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DRUGS

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A N D

VIOLENCE



Drugs, Gangs, and Violence

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Drugs, Gangs, and Violence

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*In honor of David Rosen, Hanna Bechara Kassab,
and Halim Boukaram*

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Americas is the most violent region in the world. The Americas has a homicide rate of 16.3 per 100,000 people, while Africa had a homicide rate of 12.5 per 100,000 inhabitants. Europe, Oceania, and Asia had much lower homicide rates with three percent, three percent, and 2.9 percent, respectively (see Fig. 1.1).¹ The Americas is also home to the most violent country in the world. In 2015, El Salvador surpassed Honduras as the most violent non-warring nation. Violence has exceeded the days of the country's civil war, which lasted for more than a decade. In fact, experts note that at one point in 2015 El Salvador had one murder per hour. Jonathan Watts writes, "Last Sunday was, briefly, the bloodiest day yet with 40 murders. But the record was beaten on Monday with 42 deaths, and surpassed again on Tuesday with 43. Even Iraq—with its civil war, suicide bombings, mortar attacks and US drone strikes—could not match such a lethal start to the week."² In January 2017, the country saw a rare phenomenon occur: one day without a murder.³ Much of the violence in El Salvador has been a result of gang-related activities as well as the consequences of the government's tough on crime strategies.⁴ El Salvador's neighbors, Guatemala and Honduras, have also seen high levels of gang-related violence.⁵ Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández argued that 80 percent of the homicides that occur in this country are related to organized crime.⁶

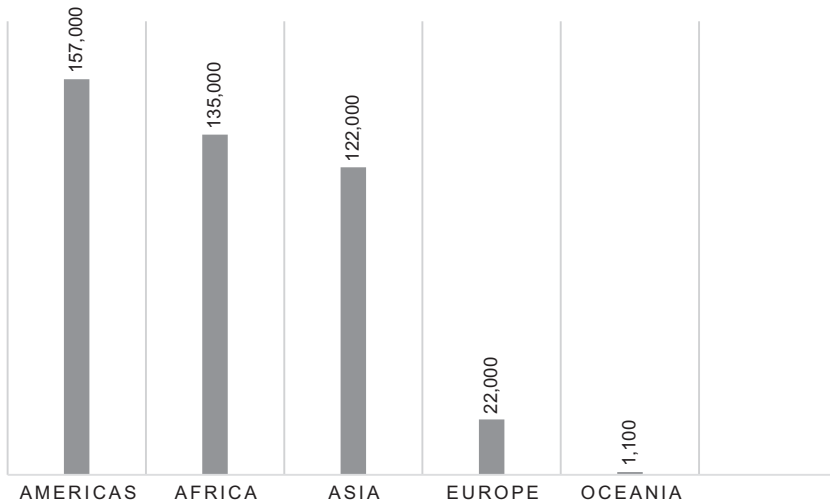


Fig. 1.1 Total number of homicides according to region (2012). Source: Created by authors with data from UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide: 2013*

To the north of Guatemala lies Mexico. During the six years of the Felipe Calderón administration, this country witnessed more than 100,000 drug-related deaths. While violence dropped in the first several years of the Enrique Peña Nieto administration (2012–2018), 2016 and 2017 have been extremely violent years.⁷ In December 2017, presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador contended that he would be willing to provide drug traffickers with amnesty to reduce the high levels of violence plaguing the country. He argued, “We are going to consider it. I am analyzing it. What I can tell you is that there will not be any issue left unattended, if it is to guarantee peace and tranquility.”⁸ In sum, drug trafficking, organized crime, and violence have plagued many countries.

How can we understand the nature of gangs and transnational organized crime, and how these organizations have contributed to crime and violence? This work is an effort to answer these questions. This book adopts a framework based on the concept of fragile states.⁹ The argument, which will be developed throughout the book, is that states plagued by high levels of corruption, impunity, and lack of transparency serve as incubators for crime and violence. Moreover, economic inequality, poverty, and unemployment create various structural problems. According to 2017

data, 70.1 percent of the global population is worth less than \$10,000.¹⁰ There are 767 million individuals who survive on less than \$1.90 per day.¹¹ In summary, these variables help contribute to state fragility.

Inequality and high levels of poverty could lead to more disconnected youth who are vulnerable to being recruited by criminal organizations.¹² The issue of disconnected youth has plagued many countries. For example, many Latin American countries have large segments of the youth who neither study nor work. The new lost generation of youth has been referred to as *Los Ninis*, which stands for the youth who neither study nor work (*ni estudian, ni trabajan*). In Latin America, for example, there are 20 million youth between the ages of 15 and 24 that are ninis.¹³ This is a major problem because young people who do not have the means to study or have the necessary skills to find work are vulnerable and more likely to partake in crime and other delinquent activities. It is rational that a young person lacking skills may decide to join a drug cartel and earn large profits as opposed to work at a menial job for little money. Governments must address the underlying socioeconomic challenges that create the appropriate conditions to being vulnerable to being recruited by gangs and other organized crime groups.

While there is a major difference between countries like El Salvador, Mexico, and Brazil, these states have elements of fragility. Each of these countries has been plagued by high levels of corruption and impunity as well as drug trafficking and organized crime.¹⁴ Indeed, the degrees and nature of organized crime are different in every context. This work seeks to understand how institutional weakness can help foster these organizations, which in turn leads to violence. Yet organized crime groups alone do not explain the nature of violence in some countries. It also is important to examine the role of government strategies. What has been the impact of “tough on crime” policies designed to combat gangs, organized crime, and drug trafficking? Have strategies that have concentrated on combating the supply of drugs been effective? How have such policies contributed to violence?

SUPPLY-SIDE POLICIES: THE DRUG WAR

US President Richard Nixon declared the “war on drugs” in 1971, desiring to combat such dangerous substances. However, Nixon did not invent the prohibitionist drug policy model. The United States has had a long history of prohibitionist policies, beginning in 1914 when the

United States signed a major anti-drug effort referred to as the Harrison Act.¹⁵ In 1971, Nixon approved the creation of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which remains a major anti-narcotics unit in the United States. During his administration, Nixon witnessed the first major drug epidemic within the United States (the heroin epidemic). Heroin became a major drug starting in the late 1960s, but the usage of this drug was primarily concentrated in several metropolitan areas in the country as opposed to rural towns. A key factor that led to the heroin epidemic was the soldiers from Vietnam who returned to the United States and used heroin to cope with the atrocities of the war. In the 1970s, the US military failed to help reintegrate soldiers back into society as many of them suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Soldiers with PTSD were stigmatized and believed not to be “tough enough.” Bruce Bagley, a drug trafficking expert at the University of Miami, notes that “American soldiers returning from Vietnam, where heroin was widely available, were apparently a contributing factor in the heroin epidemic as well. The annual number of new heroin users in the United States peaked in the early 1970s, dropped by some 50 percent by the end of the decade, and remained low until the mid-1990s, when a new heroin epidemic began.”¹⁶ Heroin is an extremely addictive and dangerous substance and is often consumed via needles, which creates a major problem because intravenous drug users who share needles can spread diseases, such as hepatitis and HIV.

Despite his rhetoric about the war on drugs, it is important to note that Nixon recognized the need to curb demand to curtail the profits from drug trafficking.¹⁷ Drug traffickers traffic such substances because they can make large amounts of money from this clandestine business, but traffickers cannot survive without a market. Such statements reveal that Nixon recognized that the war on drugs should not only be about reducing the supply of drugs but also reducing the demand so that drug traffickers would not be able to earn such large profits. Nixon’s assertion about the need for demand reduction was more than just rhetoric. In fact, in 1970 and 1975, the budget for drug control by the US federal government allocated more than 50 percent of the money toward programs for treatment, rehabilitation, and prevention.¹⁸ Thus, Nixon should be credited for his recognition that the war on drugs is not only a supply-side issue but is a health problem. As a result, resources must be allocated to prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.

While the Nixon administration attempted to curb the supply of drugs, a balance still existed between supply and demand. This balance later changed in Washington, particularly during the Reagan administration, where everything became about stopping the supply and viewing drug trafficking as an “us” versus “them” problem. In other words, the United States would not have a security quandary if the Colombians did not traffic such large amounts of cocaine. Ted Galen Carpenter, a drug war expert, echoes such sentiments, declaring: “Despite the ‘war’ metaphor, a surprisingly large part of Nixon’s anti-drug measures was devoted to treatment. Throughout his administration more money was spent on demand reduction than on law enforcement. Even the law enforcement component concentrated more on domestic aspects than international interdiction and eradication measures.”¹⁹

President Ronald Reagan had a different perception of how to solve the drug problem than Nixon and stressed the potential of drugs to destroy society within the United States. During his Presidency, the United States experienced major problems with two drugs: cocaine and crack cocaine. Powdered cocaine, a highly addictive substance, became a major problem during the 1980s.²⁰ Cocaine tended to be consumed among wealthier individuals because the drug is more expensive than crack. Therefore, people need a steady income to consume powdered cocaine. While powdered cocaine is consumed by people with enough money to purchase this costly substance, crack cocaine is a much cheaper version, resulting in a crack epidemic that destroyed the lives of millions of people in major cities throughout the United States. Crack cocaine is very easy to make and can be concocted in a kitchen in a matter of minutes and then smoked by users. This is quite different from cocaine which requires cultivating coca leaves, turning the leaves into coca base or paste, and refining it into cocaine.

The year 1982 represents the beginning of the crack boom in the United States, which particularly devastated low-income communities in Los Angeles, New York, and other major cities. Reagan viewed the drug epidemic witnessed during this period as a vital problem within the United States that had to be addressed. In other words, he viewed drugs as evil substances that needed to be combated because drug use could destroy the social fabric and morale of this country. The average middle-class American, for example, recognized the ability of drugs to destroy youth and, therefore, wanted to shelter their children from such dangerous activities. Politicians echoed such feelings, arguing that drugs had the ability to ruin someone’s life.²¹

Experts note that people who perceived drugs as evil substances that need to be combated supported Reagan's efforts to increase financial resources to rid drugs from their neighborhoods.²² In essence, drugs became a major security issue for the United States because noxious substances such as heroin and crack cocaine have the ability to ruin lives. Reagan and other politicians contended that drug consumption increased levels of crime and violence in cities. Drugs must be delivered and trafficked to the consumers, which inevitably necessitates dealers to locate in neighborhoods to sell such substances. This is an illicit proposition and requires enforcers and weapons, and, therefore, will result in spikes in criminal activity. Carpenter contends, "For conservatives of Reagan's stamp, widespread drug use was not merely a public health problem, it offended a wide range of deeply held social views. They blamed drugs for the massive increase in street crimes noting that compulsive drug users committed a higher percentage of robberies, burglaries, and other offenses to support their habits."²³

Reagan also abandoned the notion that money had to be allocated for demand reduction, arguing that the United States needed to increase the fight against drugs. He believed that the best way to stop drug consumption was to decrease the supply of drugs and incarcerate users. Critics contend that this represents another failure of the United States to learn from the past and recognize that if drug dealers have a market and can earn money by selling drugs to consumers, then they will continue selling such products. The President's comments were not just rhetoric, but he acted decisively and implemented task forces to combat drugs entering the United States from other countries.²⁴

April 1986 represents a significant period in history because Reagan signed the National Security Decision Directive (NSDD), which clearly stated that drug trafficking was a major threat to national security and needs to be combated.²⁵ Yet drugs became one of the major national security priorities after the collapse of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the disintegration of the Soviet Union (1991), signifying the end of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in the United States emerging from the Cold War as the sole hegemonic power or super power in the world. The disintegration of the USSR enabled Reagan to shift his foreign policy goals and security initiatives. Reagan viewed drug trafficking as a serious national security threat because of its ability to erode the moral fiber of the United States as well as its levels of violence, delinquency, and drug dependency.

Today, critics contend that drugs are cheaper and more readily available than ever before.²⁶ Some experts maintain that the United States continues to view drugs as a supply-side issue and fails to comprehend that demand also must be addressed. After spending an estimated \$51 billion per year on the war on drugs, the United States remains the number one consumer of drugs in the world.²⁷ Therefore, some experts argue that Washington's war on drugs has not been cost-effective. The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) reports that the United States spent an estimated \$4.2 billion over an eight-year period, from 2002 to 2009.²⁸ Yet this figure is not an accurate reflection of the total cost because it does not include other programs, such as the cost of incarcerating prisoners. Excluding the cost of housing each prisoner as well as the social impacts that the prison system has had on society enabled the United States to present a more balanced budget. Some scholars have estimated the entire cost of the drug war at over \$40 billion when considering the amount of money that states and local governments within the United States spent attempting to combat drug trafficking and prosecute drug dealers.²⁹ The United States experienced declines in drug usage from 11.6 percent in 2002 to 9.3 percent in 2008, but this decrease represents only a slight improvement. In terms of the big picture, drug use has been increasing over time. In 2010, law enforcement arrested 853,838 people for possessing marijuana. Moreover, 88 percent of the individuals arrested for the possession of this illegal substance were charged for their crimes.³⁰

For many years, governments in Latin America have argued that if the Americans did not consume so many drugs, then Latin American countries would not have a drug problem. In other words, the logic is that drug dealers continue to traffic drugs because they have a market for the substances. Indeed, the United States remains the number one drug consuming country in the world, spending an estimated US\$150 billion on drugs each year. Some scholars argue that it is not true that countries in Latin America and the Caribbean would not have a drug problem even if US drug demand decreased to zero as a proliferation in drug consumption has occurred as a result of globalization.³¹ Drug consumption is no longer only an American phenomenon. According to the 2010 UNODC report in 2009, Brazil received the honor as the second biggest cocaine consuming country in the world, replacing Argentina, which had held this position. The report reveals that Brazilians consume large amounts of cocaine. In fact, Brazil has

900,000 cocaine users. In addition, cocaine usage in Chile and Argentina continues to rise over time, revealing that the trends for drug consumption in South America appear to be getting worse as opposed to better.³² Like Latin America, other regions also have experienced increases in cocaine usage.³³

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Chapter 2 traces the history of crime and violence and their interaction in the formulation of sophisticated, global illicit markets. It conceptualizes violence as an important tool of the underworld to enforce contracts, eliminate rivals, communicate and, ultimately, to coerce others. The chapter highlights specific cases such as the history of prohibition, the Italian-American mafia, and other organized criminal groups, to demonstrate the use of violence in the criminal underworld. It also explores new, technological developments in the criminal landscape, such as the use of the Dark Web and Bitcoin.

Chapter 3 focuses on the global superstructure and states that facilitate demand and supply. Looking specifically at weak and fragile states of the international system, the chapter illustrates the role of corruption, underdevelopment, and political/institutional weakness that enable global crime and violence. Some fragile states produce the goods and services (e.g., drugs) that are then marketed and ultimately sold to other countries. This means the United States and states of the European Union are the target of illicit suppliers; and as long as people in those states demand those goods, organized criminal networks will thrive. The chapter encourages more coordination through already established regimes like *Interpol*.

Chapter 4 examines the trends in drug trafficking and organized crime. It begins with an analysis of the case of drug trafficking and organized crime in Colombia, which has played a crucial role in the drug trafficking supply-chain. Colombia also has been a critical ally of the United States in its war on drugs. The US government, for example, invested billions of dollars trying to increase security in this country and combat organized crime through an initiative known as Plan Colombia. What have been the results of such efforts? The chapter then turns to drug trafficking and organized crime in Mexico, focusing on the militarization of the war on drugs. It examines the nature of drug cartels and organized crime in Mexico, focusing on how such organizations have evolved over time. The

chapter then explores the relationship between Mexico and the United States and evaluates the role of strategies such as the Mérida Initiative. Next, the chapter turns to the issue of human trafficking and examines the role that organized crime groups play in this enterprise. The chapter concludes with an analysis of what constitutes success as well as some potential future challenges.

Chapter 5 focuses on gangs and counter-gang strategies and how they have contributed to violence. The chapter begins with a conceptualization of gangs. After an examination of the different elements that constitute a gang, the chapter discusses the structure of gangs, focusing on the differences between vertical and horizontal structures. This chapter of the book then turns to an examination of Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and the 18th Street gangs. It analyzes the origins of these organizations and the different factors that resulted in the expansion of these street gangs throughout Central America. The chapter focuses on the role of tough on crime strategies as well as the consequences of such initiatives. Next, the chapter explores the relationship between Central American street gang members and the penitentiary system. It also explores the relationship between these gangs and the United States and analyzes the policies of the current administration. The chapter concludes with some policy recommendations.

Chapter 6 explores the nature and types of violence the world suffers from today. Physical acts of violence such as war and terrorism, structural violence like poverty and economic deprivation and violence against women and children, including sexual abuse, are examined. The chapter sees violence as an act of communication by various groups (e.g., organized crime groups), as they seek to convey some message to the world. For instance, criminal groups can use violence to scare rivals and intimidate citizens from reporting corrupt acts to the police or journalists from publishing stories about illicit activities. The chapter concludes by questioning if we will ever see the end of violence.

Finally, Chap. 7 concludes with some policy lessons. It examines the concept of models (e.g., counter-narcotics strategies) and whether they can be applied in multiple countries. In addition, this chapter explores the issue of combating poverty and inequality. The chapter also addresses the issue of corruption and the need to reform various institutions (e.g., prison reform). The chapter concludes with an examination of the issue of reducing the demand for drugs.

CONCLUSION

This book is an effort to understand the linkages between gangs, organized crime groups, and violence. Despite governments spending billions of dollars attempting to counter gangs, drug cartels, and violence, many countries around the planet continue to be plagued by high levels of criminal activity and violence. Criminal activity has contributed to high levels of violence as organized crime groups fight for control of territory. Moreover, the work also examines how government strategies have contributed—unintentionally—to violence. The work focuses on the importance of state fragility, which contributes to high levels of organized crime as well as violence.

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CHAPTER 2

History of Crime and Violence

This chapter takes a historical approach to understand the interaction of crime and violence. Organized crime has existed, and continues to exist, as long as there is demand for illegal goods and services. Moisés Naím describes illicit markets simply as “an age old, continuous facet and side effect of market economies or of commerce in general.”¹ Illicit markets and organized crime networks may always exist alongside legitimate business networks. This lesson was learned during prohibition, yet policymakers in the United States and other countries have yet to apply it to other matters like drugs, illegal gambling, prostitution, loan sharking, and various other illicit activities.

Violence has a purpose in the underworld.² It can be used to enforce contracts, send a message to other gangs, and consolidate power by eliminating rivals. By exploring the correlation between crime and violence, this chapter will touch on several points: (1) How has crime evolved over time? (2) How is violence related to illicit criminal activities? (3) How have illicit markets influenced the nature of crime? This work will look at several examples prominent worldwide such as the Italian-American mafia, the Russian mafia,³ and the Black mafia. This chapter will also look at the evolution of crime, specifically in the Internet age. In today’s world, crime is protected by anonymity of the Dark Web and the use of Bitcoin.⁴ Law enforcement must be able to learn and adapt to keep up with technological change in crime and violence.

CONCEPTUALIZING VIOLENCE AND ITS ROLE IN ORGANIZED CRIME

Before we understand the nature of violence in organized crime, it is important to first understand organized crime.⁵ Organized crime is defined as:

The product of a self-perpetuating criminal conspiracy to wring exorbitant profits from our society by any means—fair or foul, legal and illegal. It survives on fear and corruption. By other means, it obtains a high degree of immunity from the law. It is totalitarian in organization. A way of life, it imposes rigid discipline on underlings who do the dirty work while the top men of organized crime are generally insulated from the criminal act and the consequent danger of prosecution.⁶

Corruption can be considered the consent part of organized crime. Consent is important for garnering support and forcing behavior without violence. When that fails, organized criminal elements often use violence to formulate behavior that would then assist in the profitability of the illegal business. People pursue illegal business for the purposes of profit, and since not many pursue this line of work, the demand is ultimately inelastic. Price elasticity “measures how much the quantity demanded responds to a change in price. Demand for a good is said to be elastic if the quantity demanded responds substantially to changes in the price. Demand is said to be inelastic if the quantity demanded responds only slightly to changes in the price.”⁷ This means that the price of illegal goods will have no change on the amount demanded. Thus, you can charge any price for say, an ounce of heroin, because people are going to need heroin. It is important to bear in mind that there is incredible risk associated with illegal activities. Risk can be valued into the price of an illegal good.⁸ If there is a demand for something illegal, whatever that thing may be, then there will be ambitious people waiting to fill that gap. During prohibition (1920–1933), Al Capone, a Chicago mob boss, recognized the demand for liquor. Whoever could fill that void was to make that money: “somebody had to throw some liquor on that thirst!”⁹ This is true if you are someone selling methamphetamine in Appalachia, heroin in Afghanistan, or cocaine in the hills and mountains of Colombia. The same logic has even been applied historically during American prohibition in the 1920s.¹⁰ Chapter 3 will discuss the appeal of engaging in illegal markets given chronic underdevelopment or poverty.

Interestingly, prohibition sought to discourage people from drinking alcohol.¹¹ However, the exact opposite occurred, as one writer remembers:

When Prohibition was introduced, I hoped that it would be widely supported by public opinion and the day would soon come when the evil effects of alcohol would be recognized. I have slowly and reluctantly come to believe that this has not been the result. Instead, drinking has generally increased; the speakeasy has replaced the saloon; a vast army of lawbreakers has appeared; many of our best citizens have openly ignored Prohibition; respect for the law has been greatly lessened; and crime has increased to a level never seen before.¹²

Thus, not only did prohibition fail to get people to stop drinking, but it created an entire industry and subculture based on illegal drinking. There was an uptick in violence which was significant stemming from the fight over market share as well as increases in deaths from tainted alcohol. The cocktail and NASCAR racing are just two things out of the prohibition subculture that many people enjoy today.¹³ After a decade, prohibition came to an end with the election of President Franklin Roosevelt. Many expected criminal networks to disappear after their major source of income, alcohol, had now been returned to legality. Yet this simply did not happen. Once these networks were created, their purpose was to survive and that meant maintaining extreme levels of income. As a result, organized criminal networks moved to other operations like drug trafficking, extortion, book making, illegal gambling, and even perfecting the institution we know today as money laundering.¹⁴ Peter Lupsha, an expert on organized crime, contends that “transnational organized crime groups are not limited to one enterprise, such as drug trafficking, as their only market or business. Whatever makes a profit they will engage in, for they are at heart career criminals.”¹⁵

There are four practical, interrelated reasons for violence in the underworld: the enforcement of contracts, to communicate a message (as they say, sending a message) to consolidate power by eliminating dangerous rivals and to force outcomes. In a world without government, violence is used as a mechanism by criminals to resolve problems. For example, if someone did not pay you, they would have to face the consequences for that (e.g., physically harming someone). This happens frequently in the mafia but also in other criminal organizations.¹⁶ As such, it must be treated as a general rule. This shall be clarified further in the following paragraphs.

Mob organizations will use violence to make sure no party reneges. This has been documented in a report to the President and the Attorney General of the United States titled “The Impact: Organized Crime Today”¹⁷: “Violence and the threat of violence are an integral part of the criminal group. Both are used as means of control and protection against both members of the group will violate their commitment and that was outside the group to protect it and maximize its power. Members are expected to commit, condone or authorize violent acts.”¹⁸ Within this statement, the four elements that constitute mafia style violence can be observed, but specifically the enforcement of contracts. Logically, when things go wrong, one cannot go to the police or through the judiciary system. After all, organized crime is illegal so one must take matters into one’s own hands to protect wealth and defend oneself. Violence provides a utility and is a necessary evil to back up transactions and contracts, something usually the government provides. Organized crime needs enforcement and this is the reason for the relationship between violence and crime. The Oath of Omerta signifies that any complaints will be taken care of in the family: “May I burn, may my soul burn like this paper, if I betray anyone in this family or anyone in this room.”¹⁹ Governments and law enforcement were not to be involved even if the crime network were to rule against you, except for particular situations where government or police were to offer asylum in exchange for information or assistance of some sort. As a result, enforcement is a public good. The movie *Goodfellas* provides insight into the crime world, particularly the quote that describes the role of the boss of the family: “All they got from Paulie was protection from other guys looking to rip them off...That’s what the FBI can never understand—that what Paulie and the organization offer is protection for the kinds of guys who can’t go to the cops. They’re like the police department for wiseguys.”²⁰

Connected to this idea is the need to communicate a message. Organized criminals may use violence to accomplish this purpose. For criminals, communicating violence is important to safeguard against any disrespect. Respect is exceedingly important; without it, people will perceive you as a push-over and refuse to pay. For instance, Florida in the 1980s served as a major distribution hub for a major Colombian cartel. This distribution hub was centered around a Colombian drug lord named Griselda Blanco. As a woman, Blanco had to demonstrate and use extreme forms of violence to communicate her strength as position as someone with whom one was never too flippant. On one occasion, a customer did

not pay Blanco back in exchange for a product. In this instance, Blanco sent a hitman to kill the entire family. One associate described the reasoning:

...they murdered to the whole family
 then there they would think:
 ...“How will I recover the money?”...
 Not it is for the money,
 but to send a message.
 “Don’t swindle me, don’t enter with me[”],
 “because I will kill you or I will make them to kill you.”²¹

The interesting issue here is that with the death of the family, there would be no way for the money to be repaid. Instead a point had to be made to other customers; an example had to be made of the delinquent: do not cheat me or else I will kill you and everyone you love. Thus, “within organized crime...violence can be utilized as a direct method of control to silence a potential witness or as an indirect method of control to punish as a warning to others.”²²

To consolidate power by eliminating dangerous rivals, organized criminals will use violence. An example is the assassination of Paul Castellano, the head of the Gambino crime family (an organization who ruled organized crime in New York City in the middle of the twentieth century), by John Gotti and Sammy “The Bull” Gravano.²³ Gotti and Gravano knew that Castellano was looking to either demote them or kill them after the death of Neil Dellacroce due to Gene Gotti’s dealings with drugs. Dellacroce served as a loyal underboss for Carlo Gambino yet was passed over Castellano, Gambino’s brother in law. Regardless, Dellacroce remained loyal and served as Castellano’s underboss. Castellano proclaimed drug trafficking punishable by death and wanted to move the Gambino crime family into more “white-collar” crime. Since Gotti and Gravano too were under the protection of Dellacroce, his death would leave the door open for Castellano. Thus, for Gotti, it was kill or be killed.²⁴ Gotti and his associates put together a replacement leadership and proceeded to take out Castellano. In a brilliant coup d’etat, Gotti set a trap for Castellano. Gotti’s team maneuvered into position outside Sparks Steak House in New York City. Castellano was invited by Gotti’s man to a meeting there. It was there that Castellano was assassinated by a hail of bullets. Immediately, Gotti set himself up as the new boss of the Gambino

crime family.²⁵ Violence amid such a public display not only allowed Gotti to survive, but eliminated a serious rival for the top position. Such violence has been repeated throughout the history of organized crime.

