as the border states of Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and California, but also in cities like Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia. In Boston, for example, local distribution groups are increasingly receiving cocaine directly from the Mexican cartels through their bases in the border states.

The DEA has confirmed that the most powerful Mexican cartels now have a presence in U.S. territory:

Sinaloa Cartel, CJNG, Juarez Cartel, Gulf Cartel, Los Zetas Cartel, and Beltran-Leyva Organization (BLO). Each of these TCOs maintains drug distribution cells in designated cities across the United States that either report directly to TCO leaders in Mexico or indirectly through intermediaries (DEA Strategic Intelligence Section, 2018: 97).

Perhaps because of its operational structure and logistical and financial capacity, the Sinaloa Cartel is considered the most active drug supplier. This organization is dominant in much of Mexico and has managed to spread its influence north of the border. Each of the previously mentioned TCOs has sought ways to penetrate the black market and gain more territory both domestically and abroad by making use of fear and violence (Beittel, 2015). In this struggle for influence, the CJNG has increasingly acquired power that allows it to challenge the Sinaloa Cartel for dominance over trafficking operations in Asia, Europe, Oceania, and especially the United States.

There are relevant points of entry of illicit drugs into the U.S., such as Tijuana–San Diego, Mexicali–Calexico, and Ciudad Juárez–El Paso (Liu and Taylor, 2012). Most cocaine enters the United States through its southwest border and is then transported and distributed by Mexican drug cartels, which have monopolized the transportation of drugs within the U.S. Likewise, the majority of the methamphetamines available in the U.S. is clandestinely produced in Mexico and smuggled across the southwest border (Liu and Taylor, 2012).

According to The 2018 National Drug Threat Assessment Summary published by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA):

Mexican TCOs will continue to produce and traffic high-purity, high-potency methamphetamine across the Southwest Border into the United States. Mexican TCOs will continue to adapt their production methods as restrictions are placed on precursors, or precursor chemicals become temporarily unavailable or cost-prohibitive (DEA Strategic Intelligence Section, 2018: 75).

Criminal organizations in the border region have become binational and, in some cases, multinational in nature. These groups first gain control over national-level neighborhoods in strategic areas, and then expand to transnational illegal activity. Through their ties to TCOs, both Mexican cartels and U.S. gangs distribute and move the drugs across the country, ensuring payment for and protection of the merchandise during the trip. Moreover, these links have allowed the highest-ranking members of Mexican TCOs to continue operating in the U.S. without detection by law enforcement.

Table 1 shows that drug trafficking in the U.S. does not have its origin only in Mexican criminal groups, many U.S. gangs participate directly in criminal activities with Mexican counterparts. The 2018 National Drug Threat Assessment Summary shows a list of connections between U.S. street gangs and Mexican cartels. These regional connections tend to grow and expand all over the U.S.

Table 1. Street Gang and Mexican Cartel Associations by State

STATE	DTO	GANG
Alaska	Sinaloa	Border brothers, Sureños, Vagos
Arizona	Sinaloa	Hells Angels, Mexican Mafia
Arkansas	Mexican Cartels	Gangster Disciples, OMGs
California	Sinaloa, Knights Templars, CJNG, Tijuana	Border brothers, Crips, Florencia 13, Sureños
Colorado	Sinaloa, Los Zetas	Aryan Empire, Crips, Sureños
Florida	Mexican Cartels	Norteños, Sons of Silence
Idaho	Sinaloa, Knights Templars	Hells Angels, Mongols
Iowa	Mexican Cartels	Black Gánster Diciples
Kansas	Mexican Cartels	Bloods, Latin kings
Maryland	Mexican Cartels	Nampa Northside, Norteños, Sureños
Michigan	Mexican Cartels	Bloods, Latinos (all sets), vice lords
Mississippi	Sinaloa, Gulf	Ganster Diciples, Sureños
Montana	Mexican Cartels	Crips, Rolling 60's Crips
New Hampshire	Mexican Cartels	Mexican Mafia
New jersey	Mexican Cartels	Hells Angels, Latin Kings, Bloods
New Mexico	Mexican Cartels	Bloods, Crips, Hells Angels, MS-13
New York	Mexican Cartels	Bandidos, Sindicato Nuevo Mexico
North Carolina	Mexican Cartels	Bloods, MS-13, Young Gunnerz
Oklahoma	Mexican Cartels	Aryan Brotherhood, Irish Mob
Oregon	Mexican Cartels	Indian Brotherhood
Tennessee	Sinaloa, Los Zetas	Aryan Brotherhood, Bloods, MS-13, OMGs,

