RE-EXAMINING THE CRIME-TERROR CONTINUUM: UNDERSTANDING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN CRIMINALS AND TERRORISTS

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ABSTRACT

MEGAN WARSHAWSKY: Re-Examining the Crime-Terror Continuum: Understanding the Interplay Between Criminals and Terrorists
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This thesis will examine the interplay between organized criminal networks and terrorist organizations. Increasingly since the end of the Cold War, these groups, previously thought to be incompatible with each other, have begun to work together to achieve their missions. As Tamara Makarenko demonstrated with her 2004 crime-terror continuum, there is significant variation in the level of cooperation between criminals and terrorists. This thesis will further explore their relationship in an effort to understand the ways they work together. The case studies of al-Qaeda, Mexican drug cartels, the Albanian Mafia, and the FARC will be utilized as examples of the varying levels of cooperation between criminals and terrorists. By studying these examples, one can see that the relationship in question has evolved over time and not only has a new continuum been created, but that there are implications for governments seeking to combat crime and terror.
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I. INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War brought with it a new phenomenon in the relationship between organized crime and terrorism. Two groups that were traditionally kept separate from each other began to cooperate to achieve their goals. Continuing into the present day, this relationship has grown and become more solidified. To explore this relationship, Tamara Makarenko, in 2004, proposed a crime-terror continuum. She set forth different levels of cooperation between the groups, ranging from simple alliances through to convergence of methods and tactics within one group. This thesis will examine the validity of Makarenko’s continuum through the use of case studies, focusing on the convergence phenomenon. First, the examples of the FARC in Colombia and Albanian mafias will give examples of convergent hybrid groups. Then, it will examine the behavior of Mexican cocaine cartels and al-Qaeda as examples of groups that regularly move along the continuum, changing their behaviors to fit their needs. By studying these four groups, it will become clear that Makarenko’s original classifications are still relevant but her representation of these classifications on a continuum may not be dimensional enough to truly portray the relationship between crime and terror. To address this limitation, a new diagram will be proposed to better explain the crime-terror nexus. Finally, there will be a brief discussion on what governments can do to combat both crime and terrorism.
II. AN OVERVIEW OF THE CRIME-TError NEXUS

There is a lot of literature that credits the end of the Cold War with sparking the relationship between crime and terror. One must question, however, what specifically caused to the two groups that, at first glance, should be diametrically opposed to cooperation to work together. This time period is recognized as the end of state-sponsored terrorism, forcing terrorist groups to seek out other forms of financing. One way in which they did this was to turn to organized crime groups. They adopted their methods, worked together and shared funds, or in some cases, terrorist organizations extorted money from criminal groups through the imposition of “revolutionary taxation (Bovenkerk and Chakra, 2007, pg. 33).” Thus, the crime-terror nexus was created. Similarly, more stringent legislation and enforcement regarding organized criminal activity upset criminal operations and forced groups to take action against governments. Another side effect of the end of the Cold War was the creation of several weak or failing states that criminals and terrorists alike could manipulate into becoming a safe haven for their operations. Other scholars cite globalization as the spark that began the cooperation between the two. That is, by removing the borders that traditionally contained terrorists and criminals to any one area, they are more likely to move around and are, as a result, more likely to cross paths with each other. Further, they both operate in the secrecy of the underworld of legitimate society. They use the same infrastructure and the same tactics to achieve their goals. By virtue of existing the same space, they are likely to cooperate. Adding to this, the creation of emigrant and refugee communities around the world has
resulted in places that can simultaneously be used as recruitment bases and hiding places for illegal raised money (Bovenkerk and Chakra, 2007). Another explanation is their common enemy - the state. More specifically, both groups have interests in disrupting law enforcement. This shared enemy could result in cooperation. By partnering with terrorists or adopting terrorist tactics, organized criminals can disrupt the governance of the host country and destabilize the political structure, thus limiting their opportunities for international cooperation, as well as interrupt law enforcement capabilities (Shelley, 1999). Beginning as a series of partnerships and alliances, criminals and terrorists slowly converged in methods and motives and adopted the characteristics of one another.

To be certain, the post-Cold War environment has resulted in increased cooperation between the two elements as well as an increased interest and study in the phenomenon. Furthermore, on September 28, 2001, following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the United Nations Security Council adopted a wide ranging resolution against terrorism, including language regarding the concern for the “close connection between international terrorism and traditional organized crime (as quoted in Bovenkerk and Chakra, 2007, pg. 30).” It is clear that there is not only an ever-deepening connection between the groups, but also a widening concern regarding the combined capabilities of the groups.

