

Chapter 8

Characterization of drug trafficking as a destabilizing factor in a national defense and security strategy

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Abstract: The development of a national defense and security strategy must seek a holistic and comprehensive view of various aspects. Likewise, it is necessary to know what has been developed historically to mitigate the destabilization factor and determine milestones that can be considered successes or failures. In this way, a planning model for the National Defense and Security Strategy is proposed, using drug trafficking as a destabilizing factor, which requires the attention of the Colombian State from all its fields of action, in an articulated way. Therefore, and through multidimensional security, it is expected to expand the strategic landscape to allow the realization of plans and programs as inputs for the development of a National Security Plan that mitigates such destabilization and not only its legalization.

Keywords: defense, strategy, national, drug trafficking, security.

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THEORETICAL APPROACH TO THE NOTIONS OF WAR AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

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Introduction

The development of a national defense and security strategy must seek a holistic and comprehensive view of various aspects. First of all, the different factors that can destabilize a country must be taken into account, and that is why it is proposed to observe each of them from the different environments that exist: global, hemispheric, regional, neighborhood and national. These environments, in turn, must be analyzed within each of the fields of action of the State: the political, the social, the military and the economic. Likewise, it is necessary to know what has been developed historically to mitigate the destabilization factor and determine milestones that can be considered successes or failures.

For this, it is essential to use tools that provide large areas of knowledge, such as political science, international relations, geography, geopolitics, geostrategy, military sciences, economics, defense economics, strategy, and administration sciences. Only in this way can we aim for a 360° analysis that provides enough information to decision makers to generate a path that responds in the most appropriate way possible to the realities that affect the daily lives of the inhabitants of a State.

In this way, a planning model for the National Defense and Security Strategy is proposed, using drug trafficking as a destabilizing factor, which requires the attention of the Colombian State from all its fields of action, in an articulated way. In this way, authentic situational leadership is generated, in which the government acts as a cohesive unit guided by the contributions of academia in an environment of fifth-generation wars.

Fifth Generation Wars

Lind and Thiele (2015) made a characterization of wars by classifying them into generations and taking into account the armament used, the dimensions in which the battles are fought and the combatants they face. In this regard, Álvarez-Calderón et al. (2017) carry out a study of the changing nature of war, highlighting the challenges that have existed to typify and classify it.

The aforementioned authors analyze that this changing character is produced not only by technological advances that allow a change in the weapons used. But also by the changes that occur in the structure of the international system and within States, with respect to human activity, industrialization and infrastructure. Consequently, generations of war are not defined by the moment in which they were waged, but by the way they are carried out. In this way, today there can be a combination of first, second, third, fourth and fifth generation wars, depending on the means, resources and, above all, the dimensions in which the combatants move.

First-generation wars took place within the framework of the professionalization of armies, while second-generation wars were based on strategies of attrition. Third-generation wars, on the other hand, are blitzkrieg and maneuver wars, based on deflection and collapse (Álvarez-Calderón et al., 2017). Already in fourth-generation wars there is the greatest transformation, while the State is no longer the only actor that makes war, but the space is opened for guerrilla warfare and insurgencies (Álvarez-Calderón et al., 2017).

Fifth-generation wars differ from fourth-generation wars in several respects. According to Álvarez-Calderón et al. (2017), first of all fifth-generation wars are fought in the physical, information, cognitive and social domains. Likewise, as in unrestricted warfare, the limits on the actors fighting are dissipated, and in this way civilians from areas other than the military participate in them. Finally, this war seeks the implosion of the State through disinformation, the dismantling of the entities that compose it, the destruction of trust and the affectation of centers of gravity that lead to generalized destabilization (Álvarez-Calderón et al., 2017).

Fifth-generation wars manifest diluted and dispersed violence, which weakens the adversary's defense systems. They are carried out through influence on the perception of information, so their tools have to do with misinformation and the use or distortion of cultural, moral and religious values. This makes fifth-generation wars silent wars with diffuse limits, so they require a comprehensive response from the State beyond the use of the military instrument (Qureshi, 2019).

Drug trafficking as a destabilizing factor

The consumption of psychoactive substances dates back to ancient civilizations. Whether for religious, magical, medical or recreational purposes, elements such as opium, ayahuasca, coca, marijuana, and hallucinogenic mushrooms, were used by societies around the world to alter their mental state (de San Jorge Cárdenas et al., 2019; Longrich, 2021). However, it is not until the Opium Wars when a war conflict is documented due to the consequences for national sovereignty brought by drug trafficking.