In addition, violence may be used to force outcomes, whatever they may be. In the 1980s, Colombia tried to reduce the power of the drug cartels in the country, specifically Pablo Escobar, with little success. The Supreme Court of Colombia then decided to push through an extradition treaty with the United States. This meant that people found guilty for crimes in or against the United States were to have to serve out their prison sentence in the United States, not in Colombia.²⁶ The advantage here was that prisons were easily corruptible in Colombia compared to the United States. Both Escobar and a guerilla group named M-19 had a mutual interest to prevent such an act from passing as well as to destroy some damaging evidence. Thus, they launched a joint effort to stop such deliberations and possible agreements. Up to 100 people were killed in the attack.²⁷ Such an extreme assault on the state describes a major tool of violence by organized crime: to force outcomes. The outcome here was to prevent any extradition treaty to the United States. This is an example of the use of a non-state actors' power. However, the reverse may also be true. A recent peace treaty in Colombia with the The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) demonstrates not just the FARC's power to force outcomes (a peace, and now recognition as a legal political party through negotiation), but the fragility of the Colombian state as the implementation of the peace deal will cost billions. Moreover, concerns exist that the FARC will not demobilize and will join other criminal groups.²⁸ It has yet to be seen if the FARC has indeed stopped growing coca for the production of cocaine.²⁹ Thus, violence—even the threat of violence—can be used to solve problems. As Al Capone once said: “You can get much farther with a kind word and a gun than you can with a kind word alone.”³⁰

These are some examples that highlight the major uses of violence. The following statement explains the reasoning of why states go to war: “if disputes cannot be resolved by non-violent means, and because there is nothing to prevent a state from utilizing force, all states must be prepared to use force themselves.”³¹ The mafia organizes itself along similar lines. In sum, it must be noted that in the underworld, violence is not something criminals use liberally. As they say “[b]lood does not get along with business”³²; it brings negative attention, or *heat*, from law enforcement. Keeping a low profile is altogether “good for business—keeping murder rates low and police attention to a minimum—the criminal world is in turmoil and in need of an arbitrator to

re-establish authority.”³³ The most successful criminal organizations use violence sparingly, only when necessary and quietly along the four guidelines previously discussed.

OVERVIEW OF ORGANIZED AND VIOLENT CRIMINAL NETWORKS IN OPERATION TODAY

Peter Andreas has argued that “the history of America as a battle over smuggling of goods and people...illicit flows—and the campaigns to police them—defined and shaped the nation.”³⁴ His book entitled *Smuggler Nation: How Illicit Trade Made America* does an excellent job documenting the history of illicit networks in the United States. The United States has a long history of piracy and illicit markets, from the eighteenth century with the illegal importation of molasses, Canadian alcohol during prohibition, and now drugs and humans. Indeed, the United States continues to have a multiplicity of organized crime networks. This section will briefly describe three major global networks, the Italian-American mafia, the Russian mafia, and certain African-American organizations. The following descriptions seek to produce repeated patterns of behavior that establish these groups as successful criminal networks.

The Italian-American mafia boasts a long tradition, beginning in 1282 in Sicily.³⁵ They existed then as a rebel force against occupying French forces, but branched out into an entirely new network of organized crime. When Benito Mussolini came to power in 1922, he vowed to remove the mafia from Italy as the non-state criminal network presented a direct challenge to the state.³⁶ Indeed, the Sicilian Mafia was one of the many groups that deemed an enemy to the state along with communists, socialists, liberals, and other political opponents. On some occasions, political opponents who had nothing to do with the mafia were considered part of the mafia.³⁷ In this manner, Mussolini chased away hundreds of Mafiosi, some of whom made their way to the United States. There, they benefitted from prohibition, joining already established families in this country.³⁸ One such individual was Carlo Gambino. Gambino was already a “made guy” (meaning that he was a member of the La Cosa Nostra, “Our Thing”) when he came to the United States, because of the Fascist crackdown. Gambino moved up fast within the criminal organization because of his strategic brilliance and knowledge of when (and when not) to use violence. Taking a page out of Machiavelli, Gambino would

say that “you have to be like a lion and a fox. The lion frightens away the wolves. The fox recognizes traps. If you are like a lion and a fox, nothing will defeat you.”³⁹ It was this application of wisdom that allowed Gambino to know when to switch sides during the Castellammarese War to survive. He even assassinated his own boss to take command of the big seat for himself. He had legitimacy because of his perception as Gambino proved his intelligence, using the post-prohibition, Great Depression/New Deal landscape to build wealth.⁴⁰ He made millions of dollars from selling government ration cards, corrupting federal agencies like the Office of Price Administration to achieve his profits.⁴¹ Gambino became so powerful, yet his true power was never known by law enforcement. He kept a low profile, looking more like a loving grandfather than a mob boss. Under his leadership, he attained power and wealth that no other boss then and now would ever attain. The Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO)⁴² then broke the back of the Italian-American mafia to the point where they have yet to recover (as best as we know). The RICO statute, or Title 18 of the US Code, Section 1961(4), outlines organized crime enterprises as “any individual, partnership, corporation, association, or other legal entity, and any union or group of individuals associated in fact although not a legal entity: The following crimes under Title 18 of the United States Code, Section 1961 (1) form significant portions of organized crime profit seeking activity.” The aim of RICO is thus to destroy any illegal money-making schemes of the mafia. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) understands the profit motivation of these groups, defining organized crime as “a self-perpetuating, structured and disciplined association of individuals or groups, combined together for the purpose of obtaining monetary or commercial gains or profits, wholly or in part by illegal means, while protecting their activities through a pattern of graft and corruption.”⁴³ Such behavior is repeated by other organized criminal groups such as the Russian mafia and African-American criminal networks.

The Russian mafia emerged as a powerful force after the end of the Soviet Union. Russia during the 1990s was in dire economic and political straits and the Russian mafia took advantage of such a scenario.⁴⁴ During the Soviet Union, organized criminals were seriously suppressed similar to what happened in Fascist Italy. Like the Italian mafia, the Russian mafia boast a centuries’ long tradition of 400 years in the making.⁴⁵ They traffic

in the usual commodities such as drugs, arms, and humans, as well as manage brothels and gambling dens.⁴⁶ When the Soviet Union finally fell (and even during the reforms of Perestroika and Glasnost), the Russian mafia reemerged taking full advantage of Russian state weaknesses and corruption.⁴⁷ Today, the Russian mafia supplies a multiplicity of illegal goods like rare and precious metals and radioactive materials, weapons, and drugs.⁴⁸ Money laundering has been key to the Russian mafia's success, and they operate many legitimate businesses alongside illegal ones.⁴⁹ Today, the Russian mafia continues to bolster its economic position through corruption and its legal business, expanding to international markets in Latin America and the United States. In one notable example, one Russian mafia group negotiated with the Cali cartel to pay for drugs with weapons.⁵⁰ The Russian group sold a nuclear submarine built by the Soviet Union to the Colombians for \$5.5 million.⁵¹ Over the decades, organized criminal groups have increased coordination efforts to extract as much profit as possible from these relations.

The Russian mafia today boasts a global presence as do the Crips and the Bloods.⁵² The Crips rose out of necessity: there were other gangs in South Central Los Angeles that future Crip members needed protection against since the police were doing little to protect African-Americans. Soon, the Crips became the prominent group, leading to a number of smaller gangs establishing a conglomerate known as the Bloods. They moved quickly into drugs, as one member put it: "We could make about \$500 in a day...We sold our weed or drugs or whatever just to get money. The rest of the time we were just chilling."⁵³ An entire subculture grew out of such gang culture, with hand signs, dance moves, and even words and language.⁵⁴ Like the Italian and Russian examples, African-American mafia groups and gangs also seek profit through the development of illegal networks and markets.

The common thread between criminal groups is the prospect of making profit. Profit drives illegal behavior and the wealth of criminals can be translated to significant wealth and power. Like any business, technological innovations drive efficiency and further wealth. Technology makes business easier to conduct through furthering communication and transactions. This is also true for criminal enterprises. We will discuss major changes in technology and how crime has evolved to use these innovations to their profit. The Internet has become a major vehicle for criminal activity, more so on its unindexed part, commonly referred to as the Dark Web.

EVOLUTION OF CRIME IN THE INTERNET AGE: THE DARK WEB

It is worth mentioning here some of the major transformations in crime in the twenty-first century. As globalization transforms business, we must also expect similar transformations in the conduct of crime and violence. Today, we can go online to any website and purchase clothes, food, or anything you desire and have it delivered straight to your front door.⁵⁵ The advancements made over the last 100 years have resulted in such an enormous transformation of our society. Everything that you know and use, from Facebook to Twitter to any news outlet, is all part of the surface web. The surface web is any part of “the Internet that can be found by the link-crawling techniques used by a typical search engine such as Google, Bing or Yahoo. It refers to the unencrypted non-dark, non-Tor internet.”⁵⁶ The reverse is the Dark Web, which is any page on the Internet that is ultimately inaccessible through surface web means and thus requires the use of a browser specifically designed for browsing. As a result, it offers anonymity and can potentially be used for criminal or terrorist purposes.⁵⁷ It must be mentioned that the Dark Web is simply those pages that have not been indexed. This means your private Facebook messages, banking information, stock positions, emails, and anything requiring a password, is part of the Dark Web.

The Dark Web cannot be accessed by Google Chrome or other Internet browsers. It can be accessed by downloading the *tor* browser, which is understood as: “an ‘onion-routing’ system which makes a PC’s net address untraceable by bouncing the encrypted data it sends through several randomly selected computer servers on a volunteer network—each of which removes a level of encryption—before it reaches its destination.”⁵⁸ Onion-routing shrouds one’s Dark Web browsing by protecting history in that “messages are encapsulated in layers of encryption. The encrypted data are transmitted through a series of network nodes called onion routers, each of which ‘peels away’ a single layer, uncovering the data’s next destination. When the final layer is decrypted, the message arrives at its destination. The sender remains anonymous because each intermediary knows only the location of the immediately preceding and following nodes.”⁵⁹ The mechanics of *tor* allows users to navigate the Dark Web without the ability to track or monitor given the plethora of networks it uses to make it mathematically impossible to pinpoint.⁶⁰

Using tor allows users to view, download, and share illicit materials such as child pornography. The Dark Web also boasts a number of illegal market places. Users can purchase a number of illegal goods. Links list a number of illicit Dark Web websites that lead one to suppliers of illegal goods and services.⁶¹ One can identify the severe threat to domestic law and order but also to national security and international peace and stability. These websites can be used without law enforcement knowing and everything is delivered, confidentially, right to any residence around the world.

Another interesting thing is how people purchase materials online. Credit cards can certainly be tracked and monitored, so alternative currencies have been created. The currency of the Dark Web is Bitcoin, which operates between users through supply and demand with no regulation. Price is determined through interactions in electronic networks and is used to buy goods and services.⁶² There are several advantages to using Bitcoin to purchase illegal goods:

Fewer risks for merchants—Bitcoin transactions are secure, irreversible, and do not contain customers' sensitive or personal information. This protects merchants from losses caused by fraud or fraudulent chargebacks, and there is no need for PCI compliance. Merchants can easily expand to new markets where either credit cards are not available or fraud rates are unacceptably high. The net results are lower fees, larger markets, and fewer administrative costs.

Security and control—Bitcoin users are in full control of their transactions; it is impossible for merchants to force unwanted or unnoticed charges as can happen with other payment methods. Bitcoin payments can be made without personal information tied to the transaction. This offers strong protection against identity theft. Bitcoin users can also protect their money with backup and encryption.

Transparent and neutral—All information concerning the Bitcoin money supply itself is readily available on the block chain for anybody to verify and use in real-time. No individual or organization can control or manipulate the Bitcoin protocol because it is cryptographically secure. This allows the core of Bitcoin to be trusted for being completely neutral, transparent and predictable.⁶³

Bitcoin, when combined with the tor browser, allows users the freedom to purchase anything illegal, from drugs, arms, forged passports, and identities; anything that is illicit. With these two pieces of the puzzle in place, it is remarkably simple to acquire illegal goods on the Dark Web. One teenager that bought guns describes such ease as “just like buying a bar of chocolate.”⁶⁴ As startling as this sounds, many understand the ramifications:

If teenagers can get on it, then so can many others involved in terrorism and organised crime. When guns are supplied to terrorists and robbers, there is always a chance that it can be traced, networks dismantled. But there are serious obstacles if the deal is done through the dark net because the *raison d'être* for that market is secrecy. It is also an international market and goods can be shipped anywhere, this is why we are likely to see increasing use of it by terrorists and criminals.⁶⁵

The issue of course is not simply the ease by which a criminal or a terrorist can buy such materials. The benefit is to those seeking to buy and sell illegal goods is free concealment. Within this strength may lay a potential vulnerability and thus a solution for law enforcement.

Another issue to realize is the value of Bitcoin and the ramifications. Recently, Bitcoin has been in the news for its value: \$17,110.01 for one Bitcoin as of December 11, 2017 rising from \$761.66 from last year (same day).⁶⁶ This means, using one Bitcoin to buy a gun one day, may be worth double or triple another. The individuals running these illegal businesses are becoming more wealthy and powerful by the day. It becomes difficult to imagine solutions given anonymity and profitability. However, within anonymity may lie the prescription.

Since criminals and the like boast about the Dark Web's free concealment, the solution would be to remove this benefit. Thus, it is important to shed light on these activities by bringing such matters to the surface. One way to accomplish this is through the use of crawlers, which are "software programs that traverse the World Wide Web information space by following hypertext links and retrieving web documents by standard HTTP protocol."⁶⁷ Crawlers perform four major tasks:

- Forum identification: identifies the list of extremist forums to spider.
- Forum preprocessing: includes accessibility and crawl space traversal issues as well as forum wrapper generation.
- Forum spidering: consists of an incremental crawler and recall-improvement mechanism.
- Forum storage and analysis: stores and analyzes the forum collection.⁶⁸

Law enforcement is also getting smarter and utilizes a program called *Xkeyscore*,⁶⁹ which tracks Internet users who downloaded *tor* from their

browser history. Thus, if anyone tries to use tor, they will automatically be placed on a list of people of interest.

Bitcoin itself may require some governmental regulation. If the value of Bitcoin continues to rise, the likelihood of it crashing may very well occur as it has done in the past. This time, the crash may become a systemic force, bringing down other stock prices, which may set off a domino effect, ultimately bringing down the stock market. As of today, the stock market is at heights never before seen. It would take a systemically important asset, like Bitcoin, to bring it down. Some governmental regulation to ensure proper usage of the asset may be an important development but so far, there have only been discussions.⁷⁰

Another interesting thing is to track those people who use Bitcoin for the purchase of illegal goods. Bank of America CEO Brian Moynihan has discussed major flaws in tracking flows of Bitcoin. It is extremely likely that Bitcoin is being used to launder money for organized crime and other nefarious entities: “There ought to be a hard look at the policy of anonymous currencies, because the ability to track information of money flowing is one we use seriously against terrorism and as [a tool] against improper, illegal behavior.”⁷¹ This means that Bitcoin is not as secure and anonymous as its administrators say or believe. There are several other cryptocurrencies in use such as Ripple, Stellar, and Litecoin.⁷² They may not be as popular or valuable as Bitcoin, but they have similar capabilities in that, if accepted by a Dark Web vendor, people will still be able to buy illegal products.

Thus, the more globalized and linked through advancements in technology and communication, the more policymakers can expect similar transformations in the conduct of crime and violence. The unfortunate part of all this is that organized crime and terrorist groups use the Dark Web for a number of purposes. Patrick Tucker discusses terrorist groups’ use of the Dark Web to recruit, share tactics and strategies, gain money, and so forth:

For several years now Jihadists have been sharing information online concerning Tor and its usage thus indicating clearly that [Tor] is used by many of them. However, up until now I have not come across specific websites used for Jihadi purposes. I therefore assume many of them use Tor in the same way the general population does, through black markets and general forums where they can achieve material and information and remain

anonymous. Moreover, since the Dark [Web] is far less indexed and far harder to come across than regular Websites are, there is the possibility that there are Websites used by ISIS of which we do not know yet.⁷³

Governments must regulate and control what goes on to protect citizens and enhance national and international security. The recommendation would be to target the very strength and appeal of both tor and Bitcoin: anonymity. While this may seemingly breach one's right to privacy, freedom of expression and freedom of association, child pornography, illegal drugs, and services, among other crimes, must be curtailed. Indeed, the fine line between freedom and security must be straddled with checks and balances.

CONCLUSION

The nature of crime has evolved over time with the development of global illicit markets.⁷⁴ Lupsha argues that “transnational organized crime groups are not limited to one enterprise, such as drug trafficking, as their only market or business. Whatever makes a profit they will engage in, for they are at heart career criminals.”⁷⁵ Law enforcement, for example, through RICO, strives to make it too expensive for these criminals by increasing penalties for illegal activities including imprisonment, massive fines, and forfeiture of property and other assets.⁷⁶ By making illicit markets expensive to maintain, governments hope to reduce crime. Regardless, crime still exists given the expectation of profit. Anonymity has become increasingly important and may be found in the digital realm.

This chapter focused on the violent nature of organized crime as well as its evolution into other areas, including the Internet. Today a diverse array of organizations exist that cater to the demands of the public. The mafia exists simply to supply this demand in exchange for profit. They may use violence to protect sources of wealth, using a variety of measures to enforce contracts, communicate dominance, and manufacture outcomes in their favor. Violence is ideal to avoid given that it is bad for business. It is important to “buy-out” other mafia organizations but also the government. This is known as corruption. Corruption protects the organization from law enforcement. As one drug trafficker notes, everyone has a price:

Although Miami has changed, I still believe that all had a price...You could begin with Noriega in Panama and to lower until the administrators of the city, to the police. If they stopped somebody and they had 50 kilos, they were offered a tip...with 20 dollars or with 50 or 100, but there were hundred of thousands of dollars. Tell them that in one hour you will have [everything] that they want cash. Half million, three million rooms. But you should leave with the coca. He/she almost always gave result. He/she knew a lieutenant that Bay worked in North Village. I came closer one day and I told him/her: 'I want to discharge some boats behind police's department? do you believe that there will be problems?' And he/she said: 'looks (sic), we will use two patrol [cars]. Put it in the cajuelas [car trunk/boot] "and llevaremos [go] to where you want."'”⁷⁷

The following chapter will describe corruption and organized crime. We move our focus to fragile states as these are the main targets for organized criminal networks. Markets in underdeveloped states tend to be more susceptible to bribery and coercion than those in developed states. From these states, criminals can operate freely, targeting major demand states like the United States and members of the European Union.

NOTES

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CHAPTER 3

Fragile States, Corruption, and Crime

Chapter 2 posits that there is a relationship between corruption and the profitability of crime. Associated with crime is violence to enforce contracts and send messages—among other activities. How is organized crime resilient in the face of law enforcement? How has crime and violence reached systemic levels, boasting complex and global networks to facilitate supply and demand? This chapter explains how there is a deep connection between fragile states, corruption, and the proliferation of transnational crime. Organized crime will flourish if criminals are able to penetrate a state's institutions to aid concealment, protect production chains, and supply lines and ports for exportation. Developing, or underdeveloped, countries are the main vehicle that serves to accomplish this goal especially if states are particularly corrupt. A corrupt government is essential to the success of any transnational criminal organization.¹

Supplier states, such as Mexico and Afghanistan,² export illicit products around the world. Demand states, like the United States, states of the European Union, and other countries, serve as the major markets for such products. In this regard, demand creates its own supply. To reduce demand and thus supply, it is important for the states to coordinate their policies to assist countries plagued by high levels of organized crime and violence in their fight against illicit markets. This means encouraging the development of inclusive political institutions that may hinder the power of illicit markets as well as addressing the demand for such illicit commodities.

This chapter contends that corrupt, fragile states are integral for crime to flourish internationally. By combating fragility through inclusive political institutions, development may have a chance to create alternatives to illicit market activities. This chapter will accomplish the following:

- Illustrate the concept of fragility regarding state capacity;
- Explain weakness/fragility in terms of states that have trouble controlling territory and crime;
- Isolate the influence of corruption upon weak states and the health of the international system;
- Identify how weak states foster and export corruption and impunity, which encourages more crime and violence globally;
- Provide examples of state weakness;
- Address realistic solutions in the fight against fragility and weakness that would ultimately benefit major powers in the international system, including law enforcement.

This chapter will thus build on the argument that “economic underdevelopment...promotes fragility due to a lack of democratic political instability from corruption.”³ By understanding the impact of organized crime on corrupt, fragile, and underdeveloped states, this chapter seeks to provide a better explanation of the power of organized criminal groups in the international system. This chapter hopes to put Chaps. 4 and 5 into perspective, as the various trends in drug trafficking and organized crime and the power of transnational gangs are explored.

FRAGILE STATES: DEFINITIONS

In the last decade, there has been research conducted on the concept of fragile or weak states. To begin, the Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity designates fragile states as those at the cusp of collapse.⁴ There are three dimensions describing such a collapse with increasing intensity or danger. The first is authority failure, where the state does not have the authority to protect its people from organized crime, civil war, general violence, and ultimately the dispensation of justice. Somalia, Côte d’Ivoire, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka, among others, are all examples of fragile states in this regard. Guatemala and Haiti fit into this framework as well since these governments have been unable to protect its citizens from attack and bring attackers to justice.⁵ The second category is service failures,

when a state cannot dispense basic services, education, health care, and clean water to citizens. Under this framework, a state cannot economically protect its citizens from structural violence because of the inability to prevent suffering and death from poverty and destitution. Examples of states suffering from this inability to provide basic services for its people include Yemen, Somalia, and South Sudan. The third category, legitimacy failures, is the most dangerous for long-term stability and security. While authority failures are designed to reduce confidence in an authority figure, legitimacy failures describe deeper issues within the political system: a lack of support from the vast majority of the population. This may occur because of increased animosity from no free or fair election, a military governing force, a violent power grab, a violent suppression of opposition force, or a lack of free press.⁶ Prominent current state examples of legitimacy failures include the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. Under conditions of fragility, organized crime can flourish, not just through citizen networks but also by government or government officials. Corruption is essential to achieve such a goal as governments can sponsor and protect illegal enterprises.⁷

In “Promoting Stability and Development in Fragile and Failed States,” Monika François and Inder Sud describe an essential feature of fragile states as those which suffer from multiple centers of authority within its geographic territory. States traditionally hold a monopoly on the use of violence within their own territory. Effective states fill this role, while “weak or failed states provide opportunities for actors outside the government—whether religious fundamentalists, disaffected citizens, or merely opportunists seeking power—to attempt to seize the state apparatus by violent means.”⁸ In weak and fragile states then, there are direct challenges to a state’s monopoly on its use of violence within its own territory, being challenged by other centers of violence that compete for control. Hanna Samir Kassab argues this same point, using the term “weak states” to convey similar notions of fragility. According to Kassab, weakness or fragility is measured by a fundamental lack of sovereignty and autonomy.⁹ Sovereignty is control over a given territory, the geopolitical space, policy, law, and order under a certain regime and government system, while autonomy is the notion of acting independently to solve specific issues or neutralize threats.¹⁰ The threats experienced by weak and fragile states are different from those experienced by great powers. While great powers have to deal with other great power challengers (e.g., the United States against Russia and China), weak and fragile states usually confront softer

issues that are systemic, that is, part of the international system. These are ultimately out of the control, outside of the state's sovereign and autonomous control: "economic, environmental, political and social shocks."¹¹ Kassab builds on the work of Christopher Easter, arguing that weak states lack "the capacity to react to shocks, or resilience. Resilience depends more on current policy, is more easily reversed, and is less structural; but there may also be a structural element in the resilience component of vulnerability."¹² Thus, "external shocks are those caused by factors and events outside of the state's control."¹³ In the context of organized crime and violence, weak and fragile states are more vulnerable to these challengers because of their inherent lack of capacity but also resilience.