In her 2004 article on the evolving partnership between organized crime and terrorism, Tamara Makarenko created the crime-terror continuum, diagramming the varying levels of cooperation between these two groups. On either end of the spectrum are organized crime and terrorism. At these two points, a group is distinctly one or other - a classification one would be hard pressed to find today. The next stop along the
continuum is temporary alliances between organized crime groups and terrorist organizations. These alliances vary in nature and can be one-off, short-term, or long-term. There are also a variety of reasons for these alliances, including, but not limited to, the pursuit of expert knowledge regarding topics such as money-laundering and bomb making, and operational support commonly evidenced by sharing of smuggling routes. Examples of alliances between criminal and terrorist organizations are plenty. For example, to facilitate safe travel throughout Europe, al-Qaeda has turned to the Italian mafias. One way in which their alliance has manifested is through the use of safe houses belonging to the Neopolitan Camorra by al-Qaeda operatives. The Camorra also provided falsified travel documents to help the terrorist organization move throughout Europe (Pontoniere, 2005). Al-Qaeda has also been linked to Bosnian criminal organizations to transport heroin from Afghanistan into Europe (Makarenko, 2004). The next step along Makarenko’s crime-terror continuum is the adoption of tactics. In this phases, rather than outsourcing to another group, a terrorist organization actually employs the methodologies of criminals themselves and vice versa. As the 1990s progressed, the adoption of strategies became increasingly common. Crime and terror groups sought to “mutate their own structure and organization to take on a non-traditional, financial, or political role, rather than cooperate with groups who are already effective in those activities (Dishman, 2001, pg. 48).” What differentiates these groups from the next stage, convergence, is that they still very clearly identify with their original motivations, either political change or financial gain through criminal methods. For terrorists, the most commonly borrowed criminal tactic is drug trafficking for the purpose of raising funds, as can be seen by ETA’s forays into the illicit narcotics industry (Makarenko, 2003). Beyond drug
trafficking, terrorists have been known to adopt other forms of crime. For example, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have been known to engage in human smuggling and al-Qaeda extensively uses credit card fraud throughout Europe (Makarenko, 2003). Conversely, organized criminal groups have also been known to temporarily adopt terrorist tactics. Consider the Italian Mafias. It cannot be argued that their motives have ever significantly strayed from financial to political for extended periods of time. However, in the 1990s, the Italian Mafia used terrorist tactics, such as bombings, in response to the Italian government’s Anti-Mafia Commission. These bombings were meant to “subvert anti-mafia actions and legislative moves… and send a message to the ‘powers-that-be (Gorka, 2000).’” These acts were certainly political in nature. Furthermore, the mafia has made forays into politics through its clientelistic practices and by putting members into political offices. However, the motives for this behavior are still predominately monetary gain and furtherance of the criminal mission. The final point along the crime-terror continuum is convergence. At this stage, criminal and terror organizations “could converge into a single entity that initially displays characteristics of both groups simultaneously; but has the potential to transform itself into an entity situated at the opposite end of the continuum from which it began (Makarenko, 2004, pg. 135).” In this stage, the group’s aims and motives have changed to such an extent that they can no longer be classified the same way. Makarenko (2003, 2004) identifies three types of convergence: political crime, commercial terrorism, and the “black hole.” Groups classified as “political crime” are criminal groups displaying political motivations. Conversely, “commercial terrorism” occurs when terrorists who are equally interested in gaining profits by criminal means. These groups will continue to purport their original
political motivations for the sake of sustaining a support base, but their operations will largely reflect a desire to make money. At the very center of the crime-terror continuum is what Makarenko calls the “black hole.” This point represents a failed state situation, where political conflict is perpetuated for the sake of making money. States in the “black hole” have been taken over by a criminal or terrorist group with a financial interest in maintaining political chaos. States that may fall into this category include Afghanistan, Angola, Sierra Leone, and Tajikistan (Makarenko, 2004). The convergence phenomenon is increasingly relevant to the contemporary political landscape. It is becoming increasingly common for groups to balance both political and financial motives. As a result, the way governments choose to pursue criminal and terrorist organizations will need to be adapted to maximize effectiveness and efficiency.

(SEE APPENDIX A)

Early literature on the crime-terror partnership argued that long-term alliances moving toward the eventual convergence of crime and terror was not possible due to irreconcilable differences in the founding motives. Dishman (2001) argued that in spite of working together to accomplish short-term objectives, criminals and terrorists are incapable of overcoming their fundamental difference in objectives. Criminals are profit-driven and any action they take is done so to protect their financial assets; conversely, terrorists seek fundamental political change. The groups may enter short-term partnerships in furtherance of these goals, but the differences in objectives are so fundamental that they cannot be overcome. When the entire driving premise of an
organization is either financial gain or political change, it is not possible to change this in order to allow room for another goal. However, the post-9/11 global political landscape has shown that convergence is not only possible, but it is becoming increasingly common and necessary. Political criminals and commercial terrorists are indeed possible because, in convergence, the group is not abandoning their founding principle. Rather, they are adopting a secondary goal with significant driving power that is critical to their survival.

With changing legislation and stricter enforcement of laws, organized crime groups can no longer survive unless they involve themselves in politics. Similarly, terrorists no longer receive funding from the state and money-laundering laws make posing as charities increasingly difficult. Instead, they are forced to adopt criminal measures. Existence exclusively as an organized crime group or terrorist organization in the traditional sense is no longer possible. Furthermore, there are certain similarities between the groups that does allow for cooperation, despite their fundamental differences. Both criminal and terrorist organizations: are traditionally rational actors (modern terrorist organizations, namely al-Qaeda and other radical Islamic groups, may not fit with this characteristic, as evidenced by their unrealistic political goals and use of irrational behaviors such as suicide attacks), use extreme violence with the threat of reprisals, use kidnappings, assignations, and extortion, operate secretly, defy the state and the rule of law, have fairly permanent memberships (that is, for a member to leave is rare and often fatal), present an asymmetrical threat to national security, have interchangeable recruitment tools, and are highly adaptive and resilient (Sanderson, 2004). It is clear that despite their key differences in motivation, there are enough similarities to allow for cooperation.
III. DEFINITIONS

Before examination of the case studies can begin, it would be helpful to establish definitions of what terrorism and organized crime are. This will help in the classification of the groups used for the case studies.

The definition of terrorism often varies based on the audience and situation. As a result, securing a definition that is universally accepted and applicable is a challenge that has not yet been overcome. That is not to say, however, that classifying actions as an act of terrorism has been a challenge. For example, the United Nations, despite years of discussion and negotiations, has struggled to produce an agreeable definition of terrorism and, as a result, has been unable to issue a treaty or convention on the prevention of terrorism. Rather, politicians and legal scholars have no problem declaring something a terrorist incident. Despite this, some sort of working definition of terrorism is necessary in a discussion on the subject. Without a global consensus on what constitutes terrorism, international action cannot be taken to further efforts of prevention. Furthermore, for this particular discussion, parameters around which to classify terrorism is crucial for determining what can be called terrorism as opposed to what is simply crime. A clear delineation will make the construction of a crime-terror nexus simpler. In its most basic form, terrorism can be defined as “violence or threatened violence intended to produce fear or change (Simonsen and Spindlove, 2004, p. 6).” This definition is directed toward groups operating outside of the control of a state, not groups operating as official state-sponsored organizations that could be considered to employ terrorist-like practices.
However, a complete definition must also include a mention of political motivations, as this is the most commonly cited differentiation between terrorism and criminal violence. To address this, the definition given by Harmonie Toros in a 2008 article presents a more complete picture. In giving her definition, she compared and analyzed the many variations of the definition of terrorism and was able to extract three common, decisive characteristics: “(1) a violent means (2) aimed at triggering political change (3) by affecting a larger audience than its immediate target (Toros, 2008, p. 409).” This definition is useful because it pulls together an overview of the existing literature and simplifies it down to the core elements. Further, it would be difficult to argue that any of these three characteristics did not belong in a definition of terrorism. It can also be applied to the civil war and conflict situations that are characteristic of Makarenko’s black hole scenario. This definition will be used to classify groups as terrorist organizations.