The Opium Wars, which took place between 1839 and 1860, were the product of an escalation of tensions between the United Kingdom and the Chinese Empire, due to their differences in terms of the commercialization of opium in the eastern territory. The Chinese Empire watched with concern the decay of Chinese society, beginning with the detriment on the individual and extending to the family, social, economic and political aspects of the country.

For their part, the English sought an economic advantage over China, and gradually entered their territory, which was facilitated by the widespread addiction that opium had generated (Feige & Miron, 2008). In this regard, the violent escalation and use of military power as a response to defend Chinese sovereignty is striking. However, England won the victory, which generated great concessions for itself and led China to a whole century of humiliation.

It was not until 1912 that the International Opium Convention was signed. With this, greater awareness was generated regarding the negative consequences of drug trafficking, not only in terms of the health of the individual, but also, in terms of the structural damage it means for societies, for the leisure and violence it produces. In this regard, other treaties were signed such as the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, in New York, and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and, finally, the creation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The United States has been a relevant actor in the illegal treatment of drugs, leading not only the first convention on the subject, signed in 1912, but also the war on drugs since the 1970s. Nixon and, later, Reagan carried out a campaign of criminalization and a war waged not from the military instrument, but from the Police, to which was added the creation of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

This war has echoed throughout the Americas, and Colombia is not an exception. On the contrary, the declared war on drugs has allowed Colombia to carry out

actions against drug trafficking, such as Plan Colombia, Plan Libertad I, Operation Black Cat, the creation of the National Army's Anti-Drug Trafficking Brigade, the Emerald Strategy, and operations Orion and Zeus, among others.

The foregoing has been carried out under the understanding of the threat posed by drug trafficking to security. Seen from the perspective of human security, which is, in turn, composed of seven dimensions, drug trafficking generates damage no matter from which angle it is analyzed. Regarding health safety, depending on which drug is used, different damage is generated in the body. Marijuana produces neurological and psychological damage. Cocaine damages the oral and nasal mucous membranes and, with the exception of marijuana, the number of overdose deaths in the world increases year after year.

In terms of economic security, drug trafficking generates criminal ecosystems based on illegal economies. Political security is affected by the infiltration of groups with considerable economic power that corrupt the system with the so-called *narco-politics*. Soils suffer from deforestation and mineral loss, which threatens both food security and environmental security. Community and personal safety is also affected; especially in areas of cultivation and drug production in the country, such as, for example, Tumaco, Cauca and El Catatumbo.

And it is that from 2020 to 2021 alone, illicit crops in Colombia increased by 43%, which, according to the UNODC (2022), is due to the increase in demand on a global scale, the persistence of territorial vulnerability, the expectations derived from the peace agreements, the increase in illegal actors and the growth of incentives to produce the drug. This, according to the Attorney General's Office (2020), has resulted in an *outsourcing* of each of the elements of the drug trafficking supply chain, in which there are already specialized groups for each of the processes that are carried out.

Thus, in Colombia, outlaw groups are experts in cultivation and production, and have alliances with Mexican cartels and European mafias for the continuity of the chain in terms of distribution, marketing, and consumption. Money laundering, due to its organizational dynamics, manages to position itself globally, which is why one of the strategies to be carried out is the cybernetic tracking of money for the imprisonment of the heads of criminal structures.

On the other hand, drug trafficking is moving towards legalization, which in turn has its own difficulties. First of all, because so far there is talk of the legalization of marijuana and the possibility of doing the same with cocaine, but new drugs continue to be created, through the chemical manipulation of substances that can increase the level of addiction and, therefore, the risks of overdose. The legalization

of some drugs does not ensure the non-use of others, which generates uncertainty as to the actual control over illicit substances.

In the same way, legalization implies a look at the problem of drug trafficking as a public health problem, in which not only the physical but also the mental health aspects should be taken into account. With this, it would be necessary to prepare for the distribution of drugs, but also for the loss of cognitive and motor skills of society, which would have effects on the workforce, the available workforce, and its quality.

The planning models of national defense and security strategies

Due to the multiple effects of the drug trafficking phenomenon, an adequate analysis is required to integrate it into a national defense and security strategy. Therefore, there are various models for the planning and management of such strategies, which are pointed out and analyzed by Ballesteros (2016), who exposes the models of Barlett, Lykke, the Naval War College articulated by R. Lloyd, Drew and Snow. Fillberti's strategic guide; the guide to National Security Policy and Strategy, published by the Army War College, and the Deibel model. These structures will be fundamental for the reader to visualize the different elements that make up these methodologies and how they managed to influence the development of the following model.