A lack of resilience, the capacity to bounce back from shocks, including the ability to destroy such challengers and reassert authority within a state, is a feature of fragility and weakness. Countries like Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Colombia all suffer from competitors within their sovereign territory so much so the central government cannot go into certain areas due to the risk of being attacked. For instance, in Afghanistan "there are already 'no go' zones under Taliban control in Faryab and Jawzjan provinces. News correspondents report an increasing number of Afghanistan's ethnic Turkmen arming themselves, and some joining the Taliban or foreign fighters, among them Uzbeks allied with the Taliban."¹⁴ In the Helmand province, a no-go stronghold in Afghanistan, Afghani forces are targeted by the Taliban. In other words, the Taliban conduct military operations against the state. Important as well is the fact that these military operations are financed by opium and heroin sales. The center of production is the Helmand province, and since the reduction of American forces in Afghanistan, opium production has risen by 87 percent or 9,921 tons for 2017, up from 5,291 tons in 2016.¹⁵ President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan expresses concern over this increase in supply and expected profit: "Without drugs, this war would have been long over...heroin is a very important driver of this war."¹⁶

Under these dire circumstances, policymakers and academics begin thinking of alternatives to the untenable status quo. In "Beyond Failed States and Ungoverned Spaces: Hybrid Political Orders in the Post Conflict Landscape," Richard Mallett argues for some arrangement between the state and the non-state actor to achieve peace and stability within the fragile state. Such an arrangement would reduce the conflict in the region and may lead to negotiation over illicit behavior.¹⁷ Doing so would help address the high levels of violence as well as the state fragility

as a result of the inability to control “ungoverned spaces.”¹⁸ Volker Boege, Anne Brown, and Kevin P. Clements argue for a similar governance structure, contending that hybrid systems may help bolster the provision of public goods, improving the lives of people residing within the fragile state. In sum, providing some stability within fragile states in this regard may temper the flow of illicit goods and other criminal or terrorist activities into neighboring states, including developed states in different hemispheres.¹⁹

As can be seen, fragile or weak states have three fundamental attributes:

- Multiple centers of power within a geopolitical territory (including the state; thus, its authority remains challenged);
- A stark inability to solve threats to security, multiple sources of threats including economic, political (violent political actors including terrorists and organized crime), environmental, and other types of disorder which plague a state’s development;
- Questionable legitimacy: corruption, authoritarian tendencies, lack of transparency, and accountability to citizens.

Fragility thus points to multiple issues which could very well be pointing to a much deeper issue: chronic underdevelopment stemming from undemocratic, extractive political institutions.

The previous authors and scholarly works, while credible and researched in depth, omit a primary variable that shapes and reinforces fragility and weakness. Jonathan D. Rosen and Hanna S. Kassab contend that there are various factors, such as economic development, that help weaken the state apparatus and contribute to instability and corruption.²⁰ Economic development may be associated with weak political institutions hindered by corruption. Rosen and Kassab thus demonstrate the deep, constitutive interplay of these two variables (economic underdevelopment and corruption) in the formation of a fragile state. Therefore, fragile states are those that lack resilience to respond to threats and dangers because of economic underdevelopment, corruption, and so forth, due to a fundamental lack of democratic political institutions. Instead, they are plagued by organized crime, terrorist networks, and other non-state actors (or threats, including non-violent ones like economic, environmental, and others described by Christopher Easter) that hinder the state’s success and survival.²¹

The fundamental argument here is that underdeveloped states, specifically fragile states, succumb to organized crime. This is because they do

not possess the resilience to fight organized crime. A common bridge between elements of fragility within a state and the commonality of corrupt activities is the existence of extractive political and economic institutions in these states. Thus, the more fragile a state, the more likely it is corrupt, serving as centers for illegal activity. Corruption drives relationships between criminals and public officials. These connections drive criminality, creating an atmosphere of impunity and freedom to operate. For instance, a corrupt security apparatus will keep organized crime groups informed of major state effects to clamp down on activities, conceal drug shipments, and promote the well-being of those in power as well as criminals, allowing for the appearance of legitimacy.²² In other words, increases in fragility may lead to increases in corruption and government involvement in illegal markets.²³ Underdevelopment, however, does not exist in a void; there must be a cause. Lack of the correct inclusive political institutions may be the cause. The reason for underdevelopment, thus, may be weakness within governmental authority, making the state itself vulnerable to a multiplicity of non-state threats. Rosen and Kassab argue that there is more to fragility than simply lacking sovereignty and autonomy, than suffering from challenges to the state from criminal and terrorist networks. Thus, looking at the problem from a systemic level:

Fragile states are not simply those that suffer from drug trafficking, civil violence and poverty. Fragility conveys much more than that because it takes into consideration inherent weaknesses that block a state from developing the right tools and infrastructure to rendering threats harmless or ineffective. The concept of fragility denotes then a downward spiral: fragility undermines the sovereignty and autonomy of the state, and, as a result, deems it incapable and ineffective as a unit of governance and representation of peoples within an anarchical international system.²⁴

Fragility can only be confronted by the building of proper democratic institutions dedicated to the promotion of development for all citizens. Promoting “economic development presents a means to weather exogenous and endogenous economic, environmental, political and social shocks endemic to vulnerable states...there is a clear dichotomy between these two concepts, vulnerability [or fragility] and development.”²⁵ Building such institutions (such as inclusive land ownership rights, pro-business and foreign investment legislation, and an accountable system of governance) may remedy the roots of underdevelopment, organized crime, and fragility.

Specifically, the history of states plagued by fragility are those characterized by patronage and clientelism, not constitutional democracy. Under a system of patronage and clientelism, there is little transparency and accountability; in addition, there is little confidence in the political system which impacts economics and business. Such a system is easier to bribe, which leads to rampant corruption. Rosen and Kassab refer to this as the “downward spiral” hindering not only the fragile state itself but the international system in general. The following sections will discuss specific issues that plague the fragile state: corruption and underdevelopment. These political conditions will then be linked to organized crime and its impact on the international system.

CORRUPTION AND VIOLENCE IN FRAGILE STATES: CASES OF CRIMINALS’ PLAYGROUNDS

The more fragile a state, the more likely it is corrupt, serving as centers for illegal activity: “drug production helps weaken states, fuel civil conflicts; drug revenues support insurgents, other armed non-state actors, and corrupt officials.”²⁶ Research shows that increases in fragility may lead to increases in corruption and government involvement in illegal markets.²⁷ Indeed, studies show that the more corrupt a state, the more porous the border in regard to the import of illegal drugs like heroin.²⁸ The aim of organized criminals is to make profit from an illegal commodity. To operate freely, organized criminals must be able to pay off police, judges, politicians, and other officials to do so (discussed in detail in Chap. 2). In other words, “Ties between criminal groups and public officials play a crucial role in facilitating criminal activity and creating a culture of impunity. Corrupt security forces can keep criminal groups informed, shield them from law enforcement operations, and facilitate drug shipments, while ties to politicians and local elites lend criminals a facade of legitimacy.”²⁹ This section will discuss how corruption works within a fragile state to accelerate profits, securing said profit streams for years to come.

Corruption is necessary for criminals to survive and thrive in the international system. Some organized criminal networks attempt to corrupt entire states to protect themselves and operate free from law enforcement and from other organized criminal groups; corruption is simply part of the “cost of doing business.”³⁰ The following section will discuss specific regions experiencing problems with corruption. Additionally, a link with terrorism will highlight the increasing blurring of the lines separating terrorism and organized crime.

If organized criminals target the state, its police, or civilian populations in a violent manner, some experts are led to contend that these behaviors are inherently terrorist in nature. According to Paul Rexton Kan, a security expert: “The judicial system, along with other portions of security institutions, facilitates the illicit trade occurring within their jurisdictions. The drug economy also begins to take root where the benefits of drug profits begin to spread into the licit economy of a nation.”³¹ Some experts contend that certain states suffer from a combination of organized crime and terrorism, or narcoterrorism. Narcoterrorism is “part of an illegal complex of drugs, violence and power, where the illegal drug trade and the illegal exercise of power have become aggregated in such a way that they threaten democracy and the rule of law.”³² One such group is the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—FARC). The FARC has been a destabilizing force in Colombia as early as the 1960s, selling cocaine to fund their war against the state. The case of the FARC will be discussed in later chapters. For now, we will discuss narcoterrorism as it relates to other states in other regions of the world, specifically fragile states of Central Asia.

Before though, it is important to discuss three major works which describe the debate about the connection between terrorism and organized crime. First, Thomas Sanderson in “Transnational terror and organized crime: blurring the lines”³³ argues that both entities, terrorist networks and organized criminal networks, share similar predation of fragile states especially given the absence of law and order.³⁴ They use similar methods of enriching themselves: drug trafficking, money laundering, and extortion for their ultimate political goal. For example, groups like Hezbollah and Al Qaeda also work together with crime networks, buying and selling drugs like methamphetamine, opium, and other drugs. These Middle Eastern and Central Asian criminal networks are deeply enmeshed with terrorist groups, combining business transactions throughout the world.³⁵ The article refers to a case where Hezbollah agents coordinated an illegal cigarette racket from Detroit across the United States. The proceeds were then used to buy weapons and other capabilities. In other words, terrorist networks are using similar infrastructure developed and tested by organized criminals.³⁶ Similar arguments have been made regarding the methods used by both of these groups, highlighting similarities, especially given state fragility.³⁷ We see this playing out in Central Asia in particular, given the entrenchment of terrorist and criminal behavior by the Taliban across fragile states in

Afghanistan, spilling over into neighboring states like Tajikistan.³⁸ There is thus a deep connection between organized crime, terrorism and violence, and persistent state fragility in Central Asia.

Central Asian Republics are deeply fragile given their socio-political context and experience with Soviet socialism.³⁹ Scholars, like Erica Marat, discuss fundamental problems with corruption, especially in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.⁴⁰ Corruption remains at the center of this dynamic given the level of immunity and freedom senior border officials enjoy.⁴¹ Further, some analysts have argued that such corruption allows for a more complicated analysis of the nexus between drugs and the state because in some states, including those of Central Asia, the state itself is a major player in the distribution of narcotics and other illegal materials.⁴² In Afghanistan, President Hamid Karzai's brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, was arrested on major heroin charges with connections to the government.⁴³ Many experts have also cited lack of adequate border controls.⁴⁴ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has recommended the following for the Central Asian region, understanding the difficulties for fragile states to solve problems associated with terrorism, corruption, and crime unilaterally:

- The Triangular Initiative (TI) involving cooperation between Afghanistan, Pakistan and (the Islamic Republic of) Iran focusing on the Southern Route, as well as on the Balkan Route;
- The Afghanistan-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan (AKT) Initiative focusing on the Northern Route;
- The Regional Working Groups, including on Precursors, Forensics and Law Enforcement Training, involving all countries in the region;
- The 'Central Asia and Southern Hub' (CASH) and 'Network of Prosecutors and Central Authorities from Source, Transit and Destination Countries in response to Transnational Organized Crime in Central Asia and Southern Caucasus' (CASC) Initiatives, to address money laundering in the wider region, including facilitating cooperation between the Financial Investigative Units (FIUs), the creation of networks among judicial offices and financial investigators, development of practical tools and provision of training.⁴⁵

Understanding these issues leads this book to answer the question: does fragility weaken or destabilize the international system? This book argues that yes, whatever goes on in fragile states will ultimately undermine the national security of other states in the international system. The following will be discussed in the next section.

FRAGILITY'S IMPACT ON THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Fragility affects the lives and livelihood of people residing within that state. Organized criminal activity within a state can do significant damage to that country. However, organized crime also targets other markets overseas. The opium grower in Afghanistan, for instance, seeks to sell the product in the European Union just as a cocaine producer in Mexico seeks markets in the United States. Ultimately, the fragility of one state is a force that destabilizes the international system. Organized criminals and terrorists alike attempt to hijack entire states to protect and expand their influence for a specific end: the accumulation of wealth. Power and violence is used to protect or consolidate wealth, to send a message or to eliminate opponents. In the case of organized crime, power and violence is subordinate to wealth. Organized criminals thus exist to fill a demand for the purpose of making profit. If illicit production (or supply) is usually located in the developing world due to lack of profitable alternatives and stable government, then demand markets must be in wealthier and more developed states as citizens enjoy more disposable income relative to citizens in fragile states. The United States, for instance, is one of the richest countries in the world. It is also the world's largest consumer of drugs due to its sizable demand.⁴⁶ Former US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has made it known: "We know what we own, and we, as Americans, need to confront that we are the market."⁴⁷ If we indeed assume that demand helps create supply, then we cannot study fragile states in isolation; we must study fragile states as it relates to the international (or global) system. In other words, to appreciate the difficulties plaguing fragile states, we must look at relationships between fragile states and great powers (like the United States) within a global perspective, specifically, global illicit market supply chains.

Illicit supply chains comprise any "activities such as the procurement, production, transportation, sales, and distribution of prohibited commodities, as well as specialized processes of transnational smuggling, money laundering, and corrupting government officials are central to the global flow of illegal goods and services."⁴⁸ At the center of illicit supply chains are fragile states. Fragile states supply and provide transshipment points for major demand states like the United States, Europe, and other states of the developing world. The illegal business done in fragile states affects the lives of people in other countries.

Fragile states pose a great security problem for great powers in the international system. The issues emanating from fragile states, from being used as a terrorist or organized crime stronghold, or waves of illegal migrants, will find themselves within great powers. The United States, for instance, has spent billions of dollars fighting the war on drugs to reduce insecurity.⁴⁹ Studies show that criminals are engaged in complex relationships across borders due to profit-seeking activity. Corruption spreads easily within this environment, especially across borders.⁵⁰ For globalization to thrive, several elements must be present across countries:

- The existence of a global economy, meaning: (a) global interdependency of financial markets; (b) internationalization of production, management and distribution of goods and services around a core of multinational corporations and their ancillary networks; (c) largely as a result of (b), international trade...a key component of economic growth;
- Internationalization of science, technology and know-how at the source of productivity and competitiveness for firms, regions and countries
- Segmented internationalization of the labor force, with the formation of a demand-driven global labor market for the high end of talent and a supply-driven international migration of labor for all levels of skill
- A global media system...at the heart of the emergence of a globally diffused, locally appropriated cultural processes
- The management of the environment as a planetary issue characterized by the irreversible damage caused by unsustainable development, and the need to counter this deterioration with a global, long term conservation strategy
- The globalization of human rights and the emergence of the issue of social justice for the planet at large
- Global security as a shared problem, e.g. proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, global terrorism, and the practice of the politics of fear under the pretext of fighting terrorism.⁵¹

In *Prioritization Theory and a Defensive Foreign Policy*, Kassab notes the importance of weak states in the stability of the international system and the great powers that compose such a system.⁵² The notion of fragile states takes a systemic approach to the issue of organized crime and vio-

lence. Fragile states are a systemic vulnerability that degrade the stability of the international system. Kassab contends that “the health of the system depends on the weakest units of the system.”⁵³ He argues that the great powers and hegemonies of the era, those states with the capacity to solve international issues such as organized crime and other forms of political violence, are responsible for bailing out the system in times of trouble (i.e., assisting fragile states with their internal issues).⁵⁴ This recommendation seeks to address the fundamental roots of fragility, that is, the prioritization of economic development. Inclusive institutional building must be at the core of any policy. Inclusive political institutions are those that protect private property, protect equal access to justice by providing law and order, and permit a market uninhibited by corruption. These characteristics help development as people are more prone to invest in themselves knowing they will receive a return on investment.

Extractive political institutions are methods for extracting wealth from one part or group of society to other groups.⁵⁵ In their book *Why Nations Fail*, Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson further clarify how extractive institutions work: “this failure takes the form of lack of sufficient economic activity, because the politicians are just too happy to extract resources or quash any type of independent economic activity that threatens themselves and the economic elites.”⁵⁶ Many developing states have these types of political systems, grounded in patronage and clientelism. Patronage can be defined as the formulation of a special relationship in the pursuit of wealth for one person and security for another; a non-governmental actor provides security and others pay for it.⁵⁷ Second, is clientelism which is defined as “perhaps the principal informal mechanism used to integrate or co-opt otherwise marginalized sectors of the population....”⁵⁸ Marginalized segments of society are those individuals or groups that are fundamentally excluded or ignored from political participation and discourse. Clientelism is a relationship with several elements. It comprises a long-term relationship among the rich and the poor, where the rich pays for political allegiances; sometimes votes.⁵⁹ These two systems that solidify and defend extractive political institutions destroy a state’s ability to become developed as it blocks freedom of investment and defense of private property. Those on the top will stay at the top at the expense of those at the bottom, all of which help foster economic underdevelopment and contribute to state fragility in countries plagued by high levels of impunity and corruption.⁶⁰ These two traditions strengthen and actualize extractive political

organizations at the expense of people. Individuals ostracized from economic development may then turn to illegal activities and could also participate in violent extremism. Thus, fragility has systemic importance.

If we assume that states are rational actors, they must have certain needs or preferences which are prioritized from most important to least important. After arranging their priorities, states must decide how best to achieve those goals through cost-benefit analysis.⁶¹ If a state's purpose is to survive from threats, then we must assume that they may cooperate in light of major security threats resulting from organized crime and illicit markets in operation within major developed states. The United States has come to appreciate the threats emanating from weak, fragile, and failing states by understanding that failed states could bring attacks upon the developed world.⁶² The US government contends that cooperation is key to survival:

- champion aspirations for human dignity;
- strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against us and our friends;
- work with others to defuse regional conflicts;
- prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies, and our friends, with weapons of mass destruction;
- ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade;
- expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy;
- develop agendas for cooperative action with other main centers of global power; and
- transform America's national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century.⁶³

One way this can be accomplished is to bolster development projects around the world through proficient diplomatic pursuits. Another is to increase the power and efficiency of Interpol.

Interpol is an international police force that aims to monitor the global presence of the following international crimes, most of which involve major organized criminal activity. The main goal of organized criminal networks is to increase wealth. Interpol targets sources of wealth but also power and use of violence. The following is a selection of international crime Interpol monitors:

Corruption
Crimes against children
Crimes in sport
Cybercrime
Drugs
Environmental crime
Financial crime
Firearms trafficking
Fugitive investigations
Maritime piracy
Organized crime
Pharmaceutical crime
Terrorism
Trafficking in human beings
Trafficking in illicit goods and counterfeiting
Vehicle crime
War crimes
Works of art⁶⁴

Interpol member states benefit from a number of services provided by the institution. The following is a list of services provided by Interpol. Major services such as information providing and sharing continue development of innovative policing policies:

1. Serve as the worldwide information hub for law enforcement cooperation
The exchange of police information lies at the core of INTERPOL's mandate. We manage secure communication channels that connect National Central Bureaus in all our member countries, along with other authorized law enforcement agencies and partners, and which give access to a range of criminal databases.
2. Deliver state-of-the-art policing capabilities that support member countries to fight and prevent transnational crimes
A large number of policing capabilities—such as forensics and training—underpin our three Global Programmes to fight crime (Counter-terrorism, Cybercrime, and Organized and emerging crime). We seek to serve as the catalyst for efforts in global, regional and national law enforcement.

3. Lead globally innovative approaches to policing

We are committed to enhancing the tools and services we provide, and to act as an incubator for the research and development into solutions and standards for international policing.

4. Maximize INTERPOL's role within the Global Security Architecture

This goal aims to bridge information gaps in the Global Security Architecture, strengthening cooperation between relevant sectors and entities, and raising political awareness and support for INTERPOL's Programmes.

5. Consolidate resources and governance structures for enhanced operational performance

In order to keep up with the evolving law enforcement landscape, we will continue to modernize the Organization's structures and processes to ensure efficient delivery of our capabilities and services.

INTERPOL will focus its efforts on implementing a sustainable funding model for the Organization, addressing risks at the organizational level, fostering change management, promoting a sustainable human resources strategy, and re-assessing our governance framework.⁶⁵

Interpol thus acts as an international regime that hopes to achieve state cooperation by rallying them around a set of principles, norms among other informal or formal regulations when considering given issues in the international system.⁶⁶ By coordinating policing, states may be able to weaken the power of organized crime as they expand their business across the globe. By doing so, fragile states, especially when coupled with proper development strategies, may be able to become more effective states, in control of their destiny. Great powers will also benefit, as they can avoid the tentacles of organized crime from breaching their borders, discouraging crime and violence.

Thus, there are two major policy goals recommended to weaken the global power of illicit markets. First, states must cooperate and coordinate policies to assist the developing world in the formulation of inclusive political institutions without pushing political agendas or thrusting certain political systems on to underdeveloped states. For this to be successful, however, a second priority must be realized: the strengthening of Interpol and other global judicial systems to eradicate or at least dampen the strength and resilience of organized crime networks. The connection

between states, corruption, and organized crime, and the global violence that results in such a connection will be discussed further using empirical examples in Chap. 6.

CONCLUSION

The effects of state fragility are enormous, affecting not just the people and the state in question but the entire international system and its people. The more interdependent the globe is, the more impacted developed states become by state fragility and failure. When a state like Somalia becomes ungovernable, drug production and terrorism are expected to rise. Instability is also expected to spread into bordering states. The World Bank cites that 95 percent of all opium production is in fragile and failed states. Coordinated action by the world's developed states to solve state failure by addressing underlying development challenges (e.g., poverty, inequality, and unemployment—among others) could help decrease illicit activities and strengthen regional and international security.⁶⁷

Fragility hurts the quality of life of people living in the fragile state. It hinders a state's ability to attract foreign investment and thus remain underdeveloped and vulnerable to threats from state and non-state actors and events. Regarding non-state actors, fragile states provide a solid foundation for criminal actors to take advantage. Fragile states thus provide fertile ground for illicit markets. A corrupt and weak government is easier to bribe, even more so if the citizens are desperate. They seek money and work no matter the job. The natural endowment of the state, whether perfect for growing coca or opium, or even in terms of human and organ trafficking, makes for an excellent base of operation. Such a phenomenon leaves underdeveloped states underdeveloped as no economy based on illegal goods will be viable in the long term. Governments will remain corrupt and unstable and lacking justice, and foreign enterprises will not invest in such a violent criminal society.

NOTES

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Trends in Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime

Drug trafficking and organized crime groups must be nimble and adapt over time to survive in this clandestine world. In other words, organized crime groups, like any business, must stay ahead of the curb and continue to innovate to avoid law enforcement. Strategies implemented by law enforcement also help explain the shifting dynamics of drug trafficking routes. A government, for instance, might seek to combat the production and trafficking of drugs in one region. As a consequence, drug traffickers will shift the routes, often known as the “balloon effect” because increased interdiction will cause routes to move to other areas. This has been seen not only with drug trafficking routes but also the cultivation of drugs. Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru are the three principal coca producing countries in the world. The US government has supported efforts to eradicate coca through various measures, such as manual eradication and the spraying of herbicides. Coca routes decreased in certain years in Peru and Bolivia and shifted to Colombia. By 2000, Colombia produced nearly all of the world’s coca supply.¹ Today, Colombia remains the leading coca cultivating country in the world.² While one government might define decreases in production in one country as a success, it is important to examine the bigger picture: a decrease in production in one country and a spike in production or trafficking in another country means that the dynamics have changed but the overall situation remains the same as drugs are produced and trafficked to meet the demand.

Moreover, the nature of the world has changed as technology has improved over time. Research indicates that 47 percent of the global population uses the Internet. According to 2015 data, Iceland ranked as the country with the highest percentage of Internet users (98.2). In terms of countries with the lowest percentage of people using the Internet, Nigeria had 2.2 percent.³ The Internet has revolutionized the way we live. Yet there is a darker side to such technologies. A plethora of illicit activities occur via the Internet. The world has witnessed websites such as Silk Road which served as a market place for the purchasing and sale of drugs. The founder of Silk Road, Ross Ulbricht, received a life sentence in prison.⁴ Consumers no longer need to buy drugs from the local neighborhood dealer on a street corner. Instead, they can access the Internet, use currencies, such as Bitcoin, and receive the drugs in the mail.

The Internet can be used to traffic not only drugs but also other commodities, including people. For example, some research indicates that 70 percent of child sex trafficking survivors have been sold via the information superhighway.⁵ One survey of sex trafficking indicates that “[p]eople are posted and sold online multiple times a day.” This individual continues, “As far as the ad that was posted up [for me]... just [like] you can go find a car, there was a picture, and a description, and a price.”⁶ In sum, while the Internet has facilitated life in the twenty-first century, there is a dark side of the Internet. Individuals involved in the criminal underworld are taking advantage of such technologies. The Internet also helps criminals evade law enforcement as it is often harder to trace who is partaking in a particular illicit activity.