Organized crime is also difficult to define. It also carries the added challenge of being conceptually tied to the widely varying laws of countries; that is, what is criminal in some places may be acceptable in others and can carry varying levels of severity. Consider the example of money laundering. This practice is so difficult to track and prevent because of the laws on banking and finance vary so widely from country to country. Similarly, the legal parameters that define organized crime vary across borders. The UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime sets forth an internationally accepted definition of organized crime. It states that an “organized crime group shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established
in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial
or other material benefit.” The FBI defines organized crime as “any group having some
manner of a formalized structure and whose primary objective is to maintain their
position through the use of actual or threatened violence, corrupt public officials, graft, or
extortion, and generally have a significant impact on the people in their locales, region, or
the country as a whole.” In addition to these definitions, Abadinsky offers eight
characteristics of organized crime groups: 1) have no political goals; 2) are hierarchical;
3) have a limited or exclusive membership; 4) constitute a unique subculture; 5)
perpetuate themselves; 6) exhibit a willingness to use illegal violence; 7) are
monopolistic; 8) are governed by explicit rules and regulations (Abadinsky, 2010, pg. 3).
IV. CASE STUDIES

Al-Qaeda

As a group, al-Qaeda presents an interesting case study into the fluidity of the crime-terror continuum. On this phenomenon, Makarenko (2003) writes:

The CTC is referred to as a continuum precisely because it may be used to trace, past, current and the potential future evolution of organized crime and/or terrorism. It also alludes to the fact that a single group can slide up and down the scale depending on the environment in which it operates (emphasis added, pg. 163).

In making this remark, Makarenko comments on the necessity of adaptability for survival. It is clear that groups must be able to change their mission to fit the environments in which they find themselves operating.

Beginning at the far end of the spectrum, al-Qaeda is undeniably a terrorist organization. From inception, their motive has been to impose sharia law around the world. With origins tracing back to 1987, the al-Qaeda network was formed by Abdullah Azzam for the purpose of forming al-qaeda al-sulbah- “a vanguard of the strong (Burke, 2004, pg. 18).” Azzam envisioned a network of Muslim activists, acting independently to set the example for the Muslim world and to empower the believers against their oppressors. The network gained formal recognition as a terrorist organization in 1998 during an investigation by the FBI into the U.S. Embassy bombings in East Africa. For a period of time following this incident, bin Laden and his partners were able to create a loose structure for the organization, linking together different Islamic militant groups,
and acting in unison toward a common goal. Though the goal of imposing a worldwide
system of law may not have been the most rational, they operated, for the most part, as a
rational being in terms of structure and leadership. Today, however, this structure has
been destroyed and the organization has once again taken on the appearance of a loose
knit coalition of radicals working toward a common goal. Rather than operating as a
terrorist organization in the traditional sense, the al-Qaeda worldview, “sustained by anti-
Western, anti-Zionist, and anti-Semitic rhetoric,” continues to drive operatives to act in
furtherance of their common goal (Burke, 2004, pg. 18). Sulaiman Abu Ghaith,
considered to be an official al-Qaeda spokesman, confirmed this common goal when he
posted the following on an official al-Qaeda website:

> How can [he] possibly [accept humiliation and inferiority] when he knows that
> the [divine] rule is that the entire earth must be subject to the religion of Allah-
> not to the East, not to the West- to no ideology and to no path except for the path
> of Allah? (as quoted in Williams, 2005, pg. 17)

The al-Qaeda organization has pursued many strategies and tactics to achieve this goal.
The most notable of which is the plane hijackings and attacks on the World Trade Center
on September 11, 2001. Other attacks that the group has taken credit for include, but are
not limited to, the 2000 USS Cole bombing, 2002 Bali bombings, 2005 London transport
bombings, and the 2008 Islamabad Marriott hotel bombings.

In order to further their mission, al-Qaeda has also been known to pursue alliances
with organized crime groups. The reasons for this are varied and have taken on differing
levels of involvement based on the needs of the group at the time. At merely the
transactional level, the organization’s desire for weapons of mass destruction have led to
repeated contact with various criminal groups. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s,
Osama bin Laden, acting as the leader of al-Qaeda, pursued several leads in order to
obtain materials to build nuclear weapons, including cooperating with Chechens, Ukrainian arms dealer Semion Mogilevich, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Bulgarian businessman Ivan Ivanov, and the Russian Mafia (McCloud, Ackerman, and Bale, 2005 and Williams, 2005). Al-Qaeda’s alliances with organized crime also move beyond the weapons trade. In Europe, al-Qaeda extensively relies on partnerships with the Italian mafia to continue operating under the radar of law enforcement. Italian media has revealed that AQIM send operatives throughout Europe using a network of safe houses set up and run by the Neapolitan Camorra in exchange for large amounts of narcotics. The Camorra reportedly also provide forged documents and weapons for AQIM operatives (Pontoniere, 2005). Another example of al-Qaeda’s alliances with organized crime can be seen in their presence in the Balkan region. Evidence suggests that they have cooperated with the Albanian mafia and other organized crime groups in Eastern Europe to establish training camps, to utilize trafficking routes, and to infiltrate Western Europe. Furthermore, building projects in Albania have been identified as money laundering fronts for al-Qaeda. (Wilson Center). Connections have also been made between al-Qaeda and Mexican cartels, both in the drug trade and as a way for terrorist operatives to find their way into the United States (Ehrenfeld, 2011).