With this in mind, this essay proposes a model that, although it includes elements of the aforementioned models, also starts from three main sources. First, it takes into account the *Apreciación Política Estratégica Nacional* (APEN in Spanish), which is the methodology currently used in Colombia to carry out national security strategies for the Course of Advanced Military Studies (CAEM) and the Comprehensive Course of National Defense (CIDENAL), at the *Escuela Superior de Guerra* (ESDEG). Secondly, it uses the elements of the strategy formula proposed by Sánchez-Hurtado (2012), in which they take into account not only the classic elements, means, ends and modes, but also add the environment, the adversary's strategy and risks. Finally, the elements of analysis and formulation of public policy are integrated, as this is the tool used by the States to carry out the political agenda of their government using the means at their disposal.

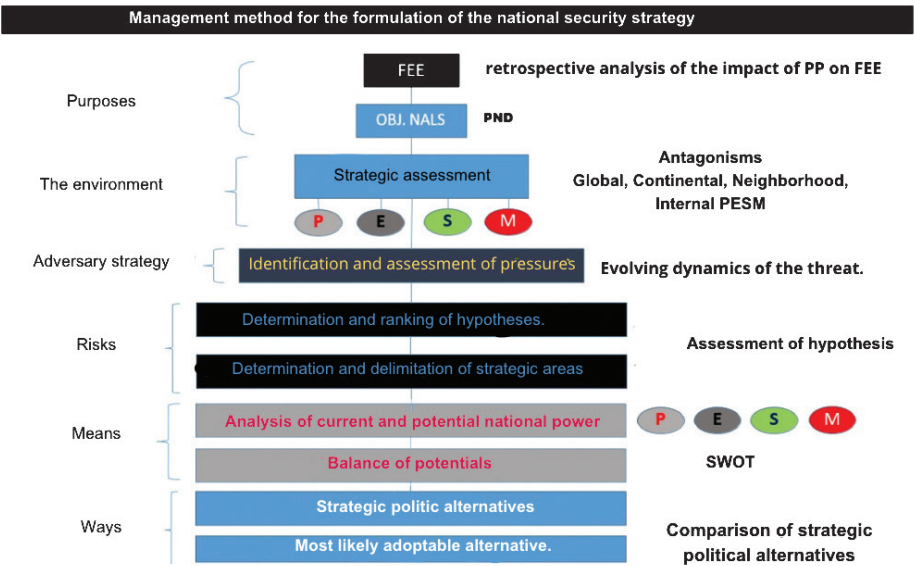
Regarding the APEN, as described by Cabrera-Ortiz (2021), this is one of the documents for the planning of the defense and security of Colombia, which was

established with Decree 1573 of July 31, 1974. The APEN seeks to materialize national interests through an analysis of the different fields of action of the State in the global, continental, neighborhood, and internal environments, as will be deepened later. We proceed with the evaluation of the hypotheses of war, or conflict, and actions are generated for these.

The National Strategic Concepts, the Government Guidelines, which serve as input for the National Security Plan, as well as other plans and programs including war plans and campaign plans, are built from the APEN. This, subsequently, seeks integration into the National Security Plan, the Public Security and Defense Policy and other technical and economic documents (Cabrera-Ortiz, 2021)

With this in mind, Figure 1 is presented, which establishes the steps and edges proposed for the planning of a national security strategy.

Figure 1. Management method to formulate the National Security Strategy.



Source: Own elaboration.

Although all the steps proposed in the center of Figure 1 have elements obtained from the APEN, the left side shows the formula of the strategy carried out by Sánchez-Hurtado (2012). Said author proposes the following formula, which was another proposal contemplated for the formulation of the model in question:

Strategy = Aims + Environment + Adversary Strategy + Risks + Means + Ways

Sánchez Hurtado's formula is novel in that it adds new elements to the analysis of strategy, which has been classically seen from the ends, means and modes. Thus, it adds the elements of the environment, which allows us to capture the opportunities and challenges presented by the international system. The hemisphere, the dynamics of the region, the phenomena present at the borders and, finally, the realities of the nation.

In the same way, identify the risks coming from the aforementioned environments and the adversary's strategy, which is essential, as Sun Tzu (2015) argued: "Know your enemy and know yourself, and you will be successful in a thousand battles". The adversary's strategy provides the strategy with a dynamic element and proactive and non-reactive responses.