In addition to the Internet, globalization has revolutionized the world as borders and boundaries have become smaller. For instance, thousands of trucks cross the US-Mexican border every day for licit commerce. Organized crime groups can take advantage of such highways, roads, and improvements in infrastructure to traffic a plethora of illicit goods from drugs to individuals. This presents major challenges for law enforcement given the number of vehicles crossing highways and international boundaries as well as the number of ships entering ports. It is not possible to inspect every car or cargo carrier. Smugglers also adapt and become more sophisticated at moving products across boundaries. Peter Andreas, a Brown University professor and expert on smuggling and borders, explains some of the trends in border security prior to the events of September 11, 2001, contending: “Drug smugglers also responded to law enforcement pressure by integrating more with legitimate cargo, using the NAFTA-encouraged

boom in trade to more effectively camouflage their illicit shipments. One negative unintended result was to create closer ties between licit and illicit trade. After years of intensified enforcement, the tasks of drug and immigration control at the border had actually become harder.”⁷ In summary, while border security increased on the US security agenda after September 11, 2001, law enforcement still faces major obstacles given the interconnected nature of the world. Drug traffickers and smugglers can utilize globalization and infrastructure to profit from clandestine activities.

The United States has witnessed many cases of legitimate routes being used for human trafficking. In July 2017, for example, authorities found 38 people either severely injured or dead in a truck in San Antonio, Texas. The victims in the case were part of a large human smuggling scandal and demonstrate the heinous nature of the crime. The US Attorney for the Western District of Texas, Richard L. Durbin Jr., explained the nature of this crime, stating: “All were victims of ruthless human smugglers indifferent to the well-being of their fragile cargo.”⁸ Sadly, this is not the first case of trafficking. Texas has become a hub of human trafficking given its proximity to Mexico, which is where many victims, often from Central American countries, must transit through en route to the United States.⁹

DRUG TRAFFICKING AND ORGANIZED CRIME IN COLOMBIA

It is not possible to examine drug trafficking and organized crime without analyzing the case of Colombia. This country has witnessed an evolution in the nature of drug trafficking and organized crime. During the 1980s and 1990s, two major drug cartels, the Cali and Medellín cartels, controlled drug trafficking and organized crime within the country. The Medellín cartel, led by Pablo Escobar, had a reputation for being more violent. Escobar, an elected official, was notorious for killing his enemies (e.g., judges, police officers, politicians, and anyone against his business). Escobar bribed people so that he could carry out his business activities and killed people who stood in his way—hence the term *plata o plomo* which means that you can accept the money (i.e., a bribe) or suffer the consequences.¹⁰

With the support of the US government, the Colombian government launched an assault on drug trafficking and organized crime in the country. Authorities sought to dismantle the leaders, or kingpins, of the major drug cartels. The death of Escobar in 1993 represented a major victory for the Colombian government. However, this did not mean an end to drug trafficking and organized crime. Instead, the rival Cali cartel increased in

power for a brief period. Jeremy McDermott, Executive Director and co-founder of InSight Crime, argues: “For two years after Escobar’s death, the Cali Cartel was able to continue operating with the same model, until the leaders, the Rodriguez Orejuela brothers, were captured in 1995.”¹¹ The demise of the major cartels, however, did not mean that Colombia no longer faced the threat of drug trafficking and organized crime. The dismantling of the two major cartels resulted in a fragmentation of organized crime. Colombia witnessed the emergence of hundreds of smaller cartels. Moreover, the most powerful guerilla organization, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—FARC) moved into the drug trade to fund their operations.

The situation in Colombia began to spiral out of control in the late 1990s. The Andrés Pastrana government attempted to end the internal armed conflict by creating a demilitarized zone for the FARC to increase confidence among these actors. The demilitarized zone enabled the FARC to step into this area and coordinate their operations. In essence, the Colombian government succeeded parts of its territory to the FARC. The failure of the demilitarized zone along with an economic crisis led the Pastrana administration to seek support from the US government. Pastrana created a version of what became known as Plan Colombia. He wanted to achieve peace in Colombia. He advocated for a Marshall Plan for Colombia to address many of the underlying challenges. Drug trafficking, therefore, was not the priority of Pastrana’s version of Plan Colombia.¹² The former Colombian president believed that it would not be possible to solve the issue of drug trafficking without addressing the internal armed conflict. Pastrana sought a plan funded by the international community.

The Bill Clinton administration agreed to help Colombia, but the version of Plan Colombia that they supported did not reflect the original initiative designed by Pastrana. Key players such as drug czar Barry McCaffrey had an important role in the re-orientation of Plan Colombia. The United States did not want to become involved in Colombia’s internal conflict. The Clinton administration changed the version of Plan Colombia to focus on “hard components” (e.g., strengthening the military and police). The US government also sought to reduce the production of coca through aerial spraying initiatives. Plan Colombia invested 80 percent of the resources in the hard components and focused less money on alternative development issues. The international community disagreed with the new goals of Plan Colombia and did not finance the new re-oriented initiative.¹³

The goals of Plan Colombia evolved over the years. President Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010) recognized that the US foreign policy agenda changed after September 11, 2001, since the Bush administration launched a global war on terror. Uribe sought to change the perceptions of the conflict contending that Colombia did not suffer from an internal armed conflict, but rather it had a terrorist problem. The Uribe administration re-oriented the goals of Plan Colombia to combating narcoterrorism as drug trafficking and organized criminal activities helped finance the war chest of the FARC and enable this organization to operate.¹⁴

Between 2002 and 2015, the United States invested \$10 billion in Plan Colombia.¹⁵ The funding for Plan Colombia increased during the Bush administration. In 2002, the US government provided the Colombian military and police with \$389 million, while economic and institutional assistance represented \$116 million. Military and police assistance jumped to \$606 million in 2003 compared to \$137 million for economic and institutional assistance. US aid remained consistent over this period. In 2007, the United States provided \$619 million to military and police assistance compared to \$150 million for economic and institutional assistance.¹⁶

Despite the significant resources designed to decrease coca cultivation, drug production, and trafficking, critics contend that the results of the war on drugs in Colombia have been underwhelming. Coca farmers can make more money cultivating coca than selling other commodities. There are also challenges that peasant farmers confront bringing their goods to market due to poor infrastructure in rural Colombia. The United States has spent billions of dollars spraying the Colombian countryside with herbicides. Aircraft pilots use satellites and seek to mitigate the possibility of the herbicides missing the target, yet wind can cause spray-drift.¹⁷ Thus, aircraft can spray legitimate crops. In addition, aerial spraying programs have major health impacts. The coca cultivation trends in Colombia demonstrate that peasant farmers will continue to move where they plant coca. Farmers can intermix coca with other products making it harder to locate from satellite. In sum, there have been ebbs and flows of coca cultivation in Colombia.

What have been the consequences of such multi-billion-dollar counter-drug operations? The criminal landscape has continued to fragment over time. McDermott argues, “Over the last 20 years, Colombia’s drug trade has fragmented. Escobar was the unchallenged head of the Medellín Cartel, a vertically integrated, hierarchical criminal enterprise that initially flew in coca base from Peru and Bolivia, processed it in Colombia’s jungles,

then flew it to the mainland US in staggering quantities.”¹⁸ There have been new actors that have arrived on the scene in the criminal landscape in Colombia—specifically, the criminal bands in Colombia, known as the BACRIM. The right-wing paramilitaries known as the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia—AUC) demobilized during the Uribe administration. While President Uribe heralded this event as a victory for Colombia, critics contend that these groups have demobilized into criminal bands which partake in a variety of illicit activities, including drug trafficking.

It is important to note that the BACRIM does not refer to one group, but there are a variety of organizations that range in their capabilities and power. Some experts have contended that the BACRIM can be considered as a “third generation” of drug trafficking in Colombia. The BACRIM are highly involved in the cocaine trade, with the destination of the product being the United States. These criminal groups play an important role in the supply-chain of drugs and often deliver cocaine to other actors involved in the process. In fact, research indicates that one kilo of cocaine in Honduras is worth approximately \$12,000. The product is then transported through Mexico since this country shares a nearly 2,000-mile border with the United States.¹⁹ Mexican organizations can earn more than two times that price in the US market, demonstrating that cocaine continues to be a lucrative business.²⁰

However, it would be a mistake to assume that the BACRIM are only involved in the transportation of cocaine. These organizations have diversified their criminal portfolio, including human trafficking, smuggling, extortion, and gold mining—among other activities.²¹ As any good business person knows, it is important not to put all your energy in one sector. Diversifying means that you will have more revenue flowing into your coffers from a variety of industries. Criminal organizations can ensure consistent cash flow. If sales in one industry decline in one year, criminal groups who are diversified will not cease to exist or take major hits because of the variety of revenue-generating activities.

Today, Colombia is at a critical juncture. After four years of negotiations with the FARC, the Colombian Congress approved the peace accord in November 2016. Drama ensued after the original peace deal did not pass because the “No vote” won in the October 2016 plebiscite. Critics of the deal contended that they wanted justice and did not want impunity for FARC members who have committed crimes. James Bargent explains,

“As part of the agreement struck between the FARC and the government, guerrillas involved in drug trafficking will be pardoned as long as the drug trade profits went towards the rebels’ war efforts and not to individual guerrillas. This compromise was a key component of the deal that convinced the guerrillas to lay down their arms, but it has proven controversial with opponents, who say it is the equivalent to granting amnesty to drug traffickers.”²² The implementation of the peace accord will cost more than \$40 billion over the next ten years.²³ The reintegration of the FARC back into society presents several challenges. Many of the demobilized actors do not have the appropriate education or training to receive a job in the formal economy. It is highly likely that these groups will suffer from high levels of discrimination. People who are unable to find work to make a living could be forced to return to a life of crime. As comparative cases demonstrate, the reintegration of many individuals (e.g., former FARC combatants, convicted felons, or ex-gang members) into society—in Colombia, Mexico, or the United States—is a challenging task. Furthermore, it is possible that some demobilized members could use their skills acquired during their time in the FARC to join other criminal organizations such as the BACRIM.

Colombia faces challenges in the evolving landscape of organized crime in Colombia. President Obama pledged \$450 million to Colombia for what became known as Peace Colombia to help assist in the post-conflict stage.²⁴ It does not appear that President Trump will support the Colombian government with the implementation of the peace process. In May 2017, Trump did not mention Peace Colombia during President Santos’ visit to Washington, DC. Instead, he stressed the high levels of coca production in Colombia, which he views as alarming. Trump contended, “Recently, we have seen an alarmed—and I mean really a very highly alarmed and alarming trend. Last year, Colombia coca cultivation and cocaine production reached a record high, which, hopefully, will be remedied very quickly by the President. We must confront this dangerous threat to our societies together.”²⁵ Thus, the Colombian government cannot rely on the United States for financial support as it will not receive another major aid package like Plan Colombia. Moreover, the downturn in the price of oil in 2014 has impacted the Colombian economy. This economic downturn comes at an inopportune time as Colombia seeks to pay for the post-conflict accord.²⁶

DRUG TRAFFICKING AND ORGANIZED CRIME IN MEXICO

While former Colombian President Álvaro Uribe declared success in the drug war in Colombia, other countries, such as Mexico, have experienced high levels of violence as a result of drug trafficking and organized crime.²⁷ One of the consequences of Plan Colombia²⁸ has been the shifting of drug routes toward Mexico. This is a classic example of the balloon effect. History shows that governments focus on combating organized crime and drug trafficking in one region or country, and the end result is that drug trafficking shifts routes.²⁹

Because of the shifting routes, Mexico has become the epicenter in the war on drugs. Moreover, this country has become the leading producer and supplier of heroin and methamphetamine to the United States.³⁰ Not only does Mexico produce drugs, but it has become the leading transit country for cocaine entering the US market. In fact, it has been estimated that over 95 percent of the cocaine sold in the United States traverses Mexico's borders and enters the market in the United States. Drug trafficking and organized criminal activities have resulted in extensive levels of violence as the various cartels have fought for control of territory and drug routes.³¹

President Felipe Calderón launched a “war on drugs” in Mexico in 2006. He sought to combat the major cartels. The Bush administration vowed to help Mexico fight organized crime through the Mérida Initiative to dissociate it from Plan Colombia. While the Mérida Initiative focused on four pillars, the first one—combating organized crime—received the bulk of the resources.³² The Mexican government failed to heed the lessons of previous cases (e.g., Colombia).³³

STRATEGIC PROBLEMS WITH CALDERÓN'S MILITARIZATION

Calderón did not have high levels of trust in the Mexican police forces, which are notoriously corrupt. Therefore, the Calderón administration militarized the conflict seeking to combat the drug trafficking organizations by using the military to fight the drug war.³⁴ Calderón—and Washington—failed to learn the lessons of Plan Colombia, which at one point allocated approximately 80 percent of the money for “hard” components,³⁵ such as the military and intelligence. Calderón believed that the military needed to combat the internal enemies—the drug cartels—and the results have been large amounts of bloodshed and human rights

abuses. Stephanie Erin Brewer criticizes the militarization approach, stating: “In light of these criteria, the most severe flaw in the Mérida Initiative is that it reinforces the war-like mentality that has led Mexico to deploy its military and police in a territorial battle against criminals as the answer to drug trafficking. This war on crime has brought with it a steeply escalating universe of human rights violations against Mexico’s residents, including arbitrary killings, torture, and illegal arrests.”³⁶

The US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, traveled to Mexico in 2010 and argued that drug traffickers should be viewed as insurgents.³⁷ Joseph Westphal, the US undersecretary of the army, “referred to Mexico’s drug cartels as a ‘form of insurgency’ and suggested that U.S. troops might have to cross the border to prevent the cartels from taking over the country.”³⁸ Westphal’s suggestion that the United States should cross the border troubled many people. The Mexican government does not want the US army to be present in Mexico as a result of the long history between the two countries—a history which includes several wars. The idea that the United States needs to intervene to “solve” the problems of Mexico is troubling for many critics. After 2008, the United States—and the world—suffered the greatest recession since the Great Depression, and Washington was not looking to expand the role of the US military in other countries. Critics also contend that the logic that Washington knows best and must intervene in “backwards” countries is presumptuous and has created a great deal of resentment throughout Latin American countries.³⁹ The United States cannot afford to be the world police, and having the United States involved in the internal dynamics of yet another country would be a disastrous policy and very unpopular among the American public.

Critics contend that such statements made by Hilary Clinton and Joseph Westphal demonstrate that Washington has failed to learn from history and continues to repeat the same mistakes.⁴⁰ For example, treating the drug cartels as insurgents is a fundamental misunderstanding of the situation in Mexico. Drug trafficking organizations use violence and participate in acts of terror to intimidate the population, rival organizations, and government officials. It is important to remember that terrorism is a tactic, and, Mexican drug trafficking organizations have used such tactics. Yet using the same counter-insurgency strategies that have been used in Colombia and Iraq will not end the violence and drug war in Mexico because the militarization of the problem does not solve the underlying issues (e.g., corruption, impunity, and demand). Drug traffickers in Mexico continue to battle for territory and control of the routes to

dominate the lucrative drug trade. The potential to earn large sums of money drives drug traffickers to traffic drugs: a market for drugs exists, therefore, producers and traffickers will supply the market.⁴¹

Some drug war critics also contend that the militarization of the war on drugs causes the routes to shift contaminating other countries with drugs and increasing levels of violence.⁴² While one government might be satisfied that the routes have shifted to another country, the big picture remains the same and shows that minor victories have been achieved, but a victory in the war on drugs remains elusive. Drug trafficking is an illegal business, and traffickers must innovate to survive. In summary, the government clamping down and focusing on one region will cause routes and criminal activities to balloon out to other places.⁴³

Another consequence of the militarization of the drug war in Mexico has been the cockroach effect, which refers to the fragmentation of drug cartels into smaller organizations. The effect is titled as such because the situation is akin to someone turning on the lights in the kitchen and witnessing the dispersion of cockroaches. Bruce Bagley argues that this trend “is reminiscent of the scurrying of cockroaches out of a dirty kitchen into other places to avoid detection after a light has been turned on them. Closely linked to the ‘balloon effect, the ‘cockroach effect’ refers specifically to the displacement of criminal networks from one city/state/region to another within a given country or from one country to another in search of safer havens and more pliable state authorities.”⁴⁴

The focus on capturing the kingpins resulted in a fragmentation of organized crime. Mexico had six major drug cartels in 2006. By 2010, Mexico had 12 major cartels.⁴⁵ Jesus Murillo Karam, the Attorney General of Mexico, argued that Mexico had as many as 80 drug cartels in 2012. The increasing number of cartels means that there is more competition.⁴⁶ Moreover, some of the smaller organizations may be more difficult to combat since they can morph and adjust to the changing landscape. In 2012, for instance, six organizations fought for control of Jalisco. According to General Genaro Fausto Lozano, the six organizations fighting for control of Jalisco were the Jalisco Cartel-New Generation, the Beltran Leyva Organization, the Knights Templar, the Familia Michoacán, the Resistance, and the Sinaloa cartel.⁴⁷

The kingpin strategy has fragmented organized crime. Patrick Corcoran, a crime expert, argues, “The previous government’s policies did not sufficiently recognize and adapt to this changing environment. For the most part, Calderon’s efforts to combat organized crime were ill-suited to a

scenario where the influence of the traditional cartels was declining. As Murillo Karam indicates, the so-called ‘kingpin strategy’—targeting the most notorious bosses from the biggest groups—does little to address the proliferation of gangs that cause the vast majority of the violence.”⁴⁸ However, the toppling of major organizations can be marketed by politicians, law enforcement, and other government officials as a major success. President Felipe Calderón wanted the public to understand that his government was winning the war against drugs. It became very common to see authorities parading kingpins in front of the television for photo-ops of these individuals. The Mexican government also marketed the major seizures of drugs and weapons to demonstrate to the public that law enforcement and the military had major successes due to counternarcotics policies. The victories are “partial successes” at best: the government is winning a battle but losing the war.⁴⁹

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF DRUG CARTELS IN MEXICO

Scholars have created different typologies to better understand the nature of the different drug trafficking organizations. According to Eduardo Guerrero-Gutiérrez, an expert on drug trafficking and organized crime, there are four different kinds of drug trafficking organizations operating in Mexico today. The first type of organization is a national cartel. Experts contend that there are three national cartels: Jalisco-New Generation, Los Zetas,⁵⁰ and Sinaloa. The national cartels are in charge of controlling the major international routes in the country. These organizations have fought among each other to expand their control of the various routes and territories. In addition, they have attempted to use their infrastructure and diversify their activities. The second type of cartel is a regional cartel. Such organizations control segments of drug flows that pass through the territory that these actors control. Drug trafficking profits are less lucrative for these actors than the major cartels. Yet these organizations have also expanded their operations in a plethora of other criminal activities such as smuggling, kidnapping, and extortion—among others. Experts note that there are four major regional organizations: the Gulf Cartel, La Familia Michoacana, the Knights Templar, and Beltrán Leyva Cartel.⁵¹

In addition to the national and regional cartels, there are “toll-collector cartels.” These organizations earn profits “from toll fees received from

other organizations that convey drug shipments through their controlled municipalities along the northern border.” The two main organizations are the Juárez (Carrillo Fuentes) and the Tijuana cartel (Arellano Félix). Finally, there are drug trafficking cells. These cartels are a result of splinterings from larger organizations. They tend to operate at a local level and focus in “small-scale drug distribution.” Experts calculate that there are 202 mafia cells.⁵²

Moreover, the consequence of the militarization of the drug war has been high levels of violence in Mexico (see Fig. 4.1). Drug trafficking organizations have fought among each other for control of routes and territory. The war between the government and the drug cartels also contributed to increases in violence. During the six years of the Felipe Calderón government (2006–2012), over 100,000 people died from drug-related violence. Moreover, violence has moved around the country. During the Calderón government, Ciudad Juárez, for instance, ranked as the most dangerous non-warring city in the world. Violence in Ciudad Juárez decreased during the Peña Nieto government. In recent years, speculation has emerged that violence in this city may be on the rise. Luis Fernando

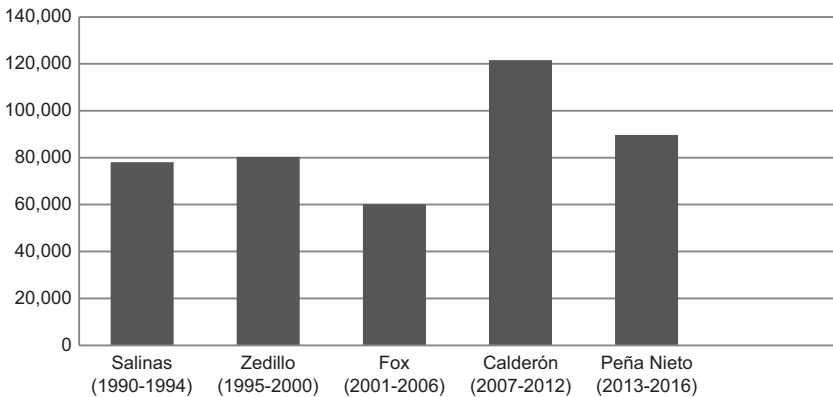


Fig. 4.1 Homicides during Mexican presidential terms. Source: Created by authors with data from Kimberly Heinle, Octavio Rodríguez Ferreira, and David A. Shirk, *Drug Violence in Mexico: Data and Analysis Through 2016* (San Diego, CA: University of San Diego, 2017). Note: The calculations are based on the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía—INEGI) data. The Peña Nieto numbers are based on estimates

Alonso contends, “Juárez and the state of Chihuahua have seen rising levels of violence in recent months, raising speculation that the dark days of brutal killings that the city saw in between the years 2008 and 2012 could be making a comeback. Just in the month of October, there have been 90 homicides in Juárez, and 183 in the state of Chihuahua.”⁵³ Other states and municipalities have also seen increases in violence. For example, Tamaulipas, Michoacán, and Guerrero have been plagued by violence (see Fig. 4.2).

The drug war in Mexico also raises various strategic policy questions regarding the definition of goals and success. The Mérida Initiative, for instance, sought to disrupt drug trafficking and organized crime. How then should success be measured? While the Mexican government has toppled some drug kingpins, the question becomes at what cost? Many critics of the Mexican drug war argue that the more than 100,000 people who died during the Calderón government demonstrate the extremely high costs of the drug war. In 2017, Mexico had more than 29,000 recorded murders.⁵⁴ Mexico has also experienced high levels of human rights abuses involving the military, the police, and the government. The 2014 deaths of 43 students from Iguala, Guerrero, in Ayotzinapa allegedly

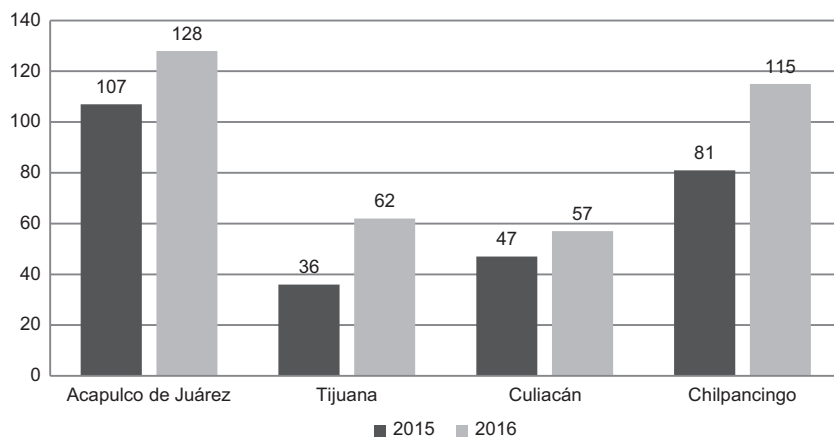


Fig. 4.2 Homicide rate per 100,000 people (four municipalities). Source: Created by authors with data from Kimberly Heinle, Octavio Rodríguez Ferreira, and David A. Shirk, *Drug Violence in Mexico: Data and Analysis Through 2016* (San Diego, CA: University of San Diego, 2017)

killed by the police and handed over to a local gang in charge of destroying their bodies became an international scandal. According to the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), “In a series of attacks, police opened fire on the buses, killing 6 people, including 3 bystanders, and injuring many more. The tortured body of Julio César Mondragón was found in a street the following day. During the night’s succession of events, 43 students were forcibly disappeared. Various theories regarding their whereabouts have since emerged.”⁵⁵ Allegations also arose in 2014 of the military’s involvement in the massacre of 22 civilians in Tlatlaya. A survivor of the massacre, Clara Gómez contended, “The army has committed many mistakes. It is not the first time.”⁵⁶ Moreover, not only are more actors involved in drug trafficking and organized crime, but drugs are readily available causing some security experts and politicians to be concerned.

WHY DOES MEXICO MATTER FOR THE UNITED STATES?