Specifically within Africa, al-Qaeda’s alliance with organized crime has had the opportunity to become even more developed thanks to the poor governance and weak rule of law that has become systemic in the region. As evidenced by Mali, al-Qaeda’s relationship with organized crime has become so strongly developed that the terrorist group is beginning to take a tangible hold and seize control in parts of the region. In fact, Northern Mali has come to represent the world’s largest al-Qaeda controlled territory
Drug traffickers throughout West Africa have used the funds raised from the narcotics trade to support the al-Qaeda mission. Research groups are reporting that traffickers have aligned themselves with AQIM, using their profits to purchase weapons and fund radical activities. More specifically, a 2012 report by the African Center for Strategic Studies reports that AQIM has partially funded their activities in Mali through “profits from drug and cigarette trafficking and hostage ransoms (UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2013).” The relationship between drug traffickers and AQIM has been traced to a meeting between Colombian drug lords and members of AQIM in Guinea-Bissau, suggests a 2010 report from Sahel Intelligence (loc. cit.).

Al-Qaeda’s alliances with drug traffickers in Africa is just part of the organization’s involvement in the drug trade. In Afghanistan, the group has also been known to play a more active role in heroin trafficking. This practice represents a shift from forming alliances to adoption of operational practices, a move closer to convergence on the crime-terror continuum. Furthermore, the drug trade represents more than a source of funding for the group; rather, despite the fact that drug use is contrary to the practice of Islam, the terrorist organization has used drug trafficking as a weapon in their war against the West. A defense official for the US told the Washington Times “bin Laden does not mind trafficking in drugs, even though it’s against the teaching of Islam, because it’s being used to kill Westerners (as quoted in Gartenstein-Ross and Dabruzzi, 2007).” In the case of Afghanistan, al-Qaeda has been known to play a large role in regulating the growing and distribution of heroin. In cooperation with the Taliban, al-Qaeda has taxed poppy growers and distributors of opium base, as well as provided security for the crops. Furthermore, DEA sources have suggested that following the toppling of the Taliban, al-
Qaeda gave large sums of money to Afghan farmers to increase their production (Ehrenfeld, 2005). Moving beyond the drug trade, al-Qaeda has also turned to the abduction of foreign nationals to make money. This shift in modus operandi was seen in 2003, when Algerian terrorist leader Abdul-Razzaq al-Para kidnapped a group of over 30 European tourists in the Algerian Sahara. In order to secure the release of the tourists, Germany agreed to pay $5 million. This set a pattern for abductions as a money making venture and has generated millions of dollars of profit for the group (al-Shafey, 2011).

The group is doing more than just trafficking drugs for the sake of raising money. Recent behavior may suggest that they are temporarily shelving their political aims for the sake of preservation of the group. Following the assignation of Osama bin Laden, coupled with the elimination of several other key leaders, it could be said that the group is severely weakened. It would seem that their recent activity suggests an interest in self-preservation, rather than an active pursuit of their political agenda. This might begin to suggest convergence. For some off-shoots of al-Qaeda, such as Abu Sayyaf, the convergence hypothesis is becoming more and more of a reality as the group strays further into criminal activity (Bergen, 2013).

**Mexican Cartels**

Whereas al-Qaeda is a terrorist organization that displays adaptability based on the circumstances of operation, Mexican drug cartels have come to represent organized crime groups that are equally adaptable. To be certain, Mexican drug cartels have found themselves operating at many points along the crime-terror continuum, relying on alliances and adoption of operational tactics to stay in business. These groups have come
to represent the epitome of “narco-terrorism.” They are a financially driven terrorist organization that will stop at nothing to protect their profits.

The prominence of Mexican cartels arose out of the crackdown of law enforcement onto South American cartels, namely Colombian cocaine cartels. Once the Colombian Medellin and Cali cartels were for the most part eliminated by the War on Drugs in the 1990s, Mexican cartels stepped into fill the void they left behind. Mexican drug cartels are definitively profit-motivated. The primary objective in all action is to protect the drug trade and protect their profits. The cartels recognized as dominating the market include: the Sinaloa Cartel, the Gulf Cartel, Los Zetas, the Juarez Cartel, the Tijuana Cartel, and Beltran Leyva (Hossain and G.V., 2011). The groups exist in fierce competition with each other, each trying to secure the largest portion of the market. The majority of their drugs- namely marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin- are exported to the United States, however Mexican cocaine is more and more moving toward Europe- a market traditionally dominated by Colombian cartels (Keefe, 2012).

Since the early days of business, Mexican cartels allied themselves with the Colombian FARC. Colombian defense officials have reported that the Mexican cartels, filling the voids for the predominately defunct Colombian cartels, are purchasing their cocaine from the FARC (Associated Press, 2008). As they have become more established in the drug trafficking industry, Mexican cartels have begun working with other organized crime groups in Europe to expand their market. Ties have been made between Mexican drug cartels and the Italian Mafia to supply cocaine to Europe. Specifically, Mexican cartels have been cooperating with the Sicilian mafia to import cocaine through the port of
Palermo (O’Reilly, 2012). Ties have also been established between the cartels and the ‘Ndrangheta and the Cosa Nostra in order to supply Europe with cocaine. Mexican cartels have also been known to cooperate with criminal groups in Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, and Nigeria, using these countries as transit points for their product (O’Reilly, 2012). Mexican cartel alliances are not purely criminal, though. As previously mentioned, al-Qaeda has teamed up with the Mexican cartels to gain entry into the United States. Furthermore, Hezbollah has been linked to the Mexican cartels, best explained by the large Lebanese diaspora in Latin America (US House Committee on Homeland Security Report, 2012). This alliance goes beyond drug trafficking to include human smuggling and arms trafficking aimed at furthering the missions of Islamic terrorist organizations. Furthermore, Middle Eastern Islamic terrorist organizations, like Hezbollah and al-Qaeda, are expressing growing interests in aligning with Mexican cartels because of the access it would afford into the United States for future attacks (loc. cit.).