All these elements are essential, but for the present test, the formula has been modified, as follows:

$$\text{Strategy} = \frac{\text{Aims (Means + Modes)} + \text{Environment (Adversary's Strategy + Risks)}}{\text{Time}}$$

The modification is due to the way in which the elements of Sánchez's strategic formulation interact. First, ends are understood as logical only if they are managed in terms of means and modes, since any goal is meaningless unless you have the resources and plans to articulate them. In particular, the proposal understands modes such as public policies, plans and programs, as will be discussed later.

On the other hand, the adversary's strategy and risks are evaluated according to the environment, or environments, as the global, hemispheric, regional, and national are taken into account. Each of these analyses how the State's fields of action face challenges or opportunities that the adversaries themselves, due to their strategies, suggest.

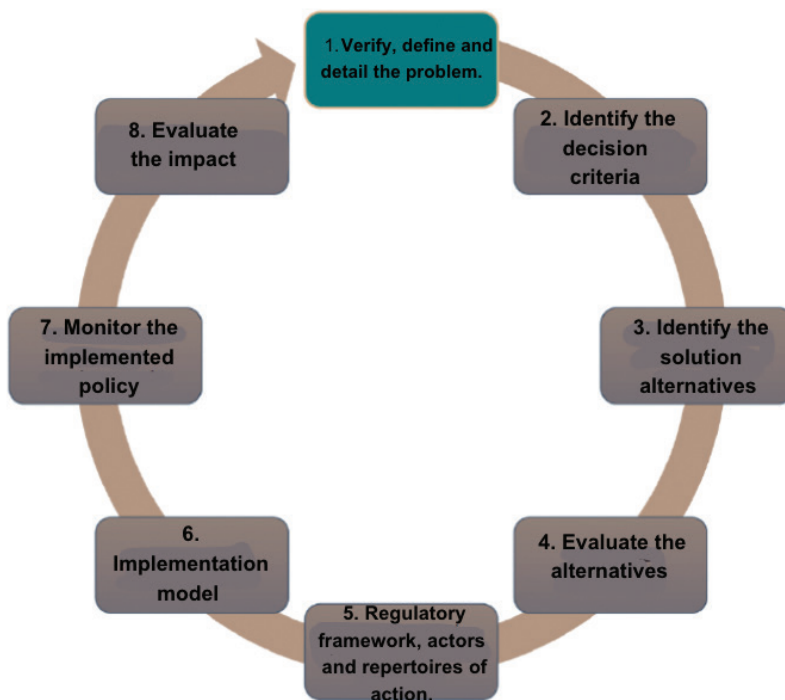
However, with regard to the analysis of public policy as a source, Figure 1 shows that, to begin with, an analysis of how the destabilization factor affects the essential purposes of the State is proposed. These goals are tied both to the national objectives, which are in line with the current National Development Plan (PND in Spanish), and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the global 2030 agenda. After that, it is studied what public policies have been developed to affect the scourge that is being determined: for example, in the case of drug trafficking there are security and defense policies, as shown below:

1. Democratic Security Policy.
2. Democratic Security Consolidation Policy.
3. Comprehensive Security and Defense Policy for Prosperity.
4. Defense and Security Policy. All for a new country.
5. Defense and Security Policy. Legality, Equity and Entrepreneurship.

These policies, in turn, are analyzed, for which, implementing contributions from Roth (2002) and Bardach (2001), among others, the analysis cycle represented in Figure 2 has been created. Through this, essential conclusions are reached that allow us to elucidate what has been done, what has worked and why it has worked and what has not worked and why it has not worked.

Undoubtedly, it is an arduous job and requires a multidisciplinary team, in which not only the qualitative aspects of the problem in question are analyzed, but also the statistics. For example: how many hectares have been planted over the years? Have they increased or decreased? How many people have died from overdoses in the country and in the hemisphere? etc.