Mexico is a major concern for the US government because the two countries share a nearly 2,000-mile border. The ability of organized crime groups to traverse the porous border is a fear for some US policymakers. The fact that bullets have flown across the border in cities like El Paso, even striking a woman walking down the street, demonstrates that the violence of Mexico is not something that is out of the minds of people residing in the United States, particularly individuals who live in border states.⁵⁷ US politicians have been quick to respond to the violence and desire to improve border security to protect people on the US side of the border from experiencing the violence witnessed in Mexico. Rick Perry, the former Texas governor, called for President Obama to place the National Guard on the border.⁵⁸

Some experts have debated whether Mexico is a failed state.⁵⁹ A failed state on the US border is not only dangerous for security, but the United States does not want to see its neighbor and key trading partner to the south succumb to drug trafficking organizations and suffer a major defeat. Other experts contend that Mexico is not a failed state, but there are failed zones and states within the country.⁶⁰ It is important to remember that Mexico is a major trading partner of the United States, and both countries have many interconnections and economic linkages.

Mexico has been elevated on the current security agenda of the United States. Donald Trump ran for president on a platform of the need to

enforce the laws in the United States. He contended that Mexico is not sending its best people and offended many people due to his comments about this country.⁶¹ Trump argued that there needs to be a wall built between the United States and Mexico to stop drugs from entering the border and keep out illegal immigrants. Critics, however, contend that a wall will not stop drug trafficking and organized crime. There are many options to penetrate a border. First, drug traffickers, such as “El Chapo” Guzmán, the former leader of the Sinaloa cartel, have been able to construct tunnels along the border. Law enforcement has witnessed a plethora of different technologies to transport different products. For instance, there are low-flying drones as well as catapults that can be used. Former Mexican President Vicente Fox has criticized the Trump administration and contended that there is an invention called a ladder which can be used to scale a wall.⁶² Finally, the cost of the wall has been estimated to be more than \$20 billion. Therefore, critics believe that not only would it be ineffective, but the money could be used for better purposes. President Trump has argued that the Mexican government will pay for the wall. However, the Peña Nieto administration has refused to pay.

Due to the tension between the United States and Mexico because of President Trump’s discourse, it does not appear that there will be tremendous levels of security cooperation between the two countries. It does not seem that the Mérida Initiative will be a top priority for the Trump administration. The funding for the Mérida Initiative has also decreased over time and will likely continue to decline. In FY 2008, for instance, the United States allocated \$400 million to the Mérida Initiative. Funding spiked to \$639.2 in FY 2010, but declined over the subsequent years. In FY 2016, for example, the United States allocated \$139 million to this program.⁶³

In addition, the Mexican government is facing high levels of political turmoil. Peña Nieto is highly unpopular and many citizens believe that he is unable to control the country. He had an approval rating of 17 percent in December 2012, but he has seen it dropped to a low of 12 percent according to some sources.⁶⁴ Mexico also faces many problems, including increasing levels of violence as well as major economic challenges. Organized crime groups have continued to fragment and increase their operations in different states. The President has not known what to do with the rise of self-defense forces in places like Guerrero and Michoacán.⁶⁵ Finally, the drop in the price of oil in 2014 has created major problems for Mexico, particularly since oil revenues are a significant part of the Mexican economy.⁶⁶

Mexico also faces major institutional challenges. The country is afflicted by high levels of impunity and corruption. Research indicates that only one out of every five homicides in Mexico results in an arrest of a suspect. The high levels of impunity means that individuals are not deterred from partaking in violence and other criminal activities.⁶⁷ Some studies indicate that impunity in Mexico is as high as 99 percent—meaning that only one percent of the crimes are prosecuted.⁶⁸ High levels of corruption and impunity also have an impact on victims of crimes. For instance, a person who has suffered from a crime may be deterred from reporting such incidents to the police due to low levels of confidence in the Mexican police. One might wonder what the utility of notifying the authorities is if the likelihood of something being done is extremely low. Thus, some people are afraid to report crimes because they fear the potential ramifications, as criminals, particularly members of organized crime groups, seek to intimidate citizens to deter them from reporting crimes to the authorities. James Bargent notes, “Such weaknesses in security institutions mean many people consider reporting crimes to be a waste of time or even risky due to the possibility of reprisals. However, this is just the beginning of Mexico’s impunity problems, which continue with a justice system that also lacks the capacity to properly investigate and prosecute crimes, meaning even those that are arrested will often not be convicted.”⁶⁹

High levels of corruption and impunity only create ripe environments for organized crime groups to flourish. Members of criminal organizations can intimidate victims to prevent them from reporting crimes. Corruption in the police and judicial system means that Mexico—along with other countries in the region—has an environment that is conducive for organized crime groups. Addressing the issues of corruption and impunity require that criminals who break the law are held accountable for their actions.⁷⁰ Yet this is easier said than done. Major reforms in the police that occurred during the Calderón and Peña Nieto governments have not been effective. Mexico’s local police continue to be plagued by high levels of corruption, which can generate distrust among the population.

THE DEMAND FOR DRUGS

The United States continues to be the leading drug consuming country in the world. Some scholars have argued that there has been a “globalization of consumption” as other countries within Latin America (e.g., Brazil, Argentina, and Chile) have high cocaine consumption rates.⁷¹ Moreover,

consumption of cocaine and other drugs in countries in Europe and Eastern Europe remains high, yet the United States remains the number one drug consuming country in the world. Drug trafficking will continue as long as there is a demand. Critics of the war on drugs have argued that the US government has focused too much energy on combating the supply of drugs coming from source countries. Some experts contend that such strategies have not worked and the only way to combat organized crime groups is to remove the lucrative profits from the industry. Ted Galen Carpenter, a drug trafficking expert, argues: “The only lasting, effective strategy is to defund the Mexican drug cartels. Reducing their billions of dollars in revenue requires the United States, as the principal consumer market for illegal drugs, to abandon its failed prohibition policy. That move would eliminate the lucrative black-market premium and greatly reduce the financial resources [of] the cartels....”⁷² In sum, the argument made by many experts is that merely interdicting drugs will not solve the problem. The seizure of one shipment can lead to a false sense of victory in the drug war, but the reality is that organized crime groups will continue to traffic drugs as long as it is profitable.

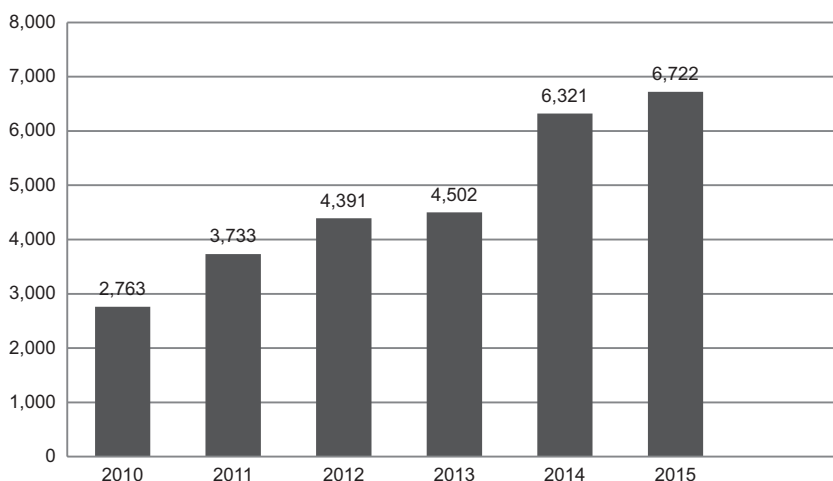


Fig. 4.3 Heroin seizures in the United States. Source: Created by authors with data from Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), *National Heroin Threat Assessment Summary—Updated* (Virginia: DEA, 2016)

Furthermore, the demand for drugs also helps fuel the violence in other countries as organized crime groups jockey for control of the lucrative drug trade (see Fig. 4.3). Vanda Felbab-Brown, an expert on drug trafficking at the Brookings Institution, argues: “Another driver of the escalating violence in Mexico is the rising taste in the United States for opiates, such as heroin, and the subsequent increase in opium poppy cultivation in Mexico. For decades, poppy has been cultivated in the state of Sinaloa, as well as in the poor and state-neglected tierra caliente in Michoacán and Guerrero. But the recent heroin boom and poppy expansion are driving new turf wars in those places, as smaller groups such as Las Viagas in Guerrero compete for territorial control and smuggling routes with large groups, such as JNG.”⁷³ In sum, the issue of demand is also fundamental when addressing how to combat the high levels of drug-related violence that has impacted countries such as Mexico. The argument is that there must be more attention placed on treatment, rehabilitation, education, and prevention.⁷⁴ Unless the demand issue is addressed, organized crime groups will continue to supply this very lucrative market.

Data show that in 2016 alone approximately 64,000 people perished from drug overdoses. Some states have suffered more than others. In Ohio, for instance, various counties witnessed dramatic increases in the number of drug overdoses. In Cuyahoga County, 267 people died from drug overdoses in 2010 compared to 775 in 2017. On the other hand, Montgomery County witnessed a spike in deaths from drug overdoses to 800 in 2017 from 127 in 2010.⁷⁵ Moreover, the number of heroin seizures has increased over the past several years from 2,763 kilograms in 2010 to 6,722 kilograms in 2015. The number of people who have died of drug-poisoning from heroin has increased by 248 percent from 2010 to 2014.⁷⁶

New drugs have also hit the streets that have presented major challenges for law enforcement. An example is flakka, or gravel in some parts of the country. This deadly drug is known as “the \$5 insanity.” However, it can be sold for as little as \$3. According to researcher Lucas Watterson, “Flakka largely emerged as a replacement to MDVP [in ‘bath salts’].”⁷⁷ Many synthetic drugs are coming from China. In addition to being sold by dealers, people can purchase it over the Internet or even a local gas station. Consuming this drug results in delirium as well as extreme elevations in one’s body temperature. Often users feel that they have excessive powers and are super human.⁷⁸

There are various theories behind why there is an opioid crisis in the United States. Prescription drug sales have increased in the United States over time. Experts contend that pharmaceutical consumption in the United States is astronomical. Valerie Paris argues, “The United States spends almost \$1000 per person per year on pharmaceuticals. That’s around 40 percent more than the next highest spender, Canada, and more than twice as much as than countries like France and Germany spend.”⁷⁹ There are concerns that it is too easy for individuals in this country to receive a prescription from doctors.⁸⁰ According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), “Health care providers, including those in primary care settings, report concern about opioid-related risks of addiction and overdose, as well as insufficient training in pain management. Although prescription opioids can help manage some types of pain, there is not enough evidence that opioids improve chronic pain, function, and quality of life. Moreover, long-term use of opioid pain relievers for chronic pain can be associated with abuse and overdose, particularly at higher dosages.”⁸¹ People also may develop an addiction over time to these highly potent drugs.⁸² Some people who become addicted may turn to other drugs through illicit means if doctors are not able or willing to continue prescribing them the drugs.⁸³

ORGANIZED CRIME GROUPS AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

In addition to drugs, human trafficking has become a major industry. Human trafficking is today’s form of modern-day slavery. Some sources indicate that there are more than 45 million people that are working in some form of modern-day slavery.⁸⁴ According to the Global Slavery Index, the Americas has more than 2.16 million people enslaved.⁸⁵ In Mexico alone, there are an estimated 376,000 people living in slave-like conditions. David Gagne, a crime expert, argues: “Drug cartels are believed to be involved in sex trafficking...using the same organized crime networks used to move drugs and weapons to smuggle human victims across the border into the United States.”⁸⁶ While human trafficking and forced labor is a major issue in the Americas, the Asia-Pacific has an estimated 30.43 million people who are enslaved. According to the Slavery Index, “The high prevalence of modern slavery in the region reflects the reality that many countries in Asia provide low-skilled labour for the production stage of global supply chains for various industries including food production, garments and technology.”⁸⁷ Such practices represent a major

human rights issue on a global scale as the numbers of victims increase. Eleanor Goldberg contends, “Some 15,000 people are being trafficked each year right here in the U.S. for purposes of forced labor or sexual exploitation.”⁸⁸ According to the International Labour Organization, more than 20 million people are victims of human trafficking on a global scale.⁸⁹

Human trafficking and forced labor are very lucrative for organized crime groups. For instance, the UNODC estimates that criminals in Europe earn approximately \$2.5 billion per year from forced labor and sexual exploitation.⁹⁰ At the global scale, forced labor and human trafficking is an industry valued at \$150 billion. Annual profits of forced labor are highest in the Asia-Pacific with yearly profits estimated to be \$51.8 billion. Developed economies and the European Union, on the other hand, earn \$46.9 percent in annual profits from forced labor. However, it is also important to understand which regions have the highest annual profit per victim. Developed economies and the European Union, for example, have a yearly profit per forced victim of \$34,800 compared to \$7,500 in Latin America and the Caribbean, \$5,000 in the Asia-Pacific, and \$3,900 in Africa. Finally, yearly profits per victim are greatest in sexual exploitation (\$21,800) compared to labor exploitation, non-domestic work, which has an annual profit per victim of \$4,800. Agriculture and domestic work have lower annual profits per victim with \$2,500 and \$2,300, respectively.⁹¹

Traffickers have taken advantage of the Internet and globalization to exploit people. Bolivia, for example, has seen a proliferation in the number of human trafficking reports by an astonishing 900 percent over the past nine years. However, it is important to note that there is a difference between reporting incidence of human trafficking and prosecuting such actions.⁹² In August 2016, Colombian authorities arrested nine individuals with alleged connections to a trafficking network that involved women from Colombia being sent to China. The operation designed to combat this human trafficking network was carried out in four major Colombian cities, Cali, Pereira, Medellín, and Bogotá. Victims in the case had to repay their debts by working in the illicit market, namely prostitution. Angelika Albaladejo contends that “[t]he recruits were then transferred to Colombia’s capital city Bogotá where travel agents aligned with the trafficking network provided passports, visas and other documentation necessary to leave the country. Once in China, these women say they were forced into prostitution and told they could not leave until they repaid a debt of \$25,000.”⁹³ The demand for human trafficking, among other

illicit activities, in China could be related to a rising middle class in the country. People who have more disposable income could lead to more consumption of various activities, including prostitution. However, other experts note that the skewed ratio of males to females as a result of the one child policy also could explain the rise in industries, such as sex tourism.⁹⁴

Mexico has also been plagued by high levels of human trafficking. While human trafficking is a major issue in Mexico, there are questions about the magnitude of human trafficking because of the lack of data.⁹⁵ Yet this is not just a trend in Mexico but in many countries throughout the world. In addition, the issue of children and their involvement in human trafficking has been a major problem in this country. Marguerite Cawley notes that “[s]ex traffickers in Mexico have reportedly begun using underage girls to recruit other minors for sexual exploitation, reflecting a broader trend of the increasing use of children by organized crime.”⁹⁶

Addressing the issue of human trafficking requires the prevention of such activities. Certain communities and populations are more susceptible than others to being victims of human trafficking; communities impacted by poverty, violence, and conflict could be more vulnerable to human trafficking. It is important to protect the victims of human trafficking. Offenders need to be prosecuted to ensure that people are punished for their crimes.⁹⁷ This can be challenging in countries plagued by weak institutions, high levels of corruption, and impunity. It is one thing for a law to be passed to combat human trafficking, yet it is an entirely different proposition to enforce the law. In addition, the nature of the business of human trafficking does present challenges for the prosecution of such cases.⁹⁸ Often, a major issue is that victims are afraid to speak. Some victims might fear that their traffickers will harm them or their families. Victims may also be scared to report such crimes to the police because they do not want to be arrested for prostitution. Law enforcement confronts challenges in terms of having victims not only report cases but testify against the network of perpetrators.

CONCLUSION

Organized crime groups have evolved over time to survive in the clandestine world. In addition, government strategies have contributed to the fragmentation of organized crime. As the cases of Mexico and Colombia show, the kingpin strategy has been effective in combating some of the top leaders of major drug trafficking organizations. Thus, the result of

capturing the leaders has been a fragmentation of the number of groups partaking in drug trafficking and organized crime. The challenge with smaller organizations is that they can be more nimble and harder to topple. Sanho Tree, the Director of the Drug Policy Project at the Institute for Policy Studies, contends that this failed US policy has resulted in super-traffickers, maintaining: “You get this filtering effect decade after decade where you end up artificially selecting or breeding super-traffickers. The people we tend to capture tend to be the people who are dumb enough to get caught, or people who have violated their own operational security—they stayed on the phone too long, they bribed too much, they engaged in turf wars, they raised a profile, they spent too much money in flashy ways, they screwed up. Those are the people who tend to get captured.”⁹⁹ Thus, leading drug traffickers are experts in learning from the mistakes of previous leaders who have been captured.

Moreover, organized crime groups are diversifying their criminal activities. For example, major drug cartels in Mexico, are not just involved in drug trafficking. Instead, they are transnational organized crime groups that have diversified into other activities, including but not limited to extortion, hired assassinations, human trafficking, and kidnapping. These criminals are entrepreneurial and will search to move into new markets when the opportunity presents itself. The manufacturing of new drugs provides opportunities for major players in the drug game to control the supply-chain from production to distribution. Criminal organizations which have gained control of territory can now use the same infrastructure to traffic new substances—from humans to drugs.

Furthermore, critics contend that the focus on supply-side strategies have not been effective in combating drug trafficking. The Mérida Initiative has resulted in partial successes¹⁰⁰ for the Mexican government. The equipment and training received from the Mérida Initiative have inevitably led to the capture of some major leaders of drug trafficking organizations as well as the seizure of shipments of drugs. One would think that the capture of drug cartel leaders should be praised as a major victory. History, however, demonstrates that there are hundreds of future leaders in line ready to take control of the organization or splinter off into smaller and more nimble organizations. Therefore, a person reading the newspaper about the capture of a drug cartel leader must be careful before jumping to the conclusion that this constitutes victory.

Where do the Mexican drug traffickers go after they are caught? The answer is Mexican prisons, which are extremely overcrowded and do not

effectively rehabilitate prisoners. Research indicates that inmates control approximately 60 percent of the prisons in the country.¹⁰¹ The head *capos* continue their drug trafficking organizations from prison because of the inefficiency of the prison system. Prisons are overcrowded and drug traffickers are able to bribe the prison guards for drugs and or their freedom.¹⁰²

In the same vein, the seizure of drug shipments may make it appear as though the Mexican government is winning the war on drugs, but the reality is the contrary. Drugs continue to be trafficked through Mexico and reach their destinations within the United States. One large shipment captured is a minuscule amount in the grand scheme of things.¹⁰³ Drug traffickers continue to make billions of dollars. Mexican drug traffickers—like all drug traffickers—adapt and are extremely creative in developing ways to elude the authorities. Drug traffickers, for example, even use submarines to transport drugs.

The Mérida Initiative may have led to partial victories¹⁰⁴ in the war on drugs, but the truth is that drug trafficking continues to destroy Mexico and has made much of the country go up into flames. Violence has become an everyday occurrence in Mexico. For example, bodies have appeared in school yards, and, Mexican elites drive around in bullet proof cars. Calderón's militarization strategy, which the Mérida Initiative helped finance, led to the suffering of millions of Mexicans. Human rights abuses have been rampant among the armed forces in Mexico. The drug cartels and the Mexican army have battled, and what is the end result? As of 2013, an estimated 100,000 people died from the drug war in Mexico while drugs continue to be produced and trafficked.¹⁰⁵ The total number of murders increased by 112 percent between 2007 and 2012, revealing the increasing levels of violence as a result of Calderón's war on drugs.¹⁰⁶ Women, in particular, have been victims of the drug war and the accompanying levels of violence. Cawley states that "[t]he number of killings of women more than doubled in the three years after then-President Calderon launched his assault on criminal groups, rising from 1,119 in 2007 to 2,471 in 2010."¹⁰⁷ The number of women who were murdered between 2007 and 2012 increased by an astounding 155 percent.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, critics of the drug war argue that there must be more investment on decreasing the demand for drugs because drug traffickers will continue to partake in this business as long as there is a demand for such commodities. In addition, new drugs will emerge that will become popular and will be in high demand (e.g., flakka). Addressing addictions

to serious drugs requires resources to be invested in treatment, rehabilitation, and education. In the United States, the Trump administration is ramping up the war on drugs, contending that the method for combating the opioid crisis is to increase border security and combat the supply. This is despite decades of criticism by many academics and policymakers about the limitations of focusing on supply-side strategies. President Obama ended the war on drugs during his administration—at least in terms of rhetoric—and stressed the need to combat the demand for drugs.¹⁰⁹ In sum, the demand for drugs not only fuels organized crime groups, but it also contributes to violence in many of the transit and source countries as criminal groups fight for control of territory.

Countries plagued by high levels of corruption, impunity, and weak institutions help foster organized crime groups. Combating corruption and impunity requires a state apparatus that functions efficiently.¹¹⁰ Implementing the rule of law and reforming institutions is not an easy task.¹¹¹ While this does not occur overnight, it is essential for states to be able to address these fundamental problems that enable organized crime groups to flourish. These organizations want weak state apparatuses where they can use money, influence, and power to bribe judges, politicians, and law enforcement officials.

Finally, technology presents major challenges for law enforcement and security professionals. Organized crime groups have become more sophisticated and can utilize technology to maximize profits. The Dark Web, for instance, has become a space where a variety of organizations—from terrorists, hackers, and drug dealers—can take advantage of this platform to communicate and partake in illicit commerce. It becomes more difficult for law enforcement to track the people involved in the supply-chain of illicit activities, such as drug trafficking.

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CHAPTER 5

Gangs and Counter-Gang Strategies

What is a gang? How are these organizations different from other transnational organized crime groups? This chapter is an effort to understand the nature of gangs by examining cases of countries that are plagued by high levels of gang violence. It focuses on understanding what factors have helped lead to the evolution of gangs and violence. In addition, how have gangs become so powerful in places like El Salvador¹ and Brazil?² El Salvador, for instance, is home to some of the most violent street gangs in the world. This case study serves as an example of the relationship between fragile states, gangs, and violence. The chapter also examines the unintended consequences of strategies that have been implemented that sought to combat gangs and gang-related violence.

CONCEPTUALIZING GANGS

There are an estimated 33,000 prison, motorcycle, and street gangs that operate in the United States as well as in Puerto Rico. The US government has created a variety of task forces and initiatives designed to combat gangs operating in the country, including the National Gang Intelligence Center, Safe Street Task Forces, and the Transnational Anti-Gang Task Forces.³ Yet how do scholars define a gang? Scholars have been studying gangs for decades. Despite the vast amount of literature on gangs, there is not a consensus about what is a gang.⁴ For example, some individuals would argue that some gangs are more like transnational organized crime

groups or mafias than youth gangs. Law enforcement entities have developed various legal definitions for defining a gang. Debates also exist among experts about how many members are needed for a group to be classified as a gang.⁵

While academics debate the different types of gangs, there are a few defining features. A crucial part of any gang is the importance of identity. Symbols play a major part in the identity of the gang.⁶ Gang members have different means of communicating with each other through various symbols. Symbols include not only verbal symbols, such as particular words or word usage that is unique to the gang. Gang members, for instance, have certain slangs and code words that can help inform members of the organization about different situations. In addition to verbal symbols, there are other non-verbal symbols that can be utilized by a gang.⁷ For example, there are different ways that gang members can sign to one another to communicate. These symbols are powerful tools that can help gang members feel a sense of loyalty and connection to the organization. Gang members use these mechanisms to strengthen the identity of its members and make them feel part of this exclusive organization.

Understanding these symbols, including hand symbols and forms of communication, is something that law enforcement has studied in an effort to better understand the gang and how it operates. Informants like Brenda Paz, a former member of MS-13, flipped on her gang and explained to federal authorities the different ways that the gang communicates. Such videos have been seen by other gang experts as training manuals as they attempt to develop different methods for combating these organizations.⁸ However, countering gangs requires law enforcement to first understand how the organizations operate.

While scholars stress the importance of identity⁹ that brings gang members together, what separates gangs from other organizations? In other words, a football team is a group of individuals that are loyal to the team. Football players may pledge their undying loyalty to the organization by vowing to route for the team until the day they die. In fact, some football players—a well as fans—have tattooed team logos to their body parts. Depending on the person, some tattoos are in visible locations, while others can be covered with clothing. For example, Kirby Freeman,¹⁰ a former quarterback at the University of Miami, tattooed the Miami Hurricanes logo on his body to demonstrate his loyalty to the team; Freeman later transferred to another university. A football team or other organization (bowling league, fraternity, chess club, and countless others) have mem-

bers who may dress the same, may even tattoo logos on their arms, and enjoy “hanging out.” Yet these organizations are different from a gang because they do not participate in criminal activities. Crime is an intricate part of gang life. Thus, when defining a gang and separating it from other organizations that have some characteristics (e.g., identity, brotherhood, and sisterhood), it is essential to understand the importance of crime in gang life as this element helps distinguish the organization from other groups.¹¹

Furthermore, another type of non-verbal symbol is graffiti. The usage of graffiti by gangs has been studied by scholars.¹² Gangs can use graffiti to mark their territory by painting their symbols on walls, park benches, street corner posts, and various other platforms. As gangs seek to expand their territory, they need other non-gang members as well as rival gang members to understand which organization controls certain areas. For example, people walking in a neighborhood who see a gang symbol from the Crips understand that this organization controls this particular area. As will be explained in more detail below, gangs seek to expand their control and influence. One of the major ways of doing this is to control neighborhoods.¹³ Tagging over a gang symbol of a rival gang is the ultimate sign of disrespect and could even result in death and other forms of physical harm—such activities are part of the daily battle of gang members who seek to expand their reach. In summary, gang experts and law enforcement can drive down areas with known gang activity in a variety of cities—from Los Angeles to New York—and determine which gang controls a particular territory or neighborhood through visible symbols such as graffiti.¹⁴

Another important type of symbol for gang members is tattoos. Tattoos are a form of representation used by gangs that are used by gang members to identify with an organization. Tattoos have multiple purposes. A person who has a visible gang tattoo alerts people in the community about one’s gang membership. Tattoos can also be used to signal to rival gang members about one’s membership status. Tattoos, particularly in visible locations, also help a member pledge his or her loyalty to the organization. Tattoos are designed to be permanent. In addition, people who join gangs pledge a dying oath of loyalty to the gang. While tattoos can be removed, the process is very difficult, painful, and expensive.¹⁵ Having gang tattoos on one’s face or other visible body parts shows one’s commitment to the gang life.