Mexican drug cartels have also made forays into what could be considered terrorist activity, bringing them closer to the middle of the crime-terror continuum and closer to convergence. The outbreak of violence has been traced to 2006, when gunmen threw five human heads onto the dance floor of a nightclub, then left a scrawled message announcing the arrival of a new cartel. Over the course of ten days in May 2012, 81 beheaded bodies were found in Mexico, no doubt meant to serve as a message asserting the dominance and power of the drug cartels (Grant, 2012b). The criminal network Los Zetas has since come to represent the use of violence as a terror tactic to achieve their pecuniary goals and, in some cases, to sway politicians and law enforcers in their favor,
followed in recognition by the Sinaloa and Gulf Cartels. Beheadings and other gruesome murders serve a dual purpose for the cartels. On the one hand, it sends a message to rival groups, asserting their own dominance over a territory. On the other hand, it sends a message to politicians. The timing of the increase in violence cannot be ignored. It was not a coincidence that the 81 bodies previously mentioned were found just six weeks before a presidential election where every candidate said they would not be negotiating with the cartels (Grant, 2012b.) Rather, the bodies were meant to reassert the dominance and power of the drug cartels. Furthermore, they also serve to strike fear among ordinary people. Gonzalez Ruiz, a former State Attorney on Organized Crime in Mexico said of the cartel violence:

"The message is clear: we have no mercy, and we will do whatever it takes to control our territory," … Mr Gonzalez Ruiz uses a word the government has been loathe to use in association with the country's drug violence: terrorism. "You can only call this strategy (of beheading the victims) a terrorist's strategy. It's terrorism because it sends a threat to the population: 'if you don't allow us to control our illegal business, we will do the same to you' (as quoted in Grant, 2012b)."

To put the seriousness of Mexican cartel violence and drug activity into perspective, sources have claimed that following the assignation of Osama bin Laden, Joaquin Guzman, also known as El Chapo and recognized as the leader of the Sinaloa drug cartel, became the most wanted man in the world (Grant, 2012a). Another terrorist tactic utilized by the cartels includes political assignations. For example, the Sinaloa cartel has been credited with the 2009 assignation of General Julian Aristides Gonzalez, a senior counter-narcotics officer for Honduras (Burton, 2010). This act can definitely be seen as terrorist in nature, given its clearly political overtones. By seeking out government officials who attempt to limit cartel drug activity and by attempting to influence policy, the cartels are creating political goals and taking action to achieve them. Their political involvement,
however, is limited to what is necessary to defend their drug trade. That is what keeps them from crossing the spectrum to be classified as terrorists. They never abandon their financial motivations, and any attempts to change government are for the sake of preserving their drug trade.

Whereas al-Qaeda and Mexican drug cartels have been used to demonstrate groups that move along the continuum, the Albanian mafia and FARC demonstrate groups that have reached the convergence stage. They represent an organized crime group and a terrorist group that are caught at the middle of the continuum and are making significant strides toward the opposite end.

The Albanian Mafia

The rise of the Albanian Mafia can be credited to two main factors: geography and political conditions. The Balkan route is one of the most widely utilized routes for trafficking into Europe. It has been used for drugs, weapons, and humans and has been used by criminal and terrorist groups alike. Reports suggest that more than 80 percent of Europe’s heroin passes along the Balkan route as a stop on the “Golden Crescent.” The popularity of this route is partially credited to the fact that the intercept rate of heroin, as reported by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, is much lower (2 percent interception rate) than those in other drug trafficking countries (10 percent in Turkey and 18 percent in Iran) (UNODC, 2010). Albanian Mafias are not only involved in heroin; that is, production laboratories for amphetamines and methamphetamines have been established along with a rise in marijuana cultivation (Mutschke, 2000). Given this proximity to the drug trade, the rise of the Albanian Mafia was inevitable. Further, the political conditions
of the 1990s allowed the growth of a shadow economy, dealing in both licit and illicit goods. Embargoes imposed by NATO created a demand for illegally traded oil, narcotics, and weapons. While some thought that war and embargoes would interrupt the trafficking routes previously established through the Balkans, the opposite occurred. New routes were established to work around the combat and to take advantage of the political turmoil. In 1995, the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs reported concluded:

The processes of political and economic change set in motion by the breakup of the former USSR and the drive to liberalize the international economy and domestic economic transactions have significantly increased the magnitude and complexity of illicit drug trafficking (as quoted in Lewis, 1998, pg. 217).

The Albanian mafia is known for more than drug trafficking. Its also been tied to human trafficking, arms trading, contract killing, kidnapping, visa forgery, and burglary (Xhudo, 1996). The group has also expanded beyond the Albanian borders into Europe and have established themselves as a major security threat to the European Union. The Albanian diaspora community has helped to establish the Albanian Mafia network throughout the world. Reports suggest they are active in Italy, the United States, and the United Kingdom with ties to South American drug traffickers, the Italian ‘Ndrangheta, Camorra, and Stida, British, Dutch, Irish, Kurdish, Mexican, Nigerian, Polish, Russian, and Serbian crime syndicates (European Parliament, 2012). Beyond the criminal dimension of the Albanian Mafia, there exists simultaneously a terrorist dimension. This terrorist dimension is what makes the Albanian Mafia an example of convergent, hybrid organization.