		Gangster Disciples, Rolling 60's Crips
Texas	Gulf, Los Zetas	Bandidos, Barrio Azteca, HPL, La Linea, Mexicles, Orejon, Paisas, Sur-13, Tangos, Texas Mexican Mafia, Texas Sydicate
Utah	Mexican Cartels	Florencia 13, Norteños, Sureños, White Supremacists
Virginia	Mexican Cartels	Aryan Brotherhood, Bloods, Crips, Black Guerrilla Family, Gangster Disciples
Washington	La Familia, Sinaloa Cartels	Mexican Mafia, Norteños, Sureños, Peckerwoods
Washington DC	Sinaloa	Street Gangs
Wyoming	Mexican Cartels	MS-13, Pagans, Sons of Silence

Source: DEA Strategic Intelligence Section (2018), “2018 National Drug Threat Assessment Summary”, U.S. Department of Justice-Drug Enforcement Administration: <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2018/11/02/dea-releases-2018-national-drug-threat-assessment-0> p. 116.

The Congressional Research Service estimates that Mexico is the main supplier of cocaine and marijuana in the U.S. market. The DEA considers that:

Mexico remains the most significant foreign source for marijuana in the United States. Along the Southwest Border in CY 2017, U.S. Customs and Border Protection seized nearly 500,000 kilograms of marijuana in approximately 20,000 incidents. Far fewer quantities of marijuana are smuggled into the U.S. from Canada and the Caribbean (DEA Strategic Intelligence Section, 2018: 77).

In addition, trafficking organizations annually smuggle \$8.3 to \$24.9 billion in drug proceeds into Mexico for laundering purposes (Cook, 2007). The majority of cocaine smuggled into the U.S. is transported over the southwest border, with a smaller percentage transported through the Caribbean corridor. Mexican TCOs continue to dominate cocaine transportation in the U.S. with little to no competition (DEA Strategic Intelligence Section, 2015).

U.S.-MEXICO COOPERATION AND CHALLENGES

Due to the figures previously stated, the U.S. government believes that Mexican TCOs remain the greatest criminal drug threat to the United States, and that no other group can

challenge them in the near term (Beittel, 2015). The extensive, damaging activities of TCOs have led both the U.S. and Mexico to implement policies and bilateral initiatives to address the problem. The subject of transnational organized crime has long been part of the bilateral agenda shared between the two countries, particularly since the beginning of 2000. Perhaps the most important policy to fight transnational crime in the region is the Mérida Initiative (*Plan Mérida*), which was passed by the U.S. Congress in 2008. This initiative allowed the transfer of resources to Mexico and Central American countries with the objective of limiting the operation of criminal organizations.

As part of this program, the U.S. has provided Mexico with about \$1.6 billion in kind through the donation of aircraft and equipment, as well as the transfer of technology and training. These assets have been received in Mexico by the Ministry of National Defense, the Mexican Navy, the Federal Police, the Office of the General Prosecutor, the Tax Administration Service, and the National Institute of Migration. Among the goods provided are helicopters, surveillance aircraft, vehicles with scanners, and other inspection equipment, including trained dogs. In addition to these assets, the project covers police training and investigation programs, as well as the training of judicial officials to implement the 2008 reform — through which Mexico began the transition to the accusatory and oral criminal system — as well as the infrastructure required to launch this new judicial model (Cisneros, 2017).

In this context, the Mérida Initiative continued to produce results, notably the arrests of Sinaloa Cartel leader Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán¹ in 2014 and again in 2016, as well as his extradition to the United States in 2017 (Cisneros, 2017).

In addition, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has developed a strategic approach to dismantling TCOs and fighting violence generated in both countries. With the aim of undermining the Mexican drug cartels, the DOJ strategy is based on six key strategies and serves as a support for the *National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy*. These strategies are the following:

1. Enhance intelligence capabilities associated with the Southwest border.
2. Interdict drugs, drug proceeds, and associated instruments of violence at the ports of entry, between the ports of entry, and in the air and maritime domains along the Southwest border.
3. Ensure the prosecution of all significant drug trafficking, money laundering, bulk currency, and weapons smuggling/trafficking cases.
4. Disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations.
5. Enhance counterdrug technologies for drug detection and interdiction along the Southwest border.
6. Enhance U.S. – Mexico cooperation regarding joint counterdrug efforts” (National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy, 2009).