Figure 2. *Public Policy Analysis Cycle*



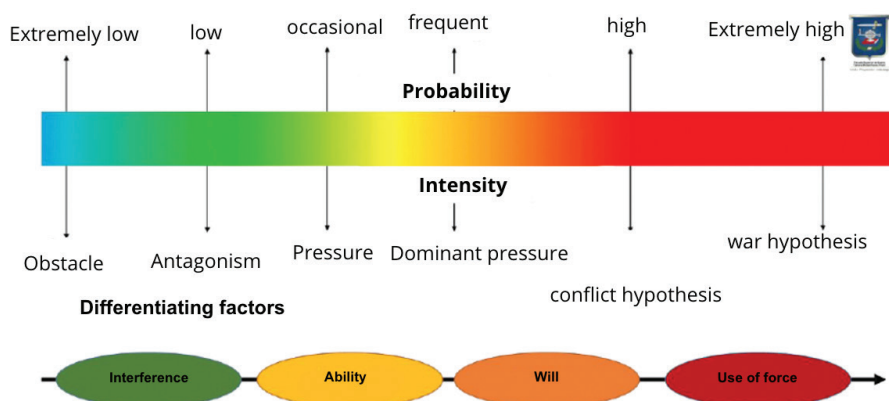
Source: Own elaboration, based on Roth (2002) and Bardach (2001).

This is one of the most important contributions of this proposal, as it allows the achievement of two objectives. First, it is clearly evident how the fields of action of the State have been articulated since the actions of the national, regional, or municipal government. That is, it is an objective analysis of what has been done. On the other hand, an evaluation of the actions taken to attack the destabilization factor is achieved, thus obtaining a complete picture of the country, which guides the analysis towards the measures that can be taken.

With the above, the first step of the proposed model has been covered, so, in a succinct way, we proceed with the following steps. For the environment, an analysis similar to that of the APEN is made, in which, by means of a table, the following questions are answered. 1) Which national interests predominate in the environment? 2) Which geographical areas deserve attention? 3) What risks of destabilization exist? 4) What commitments does the country have with intergovernmental organizations, or domestically, for the ratification of treaties?

The answers are tabulated generating a matrix of five rows and six columns, which facilitates the analysis in terms of the global, hemispheric, regional, neighborhood and national environments in each of the fields of action of the State: political, economic, social, and military. It is essential not to omit any of these steps, in order to give the decision maker a visualization of the areas that require State attention.

Figure 3. *Threat differentiators*



Source: own elaboration, based on Sánchez-Hurtado (2012).

As seen in Figure 3, the identification and assessment of pressures or destabilization factors is continued. For this, the evolutionary dynamics of the threat is

used, where, taking into account the capacity, will and use of force by the adversary, plus the interference that said adversary produces in the State, the destabilization factor is classified, where the least serious is the *obstacle*, and the most serious, the *hypothesis of war*. This step introduces the decision maker to the type of tools and instruments they can use.

In the case of drug trafficking, it has been concluded that it is a dominant pressure. This is because the criminal structures that produce this scourge are not militarized and require a comprehensive response, based on situational leadership, as will be discussed later. Drug trafficking does not represent a hypothesis of war or conflict, where the greatest weight of the State's response must be of a military nature.

However, the model continues with the determination and hierarchy of hypotheses and the delimitation and determination of strategic areas. This step takes into account that national security strategies seek to respond to various threats, and that, as has been done with drug trafficking, an analysis is made of each of the destabilization factors.

Finally, an analysis is made of the resources available to the State. Such resources can be *material* or *immaterial*, as Morgenthau (1986) argued. That is, geography (climate, position, territorial extension, population), economy, political stability, and culture, among others, are taken into account. In a context of fifth-generation wars, such an analysis is essential, since the State must analyze all its instruments of power based on its means, to give a unified, cohesive, and articulated response to the scourges that are presented to it.

This is reaffirmed by UNODC (2022), which recommends the use of social, cultural, and physical and technological infrastructure tools to facilitate more options for rural citizens, to avoid falling into illicit economies. Likewise, regarding consumption, it is suggested to review education, culture and, above all, public health plans, including both physical and mental health. In all this, the Armed Forces may be an articulating axis, but, definitely, they cannot be the only answer, since the articulation of all the fields of action of the State is required for an efficient, effective and, therefore, effective response.

Situational leadership

All of the exposed above is based on situational leadership that exists when a leader manages to have a strategic and updated vision and promotes articulation and

teamwork. Such is the case of *"The Surge strategy"*, carried out by General David Petraeus in Iraq. In 2006, prior to the arrival of General Petraeus, the situation in Iraq escalated into civil war (Miron, 2019a). More than 50 attacks and three car bombs were reported per day only in Baghdad (Petraeus, 2013), which showed that the strategies used were not working. Such strategies were directed towards the annihilation of the enemy, so they were based on kinetic tactics, which involved the use of force in a conventional manner.