The terrorist dimension of the Albanian Mafia is partially explained through an alliance. The Albanian Mafia’s relationship with the KLA is one where the two have become practically inseparable. It has reached a level of connectedness that makes
distinguishing between the two almost impossible. The Albanian Mafia and the KLA often work together to pursue the same goals and the Mafia has been critical in supplying money and weapons to KLA operations. One report suggests:

Some of [the drug traffickers] are activists in the armed movement of the KLA fighters and have gone home to fight. They feel Albanian. They are fighting to achieve annexation to Albania. And it is precisely there that at least a part of the sea of money that the Albanian drugs traffickers have amassed is reported to have ended up, to support the families and to fund both certain political personalities and the anti-Serb movement (Ruscica, 1998).

Closely identifying with the KLA’s goal of the liberation of Kosovo from Serbia, the Albanian Mafia is “intrinsically linked to ‘Panalbanian ideals, politics, military activities, and terrorism (Makarenko, 2003, pg. 171).’” Beyond shared ideals and goals, the Albanian Mafia and the KLA share both a common membership and recruitment base, further asserting the claims that they are “terrorists by day and criminals by night (loc. cit.).” These Panalbanian ideals are what tie together the political and the criminal motivations of the Albanian Mafia. Because they so closely identify with the plight of the Kosovar Albanians, they are motivated to dedicate their profits to the cause of the Kosovars. An INTERPOL representative reported “Albanian drug lords established elsewhere in Europe began contributing funds to the ‘national cause' in the 80's. From 1993 on, these funds were to a large extent invested in arms and military equipment for the KLA (Mutschke, 2000).”

The liberation of Kosovo is not the only reason for the Albanian Mafia’s foray into terrorism. In order to protect the value of their shadow market, they have an interest in preserving social and political unrest. They seek to produce an environment devoid of political calm, an environment closely associated with terrorism. Makarenko’s original continuum suggests that the result of convergence of crime and terror, as can be seen in
the case of the Albanians, is a “black hole.” Makarenko describes the black hole as being a weak or failed state that fosters the convergence of crime and terror and creates a safe haven for the continued operation of these hybrid groups. While Albania is not necessarily a weak or failed state, it does possess some of the characteristics that are easily exploited by hybrid groups for continued operation. It is trademarked with corruption and weak rule of law. Because of this, the Albanian Mafia has an interest in uniting the people in a perpetual struggle against the state, perpetuating conflict and the need for a shadow economy (Mutschke, 2000, Makarenko, 2004). This fits in line with Mary Kaldor’s new war hypothesis. According to Kaldor, new wars are usually intrastate conflicts, fought by paramilitary groups and insurgencies, rather than by state militaries. Furthermore, these conflicts can be exploited by organized crime groups interested in perpetuating unrest in order to increase profits (Kaldor, 2007). In the example of Albania, the Albanian Mafias can be attributed with struggling against the government and adding a terrorist element to their agenda in order to prolong the necessity of an illicit market and protect their profits.

**FARC**

The FARC is perhaps the strongest example of the convergence theory. The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, or FARC, began as a rebel organization composed of communist militants and peasant self-defense groups in 1965. Their mission has been to overthrow the government of Colombia. They claim to “represent the rural poor against Colombia’s wealthy classes and oppose U.S. influence in Colombia, the privatization of natural resources, multinational corporations, and rightist violence
The FARC is the largest and best-equipped rebel group in Colombia. It has an area of operations that span roughly one-third of the country. In addition to fighting the legitimate Colombian armed forces, the group kidnap\[...\]ng Colombian officials and foreign citizens. Since the death of Jacobo Arenas, the ideological leader of FARC, the group deepened its participation in criminal activities (Makarenko, 2004).

In order to finance their mission, the organization turned to cocaine trafficking. When the Cali and Medellin cartels were taken down in the 1990s, the FARC survived and was able to take over much of the Colombian cocaine market. It is estimated that FARC is able to generate between $500 million and $600 million from the illegal drug trade. A 2006 indictment from the US Department of Justice reported that FARC was responsible in some way for more than 50 percent of the world’s cocaine. The level of involvement in the drug trade varies between FARC units, ranging from protecting the crops to overseeing production to acting as middlemen in international distribution. As the group increased their profits in the drug trade, they were also able to increase the amount of land they controlled and increase their power over the countryside. By 2000, it was estimated that the group controlled 40 percent of Colombian territory (Makarenko, 2004). They also make money through kidnapping for ransom, extortion schemes, and an unofficial tax levied on families in the countryside for protection and social services that the state may not adequately provide (Hanson, 2009). It is clear that despite possessing a public image as a terrorist organization and purporting a political mission, the group is deeply entrenched in organized crime. They have taken on a role similar to the mafia in parts of Italy; that is, they have made forays into politics (for example, through providing
social services) but only to raise money for the organization. Scholars such as Paul Wilkinson have suggested FARC’s deep involvement in criminal activity has made them, both in reality and popular perception, little more than a branch of organized crime, decadent guerrillas rather than genuine revolutionaries, irredeemably corrupted by their intimate involvement with narco-traffickers and their cynical pursuits of huge profits from kidnapping and from their ‘protection’ of coca and opium production, processing, and shipping facilities (as quoted in Makarenko, 2004, pg. 137). Thus, FARC has come to represent the epitome of Makarenko’s convergence thesis. In her description of the continuum, she remarks that in the convergence stage, it will be possible for a group to switch to the opposite end of the continuum. In this case, it could be argued that while still maintaining a political ideology to appease supporters, the group is, in essence, acting as a criminal organization.