¹ Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzmán was finally found guilty of all 10 federal criminal counts against him, see Sánchez and Mogue, Mexican drug lord Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzmán is found guilty on all counts, CNN World, February 12, 2019. <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/02/12/us/el-chapo-guzman-trial-verdict/index.html>.

These strategies put particular efforts on sharing coordinated and extensive intelligence capabilities. Law enforcement agencies at the federal and local levels generate a large amount of information that is helpful for U.S. operations. In addition, the agencies seek to support Mexican authorities in their efforts to combat the cartels and internal corruption. Second, the strategy mandates that intelligence and prosecution agencies focus all their efforts, resources, and local and international capacities on investigation, extradition, prosecution, and punishment of key cartel leaders. The ultimate goals of these operations are to neutralize the cartels and bring criminals to justice (Breuer, Hoover and Placido, 2009).

Another relevant regional policy of the U.S. DEA in cooperation with Mexican and Canadian authorities was implemented in 2009. “Operation Xcellerator” specifically targeted the Sinaloa Cartel. The DOJ reported that 750 detained individuals were charged with multiple crimes, which included engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise, violating felony provisions of the Controlled Substances Act, conspiracy to import controlled substances and money laundering. (Randall, 2009). This operation has been one of the most successful and coordinated actions in the history of fighting TCOs in the region.

LOGISTICS, OPERATIONS, AND ROUTES ACROSS THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER

Mexican TCOs have set efficient bilateral connections in most of the U.S. territory. Criminal groups have coordinated with U.S. counterparts to work as multinational organizations. (DEA Strategic Intelligence Section, 2015).

TCOs’ operations have turned into sophisticated supply chains. Individuals who transport drug loads work independently and provide their services to various drug cartels. The lack of interconnection between the different links in the chain is useful to criminal organizations; since operators are insulated from one another.

The 2018 National Drug Threat Assessment Summary published by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) states that:

Mexican TCOs dominate cocaine transportation throughout the United States, but rely on local criminal groups for retail level distribution (...) Mexican and Colombian TCOs work to actively minimize their involvement with U.S. law enforcement and therefore primarily try to limit their roles to whole sale level transportation (DEA Strategic Intelligence Section, 2018: 55).

Drugs are occasionally trafficked through subterranean tunnels connected to a network of safe houses on both sides of the border (DEA Strategic Intelligence Section, 2015). Additionally, there is new evidence of the use of submarines and drones to transport illicit drugs across the border (Millward, 2017) and (Bender, 2017).

TCOs have evolved into multinational corporations that look to maximize profits and sales and expand beyond their borders. In this context, the increase in drug trafficking has led to the expansion of the routes through various territories across different regions.

In 2017, “Mexico emerged as the primary destination for cocaine documented departing South America mostly due to cocaine movements aboard noncommercial maritime vessels in the Eastern Pacific” (DEA Strategic Intelligence Section, 2018: 50-51). Mexican TCO’s have displaced cartels from other countries (mainly Colombian) but it has been observed also that there is a new trend of cooperation between Mexican, Colombian and Central

American TCO's. "Mexico constitutes a critical component in the overall Latin American drug trade" (Chalk, 2016).

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: APPROACHES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

There is currently a debate over the different approaches of the international fight against TCOs. One approach is the official view of the U.N., based mainly on the 2000 U.N. Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The convention established the legal framework for understanding the threat and fostering international cooperation to address problems related to money laundering; corruption; illicit trafficking in substances, weapons and people; terrorism; and organized crime across national borders (United Nations, 2004). It defines terms such as "organized criminal group" and "serious crime" and states that, as criminal organizations have used the globalization process to achieve their goals, the international community can and must exploit global resources to defend human rights and defeat the forces of crime, corruption, and trafficking of human beings (United Nations, 2004). To accomplish this, the convention includes protocols related to the trafficking of persons (especially women and children); the smuggling of migrants by land, sea, and air; and the illegal manufacturing and trafficking of firearms. "According to estimates by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the global illicit drugs market has an annual value of \$320 billion, making it the third largest market in the world after oil and arms," as cited by Benoît Gomis (Gomis, 2014).