The strategy General Petraeus implemented was based on four big ideas. First of all, the general evidenced that the violence in Iraq affected the population in the first place and, therefore, it was necessary to think about the security of the people rather than the transition to the Iraqi Armed Forces. In this way, he developed his strategy considering the human terrain as the center of gravity, for which he determined that it was essential for the US military to live with the Iraqis.

In this way, Petraeus rediscovered the theoretical discourse of authors such as Robert Thompson and David Galula. These twentieth-century authors had emphasized the importance of winning minds and hearts to gain victory in a counterinsurgency war (Miron, 2019b). Their population-centric *approach* was reflected in the Armed Forces of the United States, as described by the Royal Elcano Institute:

The US military recognized that a purely military operation was counterproductive if other actions were not carried out that included collaboration with local forces and their training, protection and attention to the needs of the population, the development of the economy and infrastructures, the empowerment of a representative central government, and the importance of establishing bonds of trust with tribal and religious leaders to counter the propaganda carried out by the insurgent side, creating in turn a narrative of victory attractive to the imaginary. (2015 [author's bold]).

The Royal Institute (2015) also names two concepts that appear in the manual FM 3-24, essential to work with the population as a center of gravity. The first is *cultural awareness*, and the second, *comprehensive approach*. Regarding cultural awareness, for Petraeus, social and cultural studies were key. Because if they were not taken into account, it was impossible to understand the reality of the operational environment and it was easier for the enemy to win the support of the population, which would enable him to postpone the counterinsurgency fight. On the contrary, if the aforementioned studies were taken into account, it was possible to generate alliances with tribal and religious leaders, in addition to working with various governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations.

As for the comprehensive approach, it refers to the integrality of the elements, which seeks to understand the social, political, cultural and religious realities of the operational environment. Petraeus (2013) points out that a 360° look was sought, in which even field reporters were given space to communicate their perspectives and visions. Likewise, a change was generated in the training of the military who would serve in Iraq, to prepare them in the aforementioned areas in order to generate links with the population.

Regarding the links with the population, the second idea of Petraeus' strategy was that to achieve victory in the war it was necessary to seek reconciliation with as many insurgents as possible, understanding that annihilation is not always the best way to go (Petraeus, 2016). Under this idea, the Elcano Royal Institute (2015), mentions that:

"The U.S. military changed its notion of enemy, differentiating al-Qaeda from other Sunni tribes it previously considered enemies. By negotiating with them, he managed to form an entire army of "Sons of Iraq", 100,000 volunteers who went from fighting against the Americans to fighting hand in hand with them in a phenomenon that was called "the Awakening of Anbar". (Real Instituto Elcano, 2015, n.d.)

However, it was clear to Petraeus and his team that not all combatants were reconcilable; not, especially, the leaders of insurgent and terrorist groups (Petraeus, 2016). These irreconcilable individuals were to be given conventional treatment using the direct method, to achieve their annihilation or imprisonment. This would be achieved through completely regular operations, by kinetic means.

Thus, as Marina Miron (2019) expresses, direct methods, focused on the destruction of the enemy, were combined with indirect methods, which eroded the population's support for the insurgents. These ideas had been explored by the expert David Kilcullen, who served as an advisor to General David Petraeus, and became the most cited author in the FM 3-24 manual.

These ideas formed an operational concept that was developed iteratively in three steps: *clear*, *maintain*, and *build*. That is, clear the geographical areas of insurgent and terrorist groups that attacked the population; maintain the areas through the coexistence between the US military, religious and tribal leaders, and the population, and build a democratic system, in which the representation of society was strengthened, seeking to reach the transition for the consolidation of the State.

Due to the decentralized nature of transnational organized crime structures, each of the elements of *The Surge* strategy are applicable to attack the phenomenon of drug trafficking. In this way, a comprehensive response would be achieved that does not mean impunity, but, rather, a work in society to work against the culture of illegality, fast money and social and individual decadence.

Conclusions

In this essay, different axes have been integrated to exemplify a proposal for a management and planning model for the national defense and security strategy. First, a journey has been made through the generations of war, up to the fifth-generation wars, in order to understand the type of conflict that is faced today.

A characterization of the drug trafficking phenomenon was continued, in order to show, in a six-step model, how to evaluate the destabilization factors in a national defense and security strategy. Finally, elements of the school of situational leadership used by General David Petraeus in Iraq were used to bring elements to reflection regarding the response to decentralized structures such as those of transnational organized crime.

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