Gangs participate in a variety of criminal enterprises from drug trafficking, robbery, extortion, and even hired assassinations—depending on the gang. Extortion is a lucrative method for gang members to make

money. Gangs seek to expand their control of territory and operating a business or even living within a gang neighborhood may mean that gangs will extort such enterprises and individuals. Small business owners in East Los Angeles, for example, have to pay extortion fees to the gangs. This form of payment may be viewed by victims as taking away money from the community so that gangs can operate. In other words, extortion is a type of tax or rent payment that is required for people who live in this territory to conduct business. However, some gang members might try to switch the perception of the activity by contending that they are providing protection for the business owners as well as civilians. In other words, someone who pays a gang can expect protection from the gang against criminals or other rival gang members. Yet it is important to note that refusing an extortion payment can result in someone being beaten up or even death. In summary, gang members who are extorting businesses and other individuals living within the gang's territory can increase the number of resources in the organization's war chest. Operating a gang requires money and a great way to increase the power of the gang is to have more money than other organizations. Gangs with more resources can buy different things from arms for protection or drugs and alcohol for gang parties.

Controlling a neighborhood also enables gang members to partake in other activities, including drug sales.¹⁶ Having control of the neighborhood means that a particular gang is the only group allowed to operate in this area.¹⁷ Thus, it is essential that a gang has the ability to dominate territory to increase the number of clandestine activities that can help increase the revenue supply of the organization. There are opportunities for gangs to work with other organized crime groups, including drug cartels. The Sinaloa cartel of Mexico, for instance, has worked with gangs in Chicago to distribute drugs in the city.¹⁸ However, it is important to note that these organizations operate in different parts of the supply chain. Gangs in Chicago are involved in the distribution, but they are not major players in the production of drugs. Instead, drug cartels produce and traffic drugs and work with different organizations to distribute these substances. Coca, for example, is cultivated in Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia.¹⁹ Today, Colombia remains the major producer and trafficker of cocaine. This substance is then trafficked across different routes to the United States. One of the major routes is through Mexico, which has a nearly 2,000-mile border with the United States.

THE STRUCTURE OF GANGS

Scholars have analyzed the different organizational structures of gangs. Such analysis also leads to questions about how gangs organize in different countries.²⁰ In other words, what trends can be comparable among gangs operating in different regions? Scholars are divided about the hierarchical organization of a gang. Some gang experts believe that gangs are organized along a vertical hierarchy. This means that a gang has a similar structure akin to a corporation.²¹ In other words, there are high level leaders that make decisions in the organization and such orders are filtered down the “chain of command.” There are several benefits of hierarchical organizations. First, lower level gang members know who makes the decisions (i.e., the “shot callers”). Second, it is easier for the organization to ensure that the members are following the rules. Gangs have certain codes of conduct that must be abided by. The potential draw backs of a vertical chain of command is that lower level gang members who might question the decisions of the leadership can fracture and splinter off into different organizations. Gang members, like other criminal groups, may be ambitious and desire to ascend the gang hierarchy. The reality is that the majority of gang members are not wealthy. Top leaders might have more money and can make decisions about how to divide resources, where to expand the operations of the gang. A plethora of other issues can cause tension among gang members. For example, jealousy among members who desire to be leaders in the organization can be a dividing factor.

Other scholars contend that gangs are horizontally structured, which implies that organizations are less well-structured than some members of law enforcement or scholars might believe. In addition, the codes of conduct are less rigid and depend on the loyalty of the gang members. Some scholars have conducted studies of gangs in cities such as St. Louis, Missouri and found that gangs are horizontally structured.²² One of the benefits of this type of structure is that there could be a higher sense of equality among members. However, the negative aspect could be less formal structures and more difficulty maintaining discipline. Gangs that have a more formal structure understand how decisions are made and rely upon a strict hierarchy to enforce codes of conduct.

Furthermore, scholars have developed different categories to define the different types of gangs. Not all gangs are uniform as there are differences between street gangs, prison gangs, and more transnational enterprises. The different types of gangs depend on the size of the organization as well

as how long the gang has been operating. Some gang scholars have developed as many as five different categories of gangs.²³ It is important to remember that gangs are not static and can evolve over time. Small gangs might disappear if the members leave the organization—either voluntarily or through death. Moreover, gangs can disagree and splinter as has been seen in the 18th Street gang in El Salvador which divided into the 18th Street Revolutionaries and the 18th Street Southerners.²⁴ Interestingly, the 18th Street gang has not divided in Guatemala or Honduras. The division of a gang for various reasons (e.g., ideological) only weakens an organization. For example, the split between the 18th Street in El Salvador has not helped the organization as these two divisions are arch enemies. The division also helps to strengthen MS-13. Some discussions have emerged about the divisions within MS-13. Some experts contend that there has been the emergence of MS-503—503 is the area code of El Salvador—as there are factions with the group.²⁵ This, however, is debated as there is not consensus among experts about whether MS-13 is divided.

MS-13 AND THE 18TH STREET GANGS

Salvadoran immigrants fleeing the high levels of violence in El Salvador due to the bloody civil²⁶ war—which endured from 1980 to 1992—moved to Southern California. Individuals who fled their homes in El Salvador often did not fit into Los Angeles, even among other Latino/Latina communities.²⁷ In Los Angeles, Mexicans are the dominant Latino community, and many Salvadorans faced high levels of bullying by Mexicans.²⁸ Even the way in which Salvadorans speak Spanish is different. For instance, Salvadorans use *vos* instead of *tú*, enabling someone to notice that differences in the way that people conjugate certain Spanish verbs in Central American countries (e.g., Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua—among others) is different than in Mexico.²⁹ Immigrants who fled from El Salvador and moved to the United States also had to learn a new language, English. Sometimes people often suffered from bullying. Salvadoran immigrants formed MS-13 in Los Angeles in the 1980s. The members of the gang started out as a group of youth who liked to smoke marijuana. Moreover, the founders of MS-13 enjoyed rock-n-roll music, which helps explain the origin of the gang sign of MS-13—a derivative of the hand sign that rock fans use.³⁰ Steven Dudley, a gang expert, contends: “Feeling vulnerable to other gangs in these cities, some members of these new enclaves formed their own gangs. At first fulfilling community needs for protection and security, the activities of such

gangs quickly degenerated into crime, including murder for hire, extortion, local distribution of drugs, and prostitution.”³¹

MS-13 provided its members with a sense of identity. The gangs consisted of other Salvadoran youth who could identify not only in terms of where they were from but also the language that they spoke—and how they spoke it. The gang not only provided these individuals with a sense of belonging but also friendship. Gang members can “hang out” with other gang colleagues. MS-13 also gave its members a sense of protection. If someone decides to bully one gang member then that person no longer has a problem with one gang member but rather the entire gang. In sum, gangs not only provide a sense of comradeship among groups. In addition, gangs can instill fear into people who will think twice about crossing such organizations due to their violent natures.

MS-13 began to evolve over time. As the gang began to expand and become more organized it created security problems for law enforcement in Southern California. The Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in 1996³² resulted in the deportation of Salvadoran gang members back to their countries of origin. The deportation of people back to El Salvador without criminal records due to the poor coordination between the US government and its partners in the region led to the growth of the gang. Scholars, such as José Miguel Cruz, note that the deportations alone did not lead to the expansion of the gang. However, various factors, such as high levels of inequality, corruption, and impunity, help create conditions that enabled gangs to flourish.³³ Scholars have also noted that organized crime groups and gangs thrive in states that are plagued by high levels of corruption and impunity. Such states serve as breeding grounds for criminal activities.³⁴ Thus, deportations contributed to the spreading of the gang phenomenon throughout Central America. However, the deportations alone are not the only variables. States that have elements of fragility (e.g., impunity, corruption, inequality, and histories of violence—among other factors) create ripe conditions for gangs and other criminal organizations to flourish. Disconnected youth are vulnerable to being recruited into the gang life creating a vicious circle of crime and violence.

In 2012, the US Department of the Treasury labeled MS-13 as a transnational criminal organization,³⁵ yet debates have emerged among scholars about how to define MS-13. Some experts contend that MS-13 is not a gang but rather a transnational criminal organization because of the nature of the organization and its involvement in a plethora of illicit activities in Central

America as well as the United States. Other scholars have contended that MS-13 is a powerful organization that seeks to increase political power within Central American governments. As a result, gangs like MS-13 should be considered as a type of “urban guerilla.”³⁶ Yet experts such as José Miguel Cruz note that MS-13 should be classified as a gang because the organizations adhere to the standard definition of gangs developed by scholars. He notes that while there are some leaders in the gang who are older members, the majority of MS-13 gang members are youth that share a common identity.³⁷ Therefore, it would be incorrect to consider a gang like MS-13 as a guerilla movement like The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—FARC) in Colombia. In sum, MS-13 meets all the standard characteristics of a gang discussed in the beginning of this chapter. It is a misconception to classify the organization as an urban guerrilla movement. Most gang members are young and feel a strong sense of identity to the organization.

Furthermore, the Salvadoran government has implemented different strategies to combat gangs operating in the country. In the early 2000s, President Francisco Flores of the conservative party known as the Nationalist Republican Alliance (Alianza Republicana Nacionalista—ARENA) launched *Plan Mano Dura* in an effort to combat gangs and gang-related violence.³⁸ The government began to round-up alleged people involved in the gang life. Gang members in El Salvador often are easy to identify because of certain defining characteristics. First, gang members tend to dress a certain way (i.e., they have a gang uniform). For example, members might often wear Nike shoes and white socks. In addition, shaving one’s head is very common in Central American street gangs. Central American street gangs often show their loyalty to the gang by having gang symbols tattooed on their bodies. Individuals who have a gang tattoo on their faces make it very easy for the police to locate someone with a gang affiliation.

Police began to increase the number of people arrested for being gang members and partaking in gang-related activities. Police often arrested and re-arrested gang members. Cruz notes, “A significant number of arrests were carried out against the same individuals; meaning the clean ups led to situations where the same gang member was imprisoned and then released up to four or five times in a 1-year period. Despite this, an important number of MS-13 and Eighteenth affiliates remained in prisons and were indicted. Hence, these raids led to severe prison overcrowding.”³⁹ Such policies had unintended consequences as prison officials sought to separate gang members within the prison system. Benjamin Lessing of the University of

Chicago contends that “[p]ro-incarceration policies like anti-gang sweeps and enhanced sentencing can increase prison gangs’ ability to project power onto the streets. This in turn can lead to the further growth of prison gangs as criminal organizations, trigger important structural changes in criminal markets, and give prison gangs important sources of leverage over state actors.”⁴⁰ Gang members from different cliques in the prison system began to organize and network.⁴¹ Prisons served as “schools of crime,” where gang members could organize and plan different operations. While this could be classified as an unintended consequence of the original strategies designed by the government, the reality is that gangs have taken advantage of the prison system. It, therefore, is not possible to understand the structure of gangs like MS-13 without examining the relationship between these organizations and prisons. Prisons play such an integral part of gang life, which, in essence is the opposite desired outcome of the tough on crime strategies that seek to incarcerate gang members and other criminals by punishing them and deterring them from re-offending.

The *mano dura*⁴² strategies created severe strains on the Salvadoran prison system. The prison population increased from 10,907 in 2002 to 19,814 in 2008. By 2014, El Salvador had a prison population of 28,334. Prisons in the country are extremely overcrowded (see Fig. 5.1).⁴³ In 2016, El Salvador had an occupancy rate of over 348 percent. In 2016, the

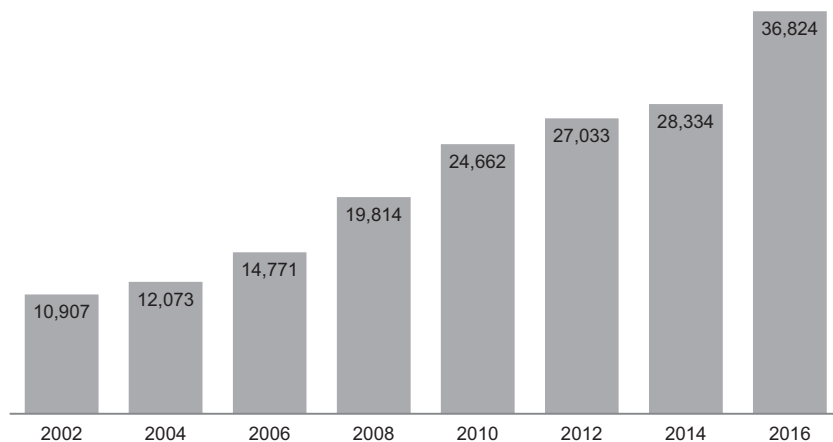


Fig. 5.1 Total El Salvadoran prison population. Source: Created by authors with data from the Institute for Criminal Policy Research

highest court ruled that the overcrowding in the prison system is a violation of the constitution as inmates have the right to a “dignified detention.”⁴⁴ Overcrowding in the prison system is a major concern for human rights advocates. In addition, such high levels of overcrowding can create tension among prison populations and could lead to increases in levels of violence.⁴⁵ Dudley argues that “[t]he fighting on the street between the two main gangs, the Mara Salvatrucha-13 and the Barrio 18 spilled into the overcrowded jails. Hundreds died in several riots. The authorities, seemingly desperate for a short-term solution, split the groups up. Now, MS-13 and 18 members are sent to different prisons, a de facto nod to their increasing power and a de facto admission that the state was relatively powerless to stop them.”⁴⁶ Finally, housing so many people in such horrific conditions can make it difficult to control diseases such as tuberculosis. While some members of the public are less concerned with the well-being of gang members, the reality is that prison overcrowding only creates more tensions among inmates and can lead to riots, violence, and other criminal activities. Moreover, people who leave the prison system may return to society angrier and with more resentment toward the criminal justice system.

*Mano dura*⁴⁷ strategies fail to address the underlying problems in El Salvador, which is a highly unequal country plagued by high levels of poverty. The vast majority of gang members are highly uneducated. José Miguel Cruz and his colleagues at Florida International University conducted a survey with nearly 1200 former and active gang members in El Salvador. The data show that 35.2 percent of gang members only had a primary education, while 41.6 percent had a middle school education (see Fig. 5.2).

Moreover, gang members are from very poor households: 71.3 percent of the survey respondents had a monthly household income of under \$250. Only 3.4 percent of gang members had a monthly family income of \$501 or more.⁴⁸ In sum, it is important to understand the underlying reasons that help contribute to gang membership. Counter-gang strategies fail to understand these underlying structural problems that only contribute to El Salvador’s status as a fragile state.

The work of Cruz and his colleagues on Salvadoran street gangs also demonstrates that gang members come from marginalized communities and households plagued by high levels of domestic violence. Nearly half (45.7 percent) of the gang members in the survey contended that they joined the gang because they liked to hang out with the gang. The sense of brotherhood and identity are powerful factors for marginalized youth who are disconnected from society. Yet the gang not only provides indi-

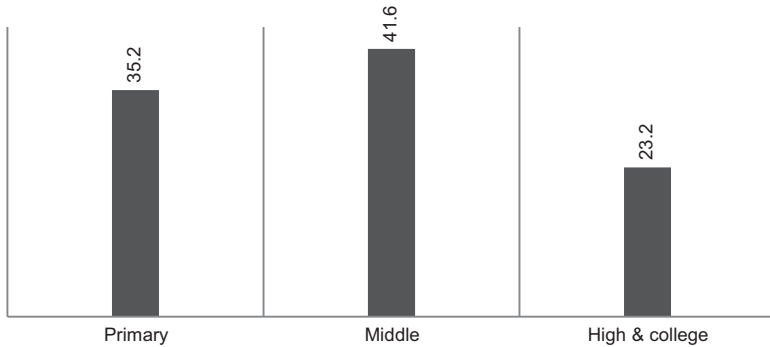


Fig. 5.2 Education level of gang members. Source: Created by authors with data from José Miguel Cruz, Jonathan D. Rosen, Luis Enrique Amaya, and Yulia Vorobyeva, *The New Face of Street Gangs: The Gang Phenomenon in El Salvador* (Miami, FL: FIU, 2017)

viduals with friends but also self-confidence. In fact, 59.2 percent of the respondents in the survey contended that they gained self-confidence from being in the gang. In addition, 53.1 percent indicated that they obtained material things. Thus, gangs serve as a system of support for youth and provide them not only with material resources but also self-confidence.⁴⁹ Critics argue that it is important for the El Salvadoran government to recognize the problem and address the underlying causes. Cruz contends, “In many places, youth join gangs for the same reasons previous generations did. They are searching for identity and respect. The transnational nature of MS-13 and other gangs operating in the region is profoundly entrenched in what happens at the local level. To the extent that government policies do not acknowledge such complex realities, the wicked appeal of MS-13 may only grow.”⁵⁰

Today, the El Salvadoran government faces a major dilemma regarding the gang phenomenon. The hardline counter-gang strategies result in massive spikes in the prison population. Moreover, prisons become revolving doors as gang members are arrested and re-arrested for crimes. The government must develop sound strategies for addressing why individuals join a gang. El Salvador is facing a serious problem with the number of disconnected youth in the country who neither work nor study. Youth who do not have the skills are lured into partaking in the informal economy and become prime candidates for joining gangs.

In addition to prevention, the government must focus on the reinsertion of gang members into society. Gang members face high levels of discrimination among the population and have a difficult time competing in the formal economy. A person with a criminal record—whether in El Salvador or the United States⁵¹—faces many challenges when attempting to find a job and become a productive member of society. Individuals who are unable to find work may be tempted to return to crime in order to support themselves or their family members.

Furthermore, the El Salvadoran government has not learned from the policy failures of the past. Instead, the current administration has continued to implement counter-gang strategies designed to arrest gang members and combat gang violence. In 2015, the Salvadoran Supreme court ruled that gang members should be viewed as terrorists.⁵² However, gang members are not terrorists. Terrorism is a tactic designed to intimidate and instill fear in the population. Traditional terrorist organizations like the Islamic State and Iraq and Syria have political goals.⁵³ On the other hand, organized crime groups and gangs do not have political goals. Instead, drug trafficking organizations and gangs partake in illicit activities with the goal of making money. As explained above, gang members have a strong sense of identity and loyalty to the organization. What separates a gang from other groups such as fraternities is participation in criminal activities.

The Salvador Sánchez Cerén administration is using the harsh rhetoric to demonstrate to the Salvadoran public that gangs and gang-related violence have been raised on the security agenda of the country. In addition, the use of this rhetoric enables the government to justify the use of the military in the conflict. By definition, the military is tasked with preventing the country from external enemies not internal policing. While the military is perceived as less corrupt and more professional than the Salvadoran police, the military also has been shrouded in various scandals. Luis Fernando Alonso notes that “[n]ew testimony indicates that the Barrio 18 gang’s Revolutionaries faction in El Salvador paid former soldiers and guerrillas to provide gang members with firearms and martial arts training in 2014, reviving an issue that has been the subject of debate for several years.”⁵⁴ Such warlike rhetoric concerns many human rights advocates. Moreover, critics of such counter-gang strategies note that these policies have not been effective in the past.⁵⁵

The Salvador Sánchez Cerén administration has continued the counter-gang strategies in an effort to reduce gang activity and decrease gang-related violence plaguing the country. According to the Federal Bureau

of Investigation (FBI), there are between 6,000 and 10,000 MS-13 gang members operating throughout the United States. In addition to Los Angeles, Virginia and Washington, D.C., have become a stronghold for MS-13. The gang also operates in at least 42 other states throughout the country.⁵⁶ There are concerns about the gang expanding in the United States as well as the operations between leaders in El Salvador and gang members in the country's neighbor to the north. The case of Brenda Paz, an MS-13 member and an informant, created many concerns among law enforcement about the reach and power of this gang in the United States. Gang members discovered that Paz was an informant and had betrayed the gang. As a result, gang members killed Paz, who was pregnant at the time.⁵⁷

There have been major concerns among law enforcement about the power of the gang in the United States as well as the linkages between Central America. In September 2017, a federal court in Boston charged Edwin Mancía Flore, an MS-13 gang member, with a racketeering conspiracy. Authorities alleged that this individual is one of the leaders of the gang and has played an important role in the consolidation of MS-13 in the East Coast of the United States. Héctor Silva Ávalos notes, "Edwin Mancía Flores made a call to the United States from an unidentified Salvadoran prison on December 13, 2015. On the other end of the line, in Richmond, Virginia, was José Martínez Castro, alias 'Chucky,' the leader of the Everett Loco Salvatrucha clique who was appointed by the national leadership of the MS13 to expand the gang's East Coast 'program' from the Carolinas to the suburbs of Boston."⁵⁸

Furthermore, President Trump has blamed former President Obama for the presence of MS-13 in the United States, contending that his immigration policies helped the gang thrive. On April 18, 2017, he wrote the following on Twitter: "The weak illegal immigration policies of the Obama Admin. allowed bad MS 13 gangs to form in cities across U.S. We are removing them fast!"⁵⁹ In reality, the Obama administration deported more individuals than the Bush administration. In 2001, for instance, the US government deported 189,000 people—both criminals and non-criminals. By 2008, the number of deportations spiked to 360,000 people. In 2010, the Obama administration deported 382,000 individuals. Yet by 2013, the government deported 435,000 people. These practices led to critics referring to President Obama as the "deporter-in-chief." It, however, is important to note that the number of deportations dropped in 2014 and 2015. In 2015, the US government deported 333,000 indi-

viduals.⁶⁰ In summary, the facts contradict President Trump's assertion via twitter as the Obama administration deported more people than the Bush government.

The deportation of gang members back to their home countries in Central America or other parts of Latin America can have negative consequences. The current governments in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador are facing significant challenges with crime, insecurity, and violence. These states are plagued by high levels of corruption and impunity.⁶¹ Critics also argue that "failed" crime strategies implemented in Central America helped the gang members flourish. Cruz argues that "[d]espite what President Donald Trump and Attorney General Sessions have claimed, lax immigration policies are not what allowed MS-13 and other Central American gangs to form in the U.S. Rather, these criminal groups spread largely in response to failed U.S. anti-crime policies in the 1980s that were later adopted in Central America."⁶² Cruz maintains that the Trump administration is not correct in the assessment of the gang threat.⁶³ Instead of focusing only on immigration, it is important to understand the failure of such crime strategies that were designed to combat gangs and gang-related violence.

Deporting gang members back to their countries of origins does not address the underlying problems of why people join a gang. In addition, there is concern that these countries do not have the necessary capacity to handle active and former gang members and provide these individuals with the necessary skills to be reinserted successfully back into society. It also is important to note that the US government has tried this approach before. The deportation of gang members back to their home countries in Central America helped gangs like MS-13 expand throughout the region. The failed coordination between the United States and Salvadoran governments resulted in people incarcerated in the United States being deported back to Central America without criminal records.⁶⁴

The Trump administration has sought to increase the importance of gangs, such as MS-13, on the national security agenda of the United States. In July 2017, Trump made a speech on Long Island, New York, about the need to combat gangs. He argued, "Together we're going to restore safety to our streets and peace to our communities and we're going to destroy the vile, criminal cartel MS-13 and many other gangs."⁶⁵ Trump emphasized the need to combat gangs like MS-13 through deportation strategies. During his speech on Long Island, he stated: "We've gotten a lot of them out of here."⁶⁶ In October 2017, Jeff Sessions, the Attorney General, spoke to the International Association of Chiefs of Police and emphasized the

importance of countering MS-13. Sessions described the actions of the gangs, stating: “MS-13 members brutally rape, rob, extort, and murder. Guided by their motto—‘kill, rape, and control’—they leave misery, devastation, and death in their wake.”⁶⁷ He also stressed that combating this organization has become a priority for the current administration. Sessions asserted, “I am announcing today that I have designated MS-13 as a priority for our Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces. These task forces bring together a broad coalition of our federal prosecutors, DEA, FBI, ATF, ICE, HSI, the IRS, the Department of Labor Inspector General, the Postal Service Inspectors, the Secret Service, the Marshals Service, and the Coast Guard.”⁶⁸ In sum, the Trump administration has focused on gangs like MS-13 and stressed the need to deport these individuals.