A briefing paper published by Chatham House in 2014 makes some observations about the illegal drug trade that are worth mentioning. First, the paper argues that the global drug trade has been a persistent problem for several decades. It states that although an international drug control system has been built based on a number of U.N. conventions and documents, it still "revolves primarily around the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotics Drugs, which was complemented by the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances and the 1988 Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances" (Gomis, 2014). Thus, the U.N. conventions have been the main source for the establishment of the drug control system; as a result, measures have focused on reducing the size of the illegal drug market with the unrealistic aim of creating a drug-free world (Gomis, 2014).

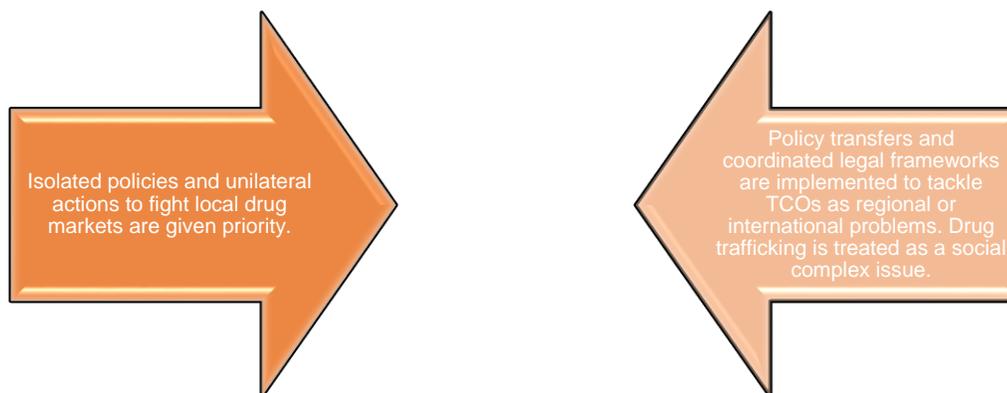
As the demand highly increases is even more difficult to control the operations of TCO's due to the growing profitability of these criminal activities. Another negative effect of these policies is related to human rights. TCOs have also and impact in failed states or regions, for example, some regions in Mexico such as Tamaulipas, Guerrero, Sinaloa, etc. or countries like Guatemala, Honduras, etc. are some cases of extreme violence and lack of governmental authority to face the growing economic power of TCOs. Failed states are a result of TCO activities and inefficient government policies (and in Mexico's case, failed allocation of public goods, or corruption).

Paradoxically, increasing cross-border global trade flows, pushing economic liberalization, implementing reforms, and weakening the power of the nation-state have all facilitated opportunities for transnational organized crime. Such elements of globalization provide opportunities to TCOs to flourish and expand (Hanna, 2016).

A relevant concept for this discussion is the so-called policy transfer, which is defined as "the process by which knowledge about how policies, administrative arrangements,

institutions, and ideas in one political setting is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political setting.” (Hanna, 2016). In this context, TCOs can be approached from two perspectives (Figure 1):

Figure 1. Approaches to Transnational Crime



Source: Based on information from (Hanna, 2016) *Transnational Crime & Criminal Justice*, 2016.

Particular problems have arisen from the lack of coordination of legal frameworks within various countries and regions. For instance, marijuana trafficking presents a challenge for state and federal laws in the United States, since marijuana remains illegal under federal law. However, numerous states have passed legislation approving the cultivation, possession, and use of marijuana within their respective borders. The disparity between federal laws that prohibit the use of “medical” or “recreational” marijuana and state laws that authorize it poses a challenge for federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement efforts, given the different legal frameworks at the state level. Additionally, the fact that most of the marijuana that is trafficked into the United States comes from Mexico makes the problem more complex, due to the differences in the legal frameworks in both countries (DEA Strategic Intelligence Section, 2015).

The international drug control system has been ineffective in reducing the overall demand, trafficking, production, and price of drugs, and therefore the size of the global market. The global demand for drugs not only persists but has also evolved (Gomis, 2014). In Mexico alone, drug-related violence during the administration of Felipe Calderón (2006–2012) reached more than 60,000 deaths. During the two first years of the Peña Nieto administration (2013–2014), there were 20,000 more victims recorded (Ribando and Finklea, 2016). In total, it is estimated that from 2006 through 2015, more than 80,000 organized crime-related killings have taken place in Mexico (Beittel, 2015). Transnational crime demands global justice, a term used to refer to “measures taken to redress harm and rebuild communities following violence and conflict, and it can include criminal prosecutions via international or domestic courts” (Beittel, 2015).