The question of FARC’s classification as either criminal or terrorist could, theoretically, be resolved by the recent development in the political situation in Colombia. Efforts on the part of the Colombian government, bolstered by funding from the United States’ Plan Colombia package, have left the FARC “in a state of strategic crisis” following the 2007 assignation of much of the group’s leadership (Isacson, 2008). Needing a new strategy to achieve the group’s political goals, FARC and the Colombian government entered into informal talks in 2010. Then, in October 2012, formal negotiations began in Oslo, Norway, despite the absence of a ceasefire, in an attempt to end conflict and reach a compromise. The agenda includes subjects such as “rural development, the end of armed conflict, drug trafficking, the rights of victims, and political participation (Mosettig, 2012).” As a sign of good faith, the rebel group did implement a ceasefire once negotiations resumed in Cuba. The Colombian military, on the other hand, continued to attack the FARC camps. Currently, the negotiations are
ongoing. Forecasts regarding the outcome of the talks are less than hopeful, with the topic of land reform being the trickiest of all. The dismal outlook stems from the ongoing violence perpetrated by both the FARC, who abandoned their ceasefire on January 20, 2013, and the Colombian military (BBC News, 2013). As just one attempt in a long history of peace talks and measures to end the conflict, the outcome of this latest round of negotiations is difficult to predict and remains to be seen.

If they are successful, though, the impact on the group’s existence will an interesting case study in the convergence theory. The group has been operating concurrently as a crime and terrorist organization for quite some time. Assuming the negotiations produce a peaceful settlement, the group’s political motivations will, for the most part, be achieved. They will no longer need to pursue terrorist tactics. It remains to be seen whether they will give up the profits obtained from the drug trade. Their deep involvement in the drug trade and the massive profits accrued from illegal activity, however, would suggest that they will continue to operate as an organized crime group. With scholars already suggesting that they are no longer as politically motivated as they once were, it stands to reason that the group may use a peace resolution as an opportunity to officially make the switch from terrorism to crime.
V. THE NEXUS REVISITED

The above case studies are a sampling of the most active and well-known terrorist and criminal organizations operating around the world today. They also all have the added dimension of operating transnationally, a trait that is fairly unique to modern day groups compared to the traditional crime and terror groups that operated before and during the Cold War. As they come to occupy the same spaces and encounter the same roadblocks created by new legislation and law enforcement efforts, criminals and terrorists have been forced to cooperate in ways previously unknown. Makarenko’s 2004 continuum shows the varying levels of cooperation that typify modern organized crime groups and terrorist organizations. Makarenko’s original crime-terror continuum served as an excellent starting point in diagramming this new phenomenon. However, as the ties between crime and terror grow ever closer, some might suggest that her original continuum has become outdated. Even Makarenko herself has conceded that the original continuum needs an update (as evidenced by her release of a refined, unidirectional model in 2009 (European Parliament, 2012)). Her intent, presumably, was to elucidate the possibility of transformation following the convergence of crime and terror. She also eliminated the “black hole” of failed states.

(SEE APPENDIX B)
Makarenko’s new model is useful in depicting path that groups can follow as they begin to cooperate with the other side. Perhaps a better model, however, would show the possibility of movement along the continuum, depending on the situation. A weakness of Makarenko’s model is that implies that groups can only move in one direction, toward convergence and transformation. However, as the examples of al-Qaeda and Mexican cartels have shown, groups can move along the spectrum in both directions. When the situation calls for it, they may form alliances to achieve a goal. In other instances, they will adopt the other side’s methodologies. And in other instances, they will temporarily set aside their overarching goals for the sake of focusing on more pressing matters. A re-conception of Makarenko’s continuum is yet again necessary to explore the relationship between crime and terror.

In this new model, the original continuum will serve as the foundation, minus the black hole. The addition of overlapping circles meant to represent crime and terror separately, in the form of a Venn diagram, adds a dimensionality to the original continuum. It suggests that placing a group at a given space along the continuum is a temporary location that could move to anywhere else in the cloud. Placing a group in the Venn diagram is less finite than placing them at a fixed location on a line. The black hole should be removed from the continuum because it refers to a specific failed state and neglects the transnational nature of modern-day organized crime and international terrorism. Furthermore, it represents a byproduct of cooperation, rather than an actual form of cooperation itself. That is not to say that the black hole should be removed all together. Rather, it should be placed in a location adjacent to the continuum. This clearly shows that it is a byproduct of cooperation between criminals and terrorists. This also
allows for the addition of other characteristics that are needed to move a state into the black hole category. Kaldor (2007) would suggest that the presence of “new wars,” most commonly in the form of ethnic conflict, is an impetus for creating a failed state. The inability to find a resolution to the conflict and what she refers to as the “globalized war economy” is what allows crime and terror to fester and take hold of the country. This can be seen to have taken place in Somalia, where the terrorist organization al-Shabaab exacerbated the conflict, hindered the installation of an effective government, and aided in the establishment of an illicit war economy trading in weapons. Pre-existing conflict is not the only necessity to move a state into the black hole (Kaldor, 2007). One should also consider the amount of corruption and the strength of rule of law. Shelley (2005) identifies “the unholy trinity”- transnational crime, corruption, and terrorism- as a major threat to state stability. Once again, a conflict economy is established whereby criminals and terrorists alike have an interest in prolonging conflict in order to continue making money. In this situation, corrupt governments and weak law enforcement can contribute to the growth of crime and terror. The Balkans and Chechnya exemplify this phenomenon. In these countries, “international crime and terrorist networks particularly intersect… where law enforcement and border control agencies are both corrupt and, in some cases, entirely collusive with the crime groups (Shelley, 2005, pg. 103).” Finally, by placing the Black Hole adjacent to the continuum, it becomes clear that a failed state is not a prerequisite in order to achieve the pinnacle of convergence. Given the increasingly transnational nature of these groups, a defined territory is no longer a necessity for operations. Terrorists and criminals can operate anywhere, and can move operations relatively easily. Consider the example of FARC. Colombia is not a failed
state, but the argument could easily be made that the group has achieved ultimate convergence, as shown above. Similarly Abu Sayyaf is an offshoot of al-Qaeda that operates predominately in the Philippines. Scholars have suggested that they have also achieved convergence through the increasing use on kidnapping for ransom. The group has also begun to move away from its terrorist roots (Makarenko, 2003). This group is simultaneously criminal and terrorist, despite the Philippines continuing as a functioning state.