While law enforcement and the current administration are concentrating on combating gangs like MS-13, research indicates that most gang members are not joining the organization in the United States. The research conducted by Cruz and his colleagues on gangs in El Salvador found that only 3.1 percent of MS-13 gang members in the survey joined in the United States. The vast majority of gang members—68.4 percent—joined that gang in the rest of the country, while only 28.5 percent of the members joined the organization in the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (MASS). On the other hand, 0 percent of the 18th Street Revolutionaries and 0.7 percent of the 18th Street Southerners joined the gang in the United States. The 18th Street Revolutionaries had a higher percentage of people who joined in the MASS, 58.6 percent, compared to 41.3 percent who joined in the rest of the country. Finally, 57.8 percent of the 18th Street Southerners joined in the gang in the rest of the country compared to 41.4 percent who joined in the MASS. Therefore, nearly all of the gang members who “jumped-in” to their respective organization in El Salvador began their gang lives in their home country. A very high percentage of gang members became involved in the gang life outside of the MASS, which is contrary to what many people might hypothesize (i.e., experts might assume that people are joining the gang in the MASS as opposed to other towns and rural areas in the country).⁶⁹

BRAZILIAN GANGS

Brazil has been touted by economists as one of the countries on the rise. In fact, the country has been labeled as a member of the BRICS, an acronym that represents Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. An

economist at Goldman Sachs contended that these developing countries had tremendous economic potential. The “rise” of Brazil as a major player on the international scene has been slowed-down as the country has been plagued by countless scandals. Moreover, the seemingly endless corruption scandals that have emerged reveal troubling trends. The country is plagued by extremely weak institutions that are shrouded with corruption and lack of transparency. On Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, Brazil scored a 40 in 2016, with 0 being highly corrupt and 100 being very clean. Moreover, Brazil ranked 79 out of 176, wherein the higher the score, the more corrupt the country.⁷⁰ In 2016, the Brazilian Senate, which has been riddled with corruption, voted to impeach President Dilma Rousseff. The current President, Michel Temer, is in the midst of various corruption scandals.⁷¹ In sum, Brazil is suffering from a political crisis and state fragility.

In addition to the high levels of corruption and impunity, Brazil has been plagued by high levels of gangs and gang violence.⁷² The oldest gang in the country is known as the Red Command (Comando Vermelho), which began in the Brazilian prison system in the 1970s. While experts note that the group began in the prison system as a method for prisoners to protect themselves, the organization evolved over time and became more involved in criminal activities. For instance, the Red Command started working in the cocaine trade in the 1980s.⁷³ In addition to this organization, the other major gang is the First Capital Command (Primeiro Comando da Capital—PCC). This gang also began in the Brazilian prison system during the 1990s. Experts note that this organization is the most organized criminal group in Brazil. In fact, the PCC operates in two-thirds of the states throughout the country and is a major player in drug trafficking, even controlling routes between Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil.⁷⁴

The favelas in the country have become battle grounds for control of routes and territories. Gangs fight to control neighborhoods. In September 2017, for example, criminal organizations battled for control of drug trafficking in Rocinha, a favela in Rio de Janeiro, resulting in high levels of violence. Parker Asmann contends that “[t]he sheer scale of the ongoing turf war in Rocinha and the striking displays of violence suggest that the city’s criminal underworld is in significant turmoil. Whether or not security forces will be able to curtail, and ultimately end, the conflict remains to be seen.”⁷⁵

The favelas are not only characterized by high levels of gang activity, but there is a lack of state presence. The Brazilian police squads designed to combat the gangs and gang-related violence in these areas are

plagued by high levels of corruption. Moreover, the use of force by these institutions has been questioned and criticized by many human rights activists. For example, the elite Special Police Operations Battalion (Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais—BOPE) was tasked with “cleaning up” the favelas prior to the 2016 Olympics. This organization has even been referred to as a death squad and has been accused of participating in corrupt acts as well as extra-judicial killings.⁷⁶

While the Brazilian government has implemented tough on crime policies to combat drug trafficking and organized crime, the consequence has been a spike in the prison population. In 2000, for example, the country had 232,755 prisoners, which is a rate of 133 per 100,000 inhabitants. The number of people incarcerated in prison has continued to increase over time. In 2006, Brazil incarcerated 401,236 people, which constitutes 212 per 100,000 inhabitants (see Fig. 5.3). By 2016, Brazil had 644,575 people in prison—a rate of 313 per 100,000. The large percentage of people—36.6 percent—who are in pretrial detention also has contributed to the rights of overcrowding. The high percentage of inmates in Brazil are in pretrial detention waiting for their day in court as a consequence of what Andrea Dip refers to Brazil’s arrest first, ask later policy. Dip states

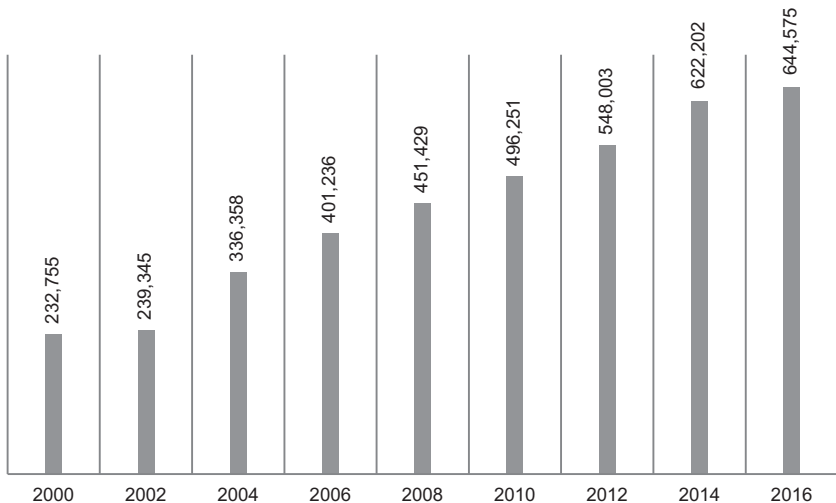


Fig. 5.3 Brazilian prison population. Source: Created by authors with data from World Prison Brief’s Institute for Criminal Policy Research

that “[a] 2011 law attempted to cut down on the rate of pretrial detention. The law prohibited pretrial detention for cases in which convictions would not result in jail time. The law also established alternative punishments to prison sentences. Yet, according to public defenders, this law has locked up more suspects than it has released.”⁷⁷ As of November 2017, the prison system had an official capacity of 403,063. Thus, the prison system is operating at an occupancy level of 163.2 percent.⁷⁸

The high levels of overcrowding and the large number of gangs dominating the Brazilian prison system have contributed to violence. Prisons in Brazil often are dominated by powerful gangs, such as the First Capital Command (PCC). In September 2014, a prison riot in Brazil’s Parana state resulted in the death of five prisoners.⁷⁹ Research indicates that the PCC were behind the riot.⁸⁰ In January 2017, a riot occurred that resulted in the death of 56 prisoners. The underlying cause of the violence can be attributed to rival gangs competing to dominate the lucrative cocaine trade. Jill Langlois notes, “Investigators said they discovered a network of tunnels under the prison floors that they believe was employed during the massacre and suggested that the killings were premeditated. In the days before the uprising, prison guards had come to believe that drug trafficking groups were smuggling in firearms, some of which were collected by police after the violence subsided.”⁸¹ Therefore, the Brazilian prison systems serve as incubators of gang activity and violence and do not effectively rehabilitate prisoners.

CONCLUSION

Gangs have continued to evolve over time. Some organizations, like MS-13, have become more violent and powerful. The US deportation policies contributed to the expansion of the gang throughout Central American countries as gang members returned to their home countries without criminal records. The expansion of gangs throughout the region has led to high levels of criminal activity (e.g., extortion, kidnapping, drug sales, and hired assassinations).

Various countries have implemented strategies to combat gang-related violence. *Mano dura* policies have resulted in higher levels of violence as the gangs not only fight among each other for territory and control but also with law enforcement. While “tough on crime” strategies designed to combat gangs and gang-related violence are often popular among the public, these policies are problematic for various reasons. In addition to violence

increasing, rounding-up gang members and incarcerating them creates a major strain on the prison system. Prisons in Latin America suffer from high levels of overcrowding as they do not have the capacity to house so many inmates. The high levels of overcrowding can create tensions between inmates and result in violence within the penitentiary system.⁸² In addition, prisons often function as schools of crime. The case of El Salvador demonstrates that separating the gangs behind bars had unintended consequences as gang members from different cliques began to organize and strategize. In essence, the prison system became an integral part of gang life. Finally, many prisons in Latin America fail to rehabilitate gang members.

Countries must focus on preventing youth from joining gangs. As research conducted by José Miguel Cruz and his colleagues demonstrates, most gang members in El Salvador are from marginalized communities plagued by high levels of violence. In addition, gang members have very low levels of education and are from very poor households.⁸³ Unless countries like El Salvador—and others in the region—can solve the underlying problems, people will continue to join gangs. Sabine Kurtenbach, Senior Research Fellow at the German Institute of Global and Area Studies, contends: “Violence drives many out of the country, but it is not perpetuated by the gangs alone. The government and the country’s economic and political elites need to own up to their responsibility. They must replace the current development model, and end the politicisation of violence and their scapegoating of marginalised youth. Otherwise, the continuing cycle of violence and repression might bring El Salvador back to the verge of war.”⁸⁴ Thus, this vicious cycle of violence will continue if the political will to solve these problems does not exist.

In addition to focusing on prevention, critics stress the need to emphasize rehabilitation and reinsertion. Since many countries, like El Salvador, do not have the death penalty, the majority of inmates will eventually leave the prisons system. Gang members face many challenges finding jobs when they exit the penitentiary system. Former gang members not only have a strike against them for being affiliated with gangs, but they also face high levels of discrimination because of their prison records. Many companies shy away from hiring ex-felons and people who can be perceived to be dangerous. Cruz’s research on Salvadoran street gangs demonstrates that gang members obtained material resources from being in the organization. Poor and uneducated youth who joined a gang for friendship and material resources can leave the organization. However, they will not only have enemies on the street who are rival gang members

but also their former colleagues could harm them for abandoning the gang life. Former gang members, therefore, will abandon the gang life poorer and without the necessary educational training and skill set to compete in the labor force.⁸⁵

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CHAPTER 6

Understanding the Nature of Violence: Crime and Its Future

Throughout history, human beings have used violence for survival, to achieve goals, for pleasure, and to neutralize past wrongs. At times, mankind detests war but may also praise war. In today's world, some people even seek to hurt others with whom they disagree with politically. Some individuals, like Andre Malraux, even praise violence rather than finding it regrettable, saying it is the "most profound experience of brotherhood."¹ This chapter hopes to further conceptualize violence, looking at the many types of violence and what it hopes to achieve. It looks at physical violence and its many forms as well as structural violence and the lack of economic security and its ramifications. We will look at political violence, especially when coupled with a religious belief or fervor. This includes political beliefs as we have seen after the election of Donald Trump. This chapter will also explain the relationship between state-sponsored crime and violence as well as terrorism.

TYPES OF VIOLENCE TODAY

Violence, in all its forms, is in full operation today. We see people dying on the streets from starvation, migrants drowning in the Mediterranean, soldiers being killed by terrorist attacks, and terrorists killed by drones. In addition, women have been raped during war and children sold into slavery.² All these are forms of violence in the twenty-first century. As tragic as it is, violence has been, is now, and seems to be the future of humanity.

Physical: War, Revolution, and Terrorism

War is when one state attacks another. Theories of international relations try to understand the reasons behind war. The realist tradition argues that power, including physical violence, is a major part of defending state interests, that is, interests are seen in terms of power as an end in itself. Power is simply violence potential, the ability for one state to strike another with the confidence that any reprisal can be buffered. More power increases the chances of survival to communicate deterrence to another state; if force is used consequences will be dire.³ If all states are fighting for power, then eventually there will be war. If one state needs to accomplish something, that state may use force to do so. Carl von Clausewitz thus understands violence or war as “nothing but the continuation of political relations by other means.”⁴ Why negotiate with a weaker power when a state can just force its will upon competitors. In cases of war and violence, the potential for war and power against another will equal legitimacy, authority and defines sovereignty. While it seems wrong to kill, when states do it, it seems acceptable. Kassab argues that there is a contradiction of norm values over the act of killing:

Killing is socially unacceptable to society at large and murder en masse is further outside of acceptable behavior. States, however, escape such judgments. States have legitimized war and humanity perceives it as just a part of life. States have made rules of war, called international law, that regulate war. However, it simultaneously systematizes the conduct of war and legitimizes mass murder. Just as long as states commit murder, we find it acceptable. Of course, there are limits to how a state can kill and how many people can be killed. There must be justification for such action.⁵

As of today, we see war between Ukraine and Russia, a plethora of civil wars in the developing world, and power positioning between the United States and China.⁶ Before, during the Cold War, we had an uneasy peace, where two superpowers threatened nuclear war on several occasions. A war could have been disastrous, but the threat of total, global annihilation kept the two powers in check because of mutually assured destruction (MAD) and balance of power politics.⁷ All of this is due to a conflict over interests across states. In the case of Ukraine and Russia, what makes Russia more deserving of Crimea enough to use violence for the sake of killing? Why is this seemingly ok with the Russian people? And why does the world stay silent in the face of such aggression?

These questions cannot be answered without first understanding, as some would argue, that violence, sadly, is inevitable: such violence is altogether justified to defend oneself with no overarching governing force. There is no such thing as mutual respect in the international realm, only the domestic. A contradiction of this point, however, leads to a second point, that of the revolution: civilian violence.

Brutality in the street, rioting, and violence against the governing authority are signs that something is wrong with society. For example, the 2015 riots in Baltimore was a sign that African-American individuals were livid about the extrajudicial killings of African-Americans by the police. Martin Luther King Jr. once said that “a riot is the language of the unheard.” One Baltimore rioter remarked: “There is only so far that you can push people into a corner...we’re frustrated and that’s why we’re out there in the streets.”⁸ The temptation would be to combat those responsible, but instead of addressing the symptoms of a sick society, the violence, governments must address the cause of the violence. Preventing such violence is always more beneficial than treating symptoms even if it may be a tougher and more complex task to accomplish.

In addition, violence often occurs during time of revolution and disorder. The Bolshevik Revolution that ushered in Soviet Russia occurred because they had an excellent marketing strategy combined with an acceptance for the use of violence to accomplish their means. They knew and understood what the people wanted after decades of increasingly authoritarian rule: “Peace, Land and Bread.”⁹ This won over the starving peasants of Tsarist Russia that demanded an end to World War I but also more rights, property, and an end to poverty. What they got, however, was a dictatorship, not of the proletariat or the peasantry as was expected, but of a ruling so-called intelligence class. For 70 years, the people of Russia, and then Eastern Europe, suffered and died for an unsustainable economic ideal. Such environments cause people to react, sometimes peacefully and other times violently.

Similarly, terrorism can be understood within this context as any act of violence to instill fear in a civilian population for political purposes.¹⁰ Terrorism hopes to communicate fear into the hearts of people for a specific political goal. For instance, Osama bin Ladin’s reason for orchestrating the attacks on 9/11 was to “hit the main enemy who divided the ummah into small and little countries and pushed it, for the last few decades, into a state of confusion. The Zionist-Crusader alliances moves quickly to contain and abort any ‘corrective movement’ [jihadist movement

within majority Islamic countries] ...utmost effort should be made to prepare and instigate the ummah against the enemy, the American-Israeli alliance, occupying [Saudi Arabia and Palestine respectively].”¹¹ As a consequence, those targeted by Islamic terrorism, like the United States and the European Union, responded in a violent manner.

In the United States, some individuals argue that Islam, as a religion, facilitates and encourages violence against unbelievers. In March 2016, for example, Donald Trump made a very controversial statement, arguing: “I think Islam hates us. There’s something there that—there’s a tremendous hatred there. There’s a tremendous hatred. We have to get to the bottom of it. There’s an unbelievable hatred of us.”¹² Yet to point to the Quran as promoting violence without appreciating the political context of people living in Islamic countries negates the importance of context. According to Dan McLaughlin, “‘Radical Islam’ is a set of political, not religious, beliefs. It compels its believers to make war not only against Israel, the West and India, but especially against Muslims who reject their political vision.” He also maintains that “these political doctrines are so dangerous precisely because they are preached to their believers as the religious commands of Islam, and can be hard for outsiders to untangle from more conventional Islamic teachings.”¹³

Terrorism, specifically radical Islamic terrorism,¹⁴ is a relatively new phenomenon beginning after the loss of Syria, Jordan, and Egypt to Israel in the Six-Day War in 1967. Arab states proved inept when facing off with Israel and so Palestinians decided to take matters into their own hands to recover lost lands.¹⁵ For instance, there were five plane hijackings¹⁶ in 1966 compared to 94 in 1968. However, during these days, terrorist groups were secular in nature, more related to nationalism and secularism than terrorism. Eventually, these terrorist groups decided to forgo secularism in favor of a more militant form of Islam. This notion is described in Article 12 of Hamas’ Charter: “Nationalism, from the point of view of Islamic Resistance Movement, is part of the religious creed. Nothing in nationalism is more significant or deeper than in the case of when an enemy should treat Muslim land. Resisting and quelling the enemy become the individual duty of every Muslim, male or female.” Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world with 1.8 billion followers.¹⁷ To expedite its fight against Israel, and to dispose of Western style governments across the “Muslim world,” terrorist-minded individuals forwarded a violent, extremist interpretation of Islam. Indeed: “Islam, as a religion, has been effectively hijacked by Islamic State to gain support and legitimacy.

Islam as a religion and identity is one of immense pride, with a proud history and culture that goes back for centuries. In this sense, we must consider Islam as terrorism's first victim. As a result, given its appropriation, we must begin to think of these movements as having a degree of soft power: the Islamic religion."¹⁸

Fast-forward to 2015 with the rise of the Islamic State, a radical Sunni extremist organization.¹⁹ The Islamic State emerged because of the political context of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of Sunni Arabs formed this state to dominate the region in a similar fashion as Saddam Hussein had. The terrible acts of the Islamic State, however, have brought significant backlash which has nearly culminated in their physical defeat. Yet at this juncture, it appears that the Islamic State is more of an ideal than a geopolitical state. Such an understanding will illicit an expectation that there may never be an end to terrorism. Terrorism itself is a communicative device which intends to convey a message of fear, hate, and revenge.²⁰ Terrorists want to exact the same upon those they blame for their position. Frantz Fanon describes these feelings during his time serving as a psychoanalyst to Algerian victims of French violence. Fanon describes the utility of violence that we in the Western world may never truly understand given our lack of experience with colonialism, subordination, and domination: "life can only spring up again out of the rotting corpse of the settler...At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect...."²¹

Similar to terrorism is the phenomenon of school shootings and acts of domestic terrorism. There have been numerous cases around the world where children, teenagers, and young adults bring a gun to their school, college, or university for the sake of random and arbitrary killings. The Columbine High School massacre serves as an example of one tragedy. Another case of a mass shooting is the one that occurred at Virginia Tech. In both cases, the perpetrators showed signs of mental illness and social isolation.²² Many would make the argument that violent video games like *Doom* and *Wolfenstein* were responsible for such violence, but so far, the research proves such a statement as inconclusive.²³ The mental health thesis seems to have more of an impact as the common link between such crimes. Intense debates have raged about gun control and its ability to prevent such violence.²⁴ Many experts argue that gun control laws that limit the access to weapons would reduce levels of gun-related violence.²⁵ However, some individuals (e.g., Libertarians)²⁶ argue that the issue here is not the

presence of guns—guns are a means to an end (i.e., mass slaughter). There have also been bombings, knife attacks, as well as acid attacks. Chlorine gas bombs can be made by simply combining a mixture of household cleaners.²⁷

In many of these examples, we see that violence is done for a purpose. People kill to achieve something, whether it is to protect interests, insight fear, overturn a society, and gain revenge or some other motive. In terms of political violence, it is important to note the role of an ideal. Given its history, idealism is probably the most dangerous element of politics. Throughout history, many millions of people commit crimes for an ideal. During the Spanish Inquisition, religious zealots killed to extract confessions of heresy and convert Jews and Muslims in the area.²⁸ In the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, people killed for the ideal of democracy or to defend the crown. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries proved most violent with the birth of two exceedingly violent ideologies of fascism and communism as well as the Western world's repressive colonial expeditions. In these cases, the rejection of liberal democracy and capitalism as well as forced religious acceptance and governance resulted in a more violent world. The resulting deaths accumulated were in the hundred millions.

Some policymakers have promoted the exportation of liberal democracy. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the United States went on a crusade to prevent such a thing from happening again. In this case, the goal was to spread democracy. According to Robert Jervis, an international security expert at Columbia University: “[S]ome...question whether the spread of democracy in the Middle East should be any concern of ours... America always is more secure when freedom is on the march.”²⁹ The high levels of violence and conflict in the Middle East today are a product of a violent society, one that underwent dictatorship and periods of political instability ultimately stemming from colonialism and its consequences. Today, the region is still undergoing violence after the suppression of the Islamic State. The Syrian Civil War continues, beginning with riots, culminating with a full-scale civil war. Children have been the primary victims of this war. The violence they have experienced will have a significant impact, not just on them, but on the world around them if violence is a learned institution.³⁰ Some experts argue that idealism must marry with violence to truly understand the mechanisms that created, and continues to create, the contexts that have led these types of societal issues. Studies show that violent political ideology is created out of fear that ultimately manufactures

further violence and other violent political ideology. Fear and violence is a major driver of political violence, shaping our perceptions of self and other.³¹ The question then becomes, how does one stop the cycle of violence? If violence is a learned behavior, what could serve as a potential solution? This will be analyzed in the following section with the discussion of structural violence and human security.

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE, VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Structural violence is defined as extreme economic destitution that reduces life expectancy. It may take the form of denial of food or other forms of economic security.³² Academics and policymakers understand the deep connection between structural violence and physical violence by considering the linkage between political and economic hardships (such as unemployment) and crime or other forms of violence including terrorism, organized crime, and other gang-related activities. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, extreme violence is correlated with persistent unemployment and a fundamental lack of economic prospects.³³ In certain areas where poverty is endemic, people turn to crime and terrorism to make a better life. Hamas and Hezbollah's social welfare programs serve to recruit people to the cause.³⁴ Poor people also fall victim to organized crime recruitment. Why work in the fields or in a factory for minimum wage, when you can make more money in an illicit field. Some estimates take note of the following:

- A transporter charged the office \$1500 a kilo
- Office charged the people who wanted to ship it \$2000 to use their name and landing strip
- A boat captain was paid \$250,000 to drive a boat from the Bahamas to Florida
- A transporter manager charged \$2000 a kilo
- A transporter paid a couple million dollars to move 3000 kilos in a compartment of a commercial freighter
- A captain paid \$1 million to move 400 kilos in the compartment of a sailboat
- An offloader was paid \$150,000 to unload 2200 kilos
- Pilots were paid \$3000 per kilo
- An accountant helping to organize a load made \$40,000³⁵

Thus, structural violence serves as a tool to push people toward illegality or other violent behaviors (e.g., terrorism). Structural violence thus drives “concerns that Mexico might become a ‘failed state’—which had gained traction during the most turbulent years of Calderón’s presidency—are again on the rise...Mexico is not Somalia, Bosnia, Yemen, Sudan or other failed states, where such stabilizing features are largely absent; nor is it fractured by bitter ideological or religious conflicts, as those countries have been.”³⁶

It may be beneficial to pursue another route toward peace and security. To weaken the lure of organized crime and terrorism, emphasis should be placed on human security. This concept describes the insufficiency of security, that is, the prevailing condition of violent and non-violent threats in a society. Human security underscores the need for creating a society free of such threats.³⁷ Studies suggest that such a policy would be a productive alternative to brute force.³⁸ In actuality, brute force and violence only worsen structural violence, increasing the likelihood of terrorist attacks and organized criminal activity in response to violent reprisal and persistent structural violence.