Law enforcement reports in the U.S. indicate that American and Mexican gang relationships are opportunistic in nature and set temporary or permanent criminal activities according to their interest. Many gangs rely on Mexican TCOs as their primary source of supply for drugs, and Mexican organizations depend on U.S. street-level gangs — many of which already have a customer base — for drug distribution. As mentioned before, this arrangement allows the highest-ranking members of Mexican cartels to remain in Mexico where they can avoid U.S. law enforcement (DEA Strategic Intelligence Section, 2015).

There is another view regarding the fight against TCOs, both regionally and globally. In a research made by Harvard, for instance, the authors recommend in a policy report that in addition to attacking the impunity of the cartels locally, the Mexican government must work to build strong communities in which people have a wide set of options for earning a living. The Mexican government should also work to subsidize education, as well as support initiatives aimed at keeping Mexican youth in school and increasing the education level of the average Mexican citizen (Liu and Taylor, 2012).

Approaches of controlling drug trafficking should also take into consideration social variables that enhance the problem. For instance, low wages and poor labor conditions make preconditions for young people to enter the criminal networks. The same is true, more generally, among the less advantaged in society, who often lack employment and thereby the means to cover the basic needs of their families. Addressing these social issues is a key element in stopping people from engaging in illicit activities where criminal actors are willing to provide employment, protection, and other social services. Bodies such as the International Narcotics Control Board and UNODC are now recognizing that the past focus on supply-side issues in relation to illicit drugs has not worked (Liu and Taylor, 2012).

Governments have paid attention to the supply side while somehow neglecting the origins of the demand. Most resources are focused on law enforcement and measures to disrupt trafficking illicit goods and services. Nations should also prevent crime through a focus on social public policies.

Additionally, differences in national approaches to TCOs can be an obstacle to combatting transnational crime effectively. Nations should adopt a far-reaching strategy of institutionalized cooperation to tackle global crime (Jojarth, 2009).

Fighting corruption at different levels of Mexican government is also a basic requirement to achieve results in the short, medium, and long term. This in turn implies more effective mechanisms that enable greater transparency and participation by society. A precondition to control drug trafficking and criminal related activities is to eradicate corruption from the local and national governments, additionally; more efficient and better-paid law enforcement bodies will also strength the fight against TCOs.

Another policy recommendation focuses on social development in Mexico, since the building of stronger communities in which individuals have opportunities for education and job growth represents a key element in battling cartels. In consequence, this context would enable the creation of a system of self-governance, with more participation from the civil society in issues concerning education and employment (Liu and Taylor, 2012). The growing problem of transnational organized crime networks has prompted countries to cooperate in joint approaches to tackle the issue. However, these mechanisms are not enough and new

reforms are needed to face the new challenges of globalized crime. States themselves need to reformulate their institutions and develop more efficient bilateral strategies to fight TCOs.

FINAL REMARKS

Globalization has brought about the need to reform the way in which institutions are structured and how they operate in different contexts. International cooperation among domestic institutions is no longer sufficient to face international challenges such as global crime. New institutional structures involving participation from states and non-state actors will be required to overcome global problems.

As Gomis states, “Current drug policies have been counter-productive, often causing more harm than the drugs themselves through capital punishment for offences, widespread incarceration, discrimination in law enforcement, violation of basic human rights” (Gomis, 2014).

States face enormous challenges due to global crime but current institutions and legal systems sometimes work either in isolation and/or at the national level. These weaknesses are used by TCOs, which freely exploit the loopholes and imperfections of state-based legal systems to extend their reach (Shelley, 2006).

Globalization processes have not only provided opportunities for the worldwide expansion of legal businesses, but for illegal businesses as well. Traditional mechanisms to control organized crime on a global scale are not enough. Nation-states must now look for new and improved ways of combatting illegal businesses, much as they seek new and innovative ways to regulate multinational corporations (Fulvio, 1997).

Globalization calls for nations to set common legal principles in order to fight crime. States need to develop new alternatives of regional and global coordination. Bilateral coordination to harmonize some aspects of national legislations is one of the main challenges in the fight against transnational organized crime within the context of globalization.

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