(SEE APPENDIX C)
VI. COMBATTING THE NEXUS

Given this threat posed by the cooperation between criminals and terrorists, what implications does this have for national security and law enforcement? In places like the United States and the European Union, the probability of becoming a weak or failed state is highly unlikely. That does not mean they are immune to the threat, though. As the targets of many terrorist organizations and as the receiving countries for many of the drugs trafficked by these groups, the impact of the convergence of crime and terror is still felt in the US and the EU. There are steps that can be taken to alleviate this threat. Unfortunately, because they are not dealing with traditional state actors, the traditional options of deterrence and diplomacy are rendered ineffective. The groups do not always act as rational actors and their behavior can be unpredictable, especially when considering terrorist groups today (Makarenko, 2008).

Rather than pursuing traditional tactics that a state may use to negotiate and settle disputes with other states, three general techniques should guide policy making when attempting to combat crime and terror together. The first technique is a practical one, relating to the investigation and prosecution of criminals and terrorists. It is one suggested by former attorney general John Ashcroft- the Capone method. Using this technique, law enforcement agencies and intelligence groups should exhaust every available lead to find some charge for individuals operating in crime and terrorism. In the case of Al Capone, the government knew they couldn’t prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Capone was involved in murder, bribery, and running illegal breweries. They could,
However, prove that he was evading taxes. Following on this, Capone was arrested and entered prison in 1932 (Gartenstein-Ross and Dabruzzi, 2007). On using the Capone method to seek out terrorists, Ashcroft said:

Robert Kennedy’s Justice Department, it is said, would arrest mobsters for “spitting on the sidewalk” if it would help in the battle against organized crime. It has been and will be the policy of this Department of Justice to use the same aggressive arrest and detention tactics in the war on terror. Let the terrorists among us be warned: If you overstay your visa—even by one day—we will arrest you. … We will use every available statute. We will seek every prosecutorial advantage. We will use all our weapons within the law and under the Constitution (as quoted in Gartenstein-Ross and Dabruzzi, 2007).

Though the Capone method may not result in the arrest of “terrorists” for terrorism and “mob bosses” for leading organized crime groups it does play a role in stopping those who might otherwise commit crimes and acts of terrorism. It provides an impediment to their day-to-day activities. The arrest of Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman, head of the Sinaloa drug cartel in Mexico is an example of the Capone method. Though he ultimately escaped from prison and was able to resume his business, the general concept in his arrest is still relevant. Captured in Guatemala in 1993 and extradited to Mexico, Guzman was sentenced to over twenty years in prison for drug trafficking, criminal association, and bribery. Mexican law enforcement charged Guzman with everything they could to ensure that he got the longest sentence possible.

Another important technique is the use of dissuasion. That is, efforts need to be taken to win “the hearts and minds of individuals who may be considered vulnerable to radicalization (Makarenko, 2008, pg. 70).” In the broader sense, this could mean alleviating political conditions which would foster terrorism as well as alleviating economic perils that would lead to the development of a black market economy. The EU has been especially active in this approach, as can be seen through the impressive
amounts of foreign aid and initiatives like the European Neighborhood Program. The US has also explored the idea of dissuasion. In 2001, it became one of four defense goals, along with assurance, deterrence, and defeat. Its importance was reiterated when it again made an appearance in the 2005 National Defense Strategy and the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (Lutes and Bunn, 2008). Finally, the importance of information sharing, between agencies and national governments, cannot be underestimated. Criminal investigators and intelligence agencies need to share their findings in order to create a complete picture of what is happening. Without this information sharing, key aspects of the relationship between crime and terror can easily be missed and efficiency in investigation can be lost.

In conclusion, as criminal and terrorist organizations find new ways to work together, governments must anticipate their changes in modus operandi in order to be effective against them. Steps have been taken that would indicate an understanding of this relationship. The United Kingdom, for example, passed the Anti-Terrorism, Crime, and Security Act in 2001. This act not only increased measures that could be taken against terrorists, but included language regarding financial crimes and crime prevention. It recognized that there was a link between criminals and terrorists and took measures to address it. Similarly, the United States passed the USA PATRIOT Act following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. This Act also drew attention to the cooperation between crime and terror and, though it was predominately aimed at terrorism, included provisions to increase information sharing and to allow investigators to use readily available tools to investigate both organized crime and terrorism. United States Congress also drafted the Vital Interdiction of Criminal Terrorist Organizations (“VICTORY”) Act
of 2003. This act would clearly define narco-terrorism and take measures to prosecute drug traffickers thought to be aiding terrorists more stringently. The European Union has also taken a strong stance against the crime-terror nexus, extending all anti-terrorism tools to be used in anti-crime measures as well. Furthermore, the European Arrest Warrant, EUROPOL, and EUROJUST are all tools meant to facilitate information sharing and to increase cooperation in investigating crime and terror. It is clear that governments are taking the steps necessary to combat organized crime and terrorism simultaneously. By pursuing organized crime and terrorism with the same legislation, both issues are securitized to the same degree and should therefore be given equal weight in the appropriation of resources. While each may require different tactics in terms of pursuit of perpetrators- an organized crime group may be better pursued with law enforcement whereas terrorists may be more effectively pursued militarily- when it comes to prosecution, the same general principles can be applied because the groups cooperate so closely. It is important, however, that they acknowledge the continuously changing shape of the relationship and anticipate new forms of cooperation. Only by keeping a constant watch on the way criminals and terrorists behave will they be able to prosecute both crimes at once.

Organized Crime

Terrorism
APPENDIX B: MAKARENKO’S REVISED CONTINUUM, RELEASED IN 2009, ADAPTED FROM EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT 2012 DOCUMENT

Organized Crime

Terrorism

Alliance
Adoption of Tactics

Convergence
Integration Hybrid

Transformation

Terrorism
Organized Crime
APPENDIX C: PROPOSED CONTINUUM

Organized Crime

Terrorism

Alliance
Adoption of Tactics
Convergence
Adoption of Tactics
Alliance

+ Corruption, poor rule of law, weak governance, etc.

Black Hole