The primary victims of structural violence tend to be women and children. Codou Bop in her article “Women in Conflicts, their gains and their losses” maintains that women bear the brunt of the loss.³⁹ During times of war, women, often the most vulnerable members of war-torn society, are left desolate. They lose the male members of their family to fighting, who often are the main bread-winners. At times, they are lost to exile.⁴⁰ In addition, women sometimes lose their “bodily integrity” through gang rapes, sexual abuse, and forced pregnancy.⁴¹ This was seen during the wars in Yugoslavia, when mass amounts of women were raped in order to force pregnancy. Rape was perceived by those fighting as an essential part of fighting an ethnic war (i.e., a weapon) and part of a policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide. As part of a wider strategy of creating a greater nation, the horrific crime of rape expands the land area of a certain nationality, furthering expansion of religious, cultural, or nationalist power.⁴² Women also suffer health-wise due to handicaps and diseases from weapons and living conditions.⁴³ Their responsibility grows as they take it on themselves to care for their dead and those who were left behind.⁴⁴ According to experts, these women also must work jobs to provide for their children seeing that many of the husbands are deceased.⁴⁵ They face economic losses as money which once was devoted to social programs such as health and child care, now are aimed toward the war effort.⁴⁶ If they are widows, they lose their land and cannot

provide subsistence and nourishment for themselves and their families.⁴⁷ When the war is over, men are the main beneficiaries as land is redistributed to men; the widows are always overlooked and are forced to live their lives impoverished.⁴⁸ Women also lose any political status they once achieved. During times of war, educational and training facilities are interrupted.⁴⁹ Once the war is over, insecurity persists as difficulties putting food on the table does not end with the war. Ana Christina da Silva Iddings has studied life after conflict and the suffering of women and children and argues that child prostitution and trafficking are systemic in Latin America. In Guatemala alone, children as young as ten are trafficked and sexually exploited. Other studies show that 89 percent of trafficked children in the region are from the fragile states of Central America (El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua) which shows an important relationship between sexual exploitation and migration.⁵⁰

Such levels of hyperviolence hinder demographic consolidation, creating a vicious circle of fragility that can perpetuate violence. The Inter-American Development Bank⁵¹ highlights the social costs of violence on a society:

Direct costs: value of goods and services used in treating or preventing violence

- medical
- police
- criminal justice system
- housing
- social services

Non-monetary costs: pain and suffering*

- increased morbidity
- increased mortality via homicide and suicide
- abuse of alcohol and drugs
- depressive disorders

Economic multiplier effects: macroeconomic, labor market, inter-generational productivity

- impacts
- decreased labor market participation
- reduced productivity on the job

- lower earnings
- increased absenteeism
- inter-generational productivity impacts via grade repetition and lower educational attainment of children
- decreased investment and savings
- capital flight

Social multiplier effects: impact on inter-personal relations and quality of life

- inter-generational transmission of violence
- reduced quality of life
- erosion of social capital
- reduced participation in democratic process⁵²

The final point, the reduced participation in the democratic process, is connected to other factors. It will take serious governmental efforts to come out of such a structurally violent situation which either may not be possible for the government to provide or not in the best personal interest of the extractive activities of government elites in developing countries. Yet a major problem is the issue of state-sponsored crime and violence. Sometimes, the state takes a symbiotic role in facilitating crime within its geographical territory. The resulting socioeconomic situation worsens over time as a consequence. The following section hopes to highlight the dangers of such a policy. Fragility appears to present a downward spiral from which the state cannot emerge, making the world worse off.

STATE-SPONSORED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

There comes a point when fragile states succumb to organized crime only to become partners. Peter Lupsha contends that there are three phases that describe the process by which a state becomes a sponsor and a beneficiary of organized crime. They are the predatory stage, the parasitical stage, and finally, the symbiotic stage. The predatory stage defines how law enforcement agencies can “discipline” criminal actors who work in coordination with both economic and political sectors in society.⁵³ As criminals become stronger and richer, they will then increase their influence within the state to protect themselves and their sources of wealth. The second stage is called the parasitical stage. The parasitical stage dem-

onstrates the increased power of organized crime as it expands in power and morphs into equivalent to a de facto state, as opposed to only an entity that works in collaboration with the state. In other words, organized crime groups no longer become subordinate to the state apparatus.⁵⁴ This may mirror current-day Afghanistan, Colombia in the 1980s and 1990s, and Chicago and New York City during the pinnacle of prohibition. The third and final stage is referred to as the symbiotic stage, which describes how “the traditional tools of the state to enforce law will no longer work, for organized crime has become a part of the state, a state within the state.”⁵⁵

With such pervasive criminal climates, it is altogether expected for there to be an increase in crime around the economy of illegal goods. Many argue, for instance, the connection between illicit markets, violence, corruption, and the increased fragility of a state: “drug production helps weaken states, fuel civil conflicts; drug revenues support insurgents, other armed non-state actors, and corrupt officials.”⁵⁶ However, this is not so in situations where there are state-sponsored illegal markets. Richard Snyder and Angélica Durán-Martínez argue along these lines especially within the context of a fragile and corrupt state. These authors carry out an ambitious study that covers a number of countries: Mexico in the 1990s when drug traffickers worked alongside the government, and conversely Colombia during its fight against organized crime at the height of the drug war. The study thus isolates the correlation of violence with criminality alongside those in which the state takes an active role. However, the reverse remains true. States that sponsor organized crime enjoy lower levels of violence (i.e., they control organized crime-related violence). Hence, any attempt at cracking down on organized crime may lead to increased violence.⁵⁷ Traffickers will furnish the government parties, information that would lead to the arrest of rival groups and so forth. The government and police would seem like they are doing a good job and receive praise both domestically and internationally for cracking down on drug trafficking.⁵⁸ Thus, any state that has a symbiotic relationship with organized crime will coordinate with organized criminal networks to solve issues for the benefit of the business because if the business does well, the state does well.

Mexico serves as an interesting case of the relationship between the state and organized crime and violence. The historical domination of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional—PRI) protected traffickers for decades. It was only when its position was challenged in competitive elections that traffickers lost their protection. This, along with two other variables (increased power and influence of the

Attorney General's office in the fight against corrupt practices and increased competition and influence from Colombian drug traffickers within Mexico), eroded the power of the state in its sponsorship. These factors have contributed to the violence we see today in Mexico.⁵⁹ The difference in drug-related deaths is significant enough to argue that there is a relationship between the breakdown of the state's active role in illicit markets.⁶⁰

Furthermore, Colin H. Kahl discusses the case of Kenya and the added factor that pushes people into illegal activity: environmental and economic pressure. In this scenario, impoverished individuals with the expressed desire to provide for their families incentivize illegal markets, presenting a direct challenge to government.⁶¹ Such defiance may even lead to increased anti-government violence. Kahl's argument goes a step further, determining the impact on an already fragile government: "demographic and environmental stress can sometimes lead to civil strife initiated by state elites who seek to capitalize on scarcities of natural resources and related social grievances to advance their parochial interests."⁶² The argument is then compared to the political violence stemming from the economic deprivation and population growth in Xinjiang Province of western China as opposed to Han Chinese settlers from other areas of China. This environment led to an increase in terrorism and terrorist action against the Chinese state.⁶³ In both cases (Kenya and Xinjiang), local elites drummed up resistance against the state leading to violence. Violence was directed both at the state and at different ethnic groups. In the case of Kenya, thousands of people died in two years (1991 to 1993). In this case, violence was a tool used to protect property and convey the need to be respected by others, especially the Kenyan state.⁶⁴ One leader of such violence justified violence by saying other ethnic groups "had suppressed the Maasai, taken their land, and degraded their environment... We had to say enough is enough. I had to lead the Maasai in protecting their rights."⁶⁵ The government played an active role in this by defending one set of ethnic groups against others, taking little action to curb any incite to violence and violence itself due to the Kenyan state being dominated by a specific ethnic group. Thus, in this example, the state took an active role in benefitting from increased economic and environmental degradation to enrich and consolidate power for themselves.

The argument presented by Kahl is similar to that of Berber Bevernage in his book *History, Memory and State-Sponsored Violence: Time and Justice*.⁶⁶ In this work, Bevernage notes the difficulties associated with reconciliation post-conflict, especially when the state takes such an active role.

For Bevernage, past violence and crime can be brought up in current discourse as if it happened contemporaneously. Being haunted by a violent past does little to heal sores that never seem to go away: “the traditional discourse of jurisdiction with its logic of guilt and punishment generally works with a reversible time in which crimes can be annulled or redressed as if they were still fully present.”⁶⁷ This book signifies the difficulties associated with a post-conflict scenario in which a state played a role in the sponsorship of such violence.

Speaking of conflict zones and post-conflict situations, the region of Latin America provides an unfortunate wealth of information on the matter. The authors of the article “Human rights and mental health among Latin American women in situations of state-sponsored violence”⁶⁸ contend that state-sponsored violence and crime promote all forms of violence in an effort to protect power structures. As a result, those without power, especially women, remain subordinated and impoverished.⁶⁹ The article illustrates the destructive capacity of such violence on women especially in Latin America, where women have traditionally held leadership positions.⁷⁰ The authors argue for considerable attention to be given to women, the most vulnerable members of society. However, as of December 2017, a Task Force from the American Psychological Association have been making strides to treat the effects of such violence, including:

- (a) build solidarity with those working on behalf of women’s mental health and human rights; (b) identify individuals and programs that may be resources (models of therapy, community-based training and educational models, models of social change) for those who are working with women who have suffered from state-sponsored violence; (c) identify the global issues that affect women who are living in situations of state-sponsored violence; and (d) collect resources (political analysis, research, curriculum, theory) that address various concerns of women living in these conditions, including descriptions of attempts to end such violations.⁷¹

There is still much to be done given the systemic force of violence on the continent as discussed in previous chapters of this book. The volume *Crime and Violence in Latin America: Citizen Security, Democracy and the State*⁷² provides an excellent description of persisting issues like the inherent vulnerabilities in criminal justice as well as the resulting tremendous social costs of continued structural, economic, and physical violence. The following recommendations have been suggested:

- establish clear indicators that define objectives and measure police effectiveness;
- enable the forces of law and order to become professional and well paid and to have access to the latest technology;
- address crime through preventive action and by strengthening democratic institutions;
- encourage partnerships among international organizations, the state, and civil society groups.⁷³

These recommendations propose the strengthening of inclusive democratic institutions as well as the promotion of development strategies to protect and enhance the lives and livelihood of all citizens. Development and inclusive democratic political institutions may serve as the beginning of the end of structural violence, physical violence, and the allure of organized crime. Democratic institutions help bolster development. Conversely, these issues present a real threat to development and human welfare, acting as what Henry Bruton would call non-growth: “The rich country seems to have an economy that has growth built into it, while the poor country seems to have an economy in which ‘non-growth’ is built into it.”⁷⁴ Once the proper political and economic institutions are developed, then we may begin to see economic development especially for those with lower incomes. This may lead to reductions in poverty, increases in literacy, and increased life expectancy, all of which could help decrease violence.⁷⁵ Although state-sponsored violence does present a real challenge to this recommendation, we must also recall the importance of enforcement mechanisms already described in Chap. 3. Interpol, along with the encouragement of transparency and accountability, may increase the likelihood of such recommendations being successful. While there is much to lament, there is much to remain hopeful.

CONCLUSION: THE END OF VIOLENCE?

If violence is a pervasive human experience, present throughout history in both illegitimate and legitimate forms (war between states), how can we as a human race understand anything different? Given all the issues in our world, how can we put an end to violence? Is violence simply an institution we can replace with something else? Or is it an innate feature of humanity? Sigmund Freud once wrote that “there is no use in trying to get rid of a man’s aggressive inclinations...wars will only be prevented

with certainty if mankind unites in setting up a central authority to which right of giving judgement upon all conflicts of interest shall be handed over.”⁷⁶ While states, especially great powers, may never give up their sovereignty willingly in such a manner, it may take a war of such a magnitude that the winner would control the world. Then, can we expect that empire to hold on to all its newly acquired territory? Freud understands this fact as well: “we shall be making a false calculation if we disregard the fact that law was originally brute violence and that even today it cannot do without the support of violence.”⁷⁷ Indeed, the history of humankind has been one of violence. No one has taken power without some type of violent act; and once power is attained, no one has consolidated power without violence. Thomas Hobbes, Machiavelli, and other classical political philosophers note the value of using power to create peace and tranquility.⁷⁸ These scholars thought it careless for any political leader to abandon violence, for those seeking power would eventually see that as a sign of weakness and an opportunity to attack.

An important question to ask is why are humans so violent? Is it due to biology or is it a learned behavior? If it is a question of biology, then we must appreciate that violence will never end as it is simply part of the human experience. If it is learned, then could humans potentially unlearn or replace violence as an institution? If violence is learned, that means violent people were once socialized as children to be violent. The problem is that states, terrorists, organized criminals, and ordinary people use violence and destruction to pursue their goals, communicate fear, exact revenge, and so on. Terrorists want the destruction of countries like the United States, and the United States uses violence and destruction to retaliate. A perfect example of this is President Nixon; while discussing terrorism with Israeli officials, Nixon jumps up and states that there was only one way to defeat terrorism. He then pretends to fire off a Tommy gun which was described by those present as “Chicago-gangland-style.”⁷⁹ This sort of policy is reminiscent of the movie “The Untouchables” (1987), directed by Brian De Palma and features Kevin Costner, Sean Connery and Robert De Niro. The film is set in the 1920s during Prohibition in Chicago. The Gangster, Al Capone, is determined to take advantage of prohibition to supply poor quality alcohol at high prices. In a scene between Malone (Ness’ mentor) and Ness seated in a Church, it is understood that physical power and coercion is the only thing crooks like Capone understand. “You wanna know how you do it? Here’s how, they pull a knife, you pull a gun. He sends one of yours to the hospital, you send one of his to the morgue...

that's how you get Capone...are you ready to do that?"⁸⁰ This method, according to the 'wise' Malone, is the key to eradicating threats, as this is the only language they understand. Capone's response is the same, which results in the cycle of violence and senseless murders of innocent bystanders. As Capone himself says in several different scenes "You can get further with a kind word and a gun than you can with just a kind word... I want you to find this nancy-boy Eliot Ness, I want him dead! I want his family dead! I want his house burned to the ground!"⁸¹ In this movie, violence seems to be the answer to the world's problems. In retrospect, the path that led to the eventual capture of Capone was by arresting him for tax evasion. The lesson here is that violence really does breed violence. States dealing with violent actors, states, terrorists, criminals, and so forth must use violence sparingly, only when necessary. Real peace and security can only be achieved through the attainment of human security.⁸²

To bring a violent person to justice is only half of the ultimate goal. The other half is constituted by providing human security to those people experiencing serious structural violence. Since violent behavior is a product of our biology and learning, we may always have to deal with it by at least protecting the world's most vulnerable. That way, we can at least try to temper the amount of violence in our world by pursuing productive policies.

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Conclusion

This book has examined trends in drugs, gangs, and violence. The framework of this volume has been the importance of understanding the nature of fragility of states and how different variables (e.g., corruption, impunity, inequality, and poverty—among others) can contribute to violence. Organized crime groups thrive in countries where they can bribe and corrupt government officials.¹ Countries that are plagued by high levels of institutional weakness often have difficulties implementing the rule of law and maintaining law and order.² This concluding chapter focuses on some of the lessons that can be learned from organized crime groups, fragile states, and violence. It focuses on the need to rethink certain tough on crime strategies that often have had counter-productive results. It examines the need to address many underlying problems.

ONE SIZE FITS ALL MODELS DO NOT WORK

In 2007, Presidents George W. Bush and Felipe Calderón supported the Mérida Initiative to combat organized crime and drug trafficking in Mexico. Nevertheless, Presidents Bush and Calderón did not heed the lessons from Plan Colombia or the past 40 years of the US-led war on drugs and implemented the Mérida Initiative.³ The Initiative provides equipment and training not only to Mexico but also to Central American countries to combat drug trafficking and improve the situation in the region. The multi-billion-dollar aid package began in 2008. The Mérida Initiative had

stipulations because of the concern for human rights abuses. The goal was that 15 percent of the money would be subject to the US State Department certifying that Mexico obtained various human rights objectives to prevent human rights abuses from occurring in the country.⁴ Critics contend that this strategy has not been effective as human rights abuses have continued and the police and military have often been responsible for such abuses. In 2011, for instance, Human Rights Watch conducted surveys in Nuevo León, Baja California, Guerrero, Chihuahua, and Tabasco and “found that security forces systematically use torture to obtain forced confessions from detainees or information about cartels. The report also provides evidence strongly suggesting that soldiers and police have carried out ‘disappearances’ and extrajudicial executions, and in many cases have taken steps to conceal their crimes.”⁵

It should have come as no surprise that Washington launched a counter-narcotics plan for Mexico. In fact, President Clinton visited Mexico during his tenure in office and advocated for a Plan Mexico to help the Mexican government achieve those same advancements that had been accomplished because of Plan Colombia.⁶ The Bush administration—one of the closest allies of the Uribe administration—advocated that other countries learn lessons from Colombia and implement a Plan Colombia-type model. Indeed, Plan Colombia did have “partial successes” in terms of decreasing violence and security within the country, particularly during the Uribe administration.⁷ Yet Plan Colombia has not been effective in terms of combating drug trafficking in the country. Coca cultivation in Colombia began shifting back toward Peru and Bolivia, yet as of 2017, Colombia remains a major drug producer and trafficker despite the billions spent on Plan Colombia.⁸ Therefore, Plan Colombia was not very successful in terms of drug trafficking and should not be used as a model when it failed to achieve its goal of decreasing drug cultivation, production, and trafficking by 50 percent.⁹ This strategy allocated very little resources for strengthening institutions, addressing impunity, and consolidating democracy within the weak Colombian state apparatus.¹⁰

The notion of a model also is troubling for several reasons. Critics contend that it is a mistake for Washington to think that it can implement a generic model in other countries that suffer as a result of drug trafficking and organized crime.¹¹ Every country has a different set of problems as well as major historical and institutional differences. Unlike Mexico, Colombia has an extensive history of democracy. Furthermore, Mexico also does not have the same challenges or problems that Colombia has

because Colombia, unlike Mexico, has a long history of an internal armed conflict. Colombia is a complicated country because the guerrilla organizations traffic drugs and use these profits to fuel their activities.¹² John Bailey, an expert on drug trafficking and organized crime in Mexico, argues that “Colombia is a case of a complicated internal war in which drug production and trafficking play a significant role; Mexico is a case of hyper-violent criminal organizations that use terrorist-like methods to challenge the government and society.”¹³ Bailey describes the internal dimensions in Mexico, stating: “The confluence of rivers of drug money, trained manpower, and high-power weapons has produced well-organized, politically-effective, hyper-violent trafficking organizations that are capable of challenging the government’s police-justice system and the army. While most of the violence is concentrated in a few (perhaps five or six) of the 32 states, the trafficking organizations can strike anywhere in the country and almost at will.”¹⁴

While differences do exist between the Mérida Initiative and Plan Colombia, the overall strategy has focused on militarization as opposed to addressing the underlying problems such as high levels of corruption, impunity, and human rights abuses. It is important to highlight the significant differences in terms of financing between Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative. Plan Colombia failed to decrease drug production and trafficking in Colombia even though the US government spent \$8 billion over more than a decade.¹⁵ The Mexican government spent an astonishing \$46.6 billion trying to improve the security situation in Mexico from the Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 to 2012. Over the same period, FY 2008 to FY 2012, the United States allocated \$1.9 billion to help the Mexican government combat drug trafficking and organized crime. These numbers are quite staggering and demonstrate that Mexico shoulders most of the burden not only financially but also in terms of violence and lives lost.¹⁶

COMBATING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

There have been improvements in reducing poverty around the world. In 1990, for instance, 35 percent of the global population lived on less than \$1.90 per day. In 2012, the percentage living on less than \$1.90 per day declined to 12.4 percent. The number of people living on less than \$1.90 declined to 10.7 percent of the global population in 2013. Moreover, the number of people living in extreme levels of poverty has decreased over time. Since 1990, almost 1.1 billion people no longer live in extreme poverty.¹⁷

Certain regions around the world have had more success combating extreme poverty. For instance, Indonesia and China have seen massive reductions in poverty. Today, 50 percent of the people who live in extreme poverty reside in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2013, this region had 389 million people who lived on less than \$1.90 per day.¹⁸

Furthermore, there remain many challenges in terms of global inequality. The United States has 43 percent of the world's millionaires. Together, North American and Europe account for over 70 percent of the millionaires around the globe. In Europe, the United Kingdom has seven percent of the planet's millionaires, while France, Germany, and Italy have five, five, and four percent, respectively.¹⁹ The richest man in the world is Bill Gates with an estimated net worth of \$86 billion. He is followed by Warren Buffett (\$75.6 billion) and Jeff Bezos (\$72.8 billion). The top ten billionaires on the Forbes 2016 list have an estimated worth of \$505 billion. This is more than the gross domestic product (GDP) of many countries. Nigeria, for instance, has a GDP of \$484.9 billion, while South Africa and Colombia have GDPs of \$326.5 and \$263.5 billion, respectively. The billionaires in this list also have a higher combined wealth than the GDP of various developed countries, including Belgium and Norway.²⁰

Countries must continue to combat the high levels of inequality and poverty plaguing the planet. Both poverty and high levels of inequality can contribute to state fragility. As mentioned in previous sections of this book, there are millions of disconnected youth that neither work nor study. People without viable economic alternatives may turn to the illicit market. While it is very dangerous to work in drug trafficking and organized crime, people without viable alternatives may calculate that the high levels of risk can be worth the potential for high financial profits. Unless countries combat this problem, there will continue to be millions of people, particularly youth, who are vulnerable to being recruited by organized crime groups.²¹

REDUCING CORRUPTION

States that can be classified as fragile states are characterized by high levels of impunity and corruption. This book argues that countries that have weak institutions foment corruption. In addition, it is important to note that corruption also helps weak institutions. Some countries that have undergone democratic transitions face challenges as democracy must be consolidated. Mexico, for instance, had 71 years of single-party rule by the

Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional—PRI). This period can be best characterized by massive amounts of corruption and negotiations between the government and organized crime groups. The election of Vicente Fox of The National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional—PAN) in 2000 marked a historic moment for Mexican politics.²² Despite the transition, today, Mexico still experiences large levels of corruption among officials at all levels of government: local, state, and national. Luis Gómez Romero contends, “And yet, by any measure, graft in Mexico has reached stunning new highs this year [2017]. Over the past five months, three state governors have been arrested abroad while trying to escape justice, and fully eleven of the country’s 32 total governors are currently under investigation or fighting prosecution for corruption.”²³ In sum, Mexico is facing a political crisis because of the high levels of corruption in the institutions throughout the country.

Organized crime groups need a weak state apparatus, which enables these actors to bribe corrupt politicians, judges, police officers, and other government officials. This issue presents major challenges as corrupt government officials who are responsible for policies only perpetuate corruption. Weak institutions enable drug traffickers to bribe, extort, and murder people to intimidate officials and avoid capture. One of the most corrupt institutions in Mexico is the police, which is the institution tasked with maintaining law and order.²⁴ Maureen Meyer of the Washington Office on Latin America contends, “The widespread abuse of citizens is not the only problem that plagues Mexican police forces. Forces at all levels are riddled with corruption and are widely seen as being ineffective in enforcing the law or even as enabling crime.”²⁵ In summary, resolving the institutional problem is not an easy solution as there is no silver bullet. Some experts maintain that reform must occur across various institutions as opposed to simply one branch of government.²⁶ For instance, it is not possible to only reform the police without addressing corruption in the judicial institution. In summary, corruption is a major challenge for weak states because it helps foment organized crime. Scholars note that states²⁷ plagued by high levels of corruption and impunity are fertile grounds for criminal organizations.

REFORMING INSTITUTIONS: PRISON REFORM

One of the major consequences of the war on drugs and prohibitionist policies has been the rapid increase in the prison population—not only in the United States but throughout the Americas. The argument has been

that governments must be tough on crime and put drug traffickers and consumers where they belong: jails and prisons. The result is that many minor-level drug traffickers and small-scale consumers have been sentenced to long prison sentences. In fact, people have been sentenced to prison who have not even been involved in the drug trade. Dorothy Gaines, for example, lived in Mobile, Alabama. She was a caring mother who was very close to her children. In 1993, her life changed drastically when police entered her home looking for drugs. Law enforcement did not find any evidence that Gaines possessed drugs, but unbeknownst to her, Gaines' boyfriend was a small-time drug dealer: "Though the state dropped all charges, federal prosecutors charged Gaines with drug conspiracy eight months later—charges that to this day, she disputes. She refused to plead guilty or provide testimony against defendants and was sentenced to serve 19 years and 7 months."²⁸ This is one case of the capacity that harsh drug sentencing laws have major impacts on the lives of people. The result of such harsh drug laws has been the proliferation of the prison population in the United States.

The United States has only five percent of the world's population but has 25 percent of the global prison population.²⁹ This means that the United States sentences more people to prison than authoritarian and non-democratic regimes, such as Iran or China. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the prison population in the United States has increased by 700 percent since 1970.³⁰ The prisons system in the United States has not affected everyone equally. The likelihood of going to prison for African-American males born in 2001 is one in three compared to one in 17 for Caucasian males. Furthermore, Latino men born in 2001 have a one and six probability of being incarcerated during their lifetime.³¹ The United States has witnessed controversial drug sentencing laws such as the crack mandatory minimum sentences, where crack users were sentenced to prison for consuming, possessing, or distributing the drug at much higher rates than individuals charged with other crimes. Powdered cocaine, for instance, is a more expensive version and tends to be used more by Caucasians than crack cocaine, which has devastated inner city communities. Such laws lead to high levels of racial disparity in prison sentences.³²

Prisons have become flooded with inmates who are incarcerated for drug-related offenses. In 1980, for example, 19,000 people were in state prisons for drug offenses. The number of people in state prisons for drug offenses spiked to 225,200 in 2011. Meanwhile, the number of inmates in federal prisons was 94,600 in 2011 compared to 4,700 in 1980. The number

of people in jails for drug-related offenses also increased dramatically to 181,700 in 2011 from 17,200 in 1980. In terms of total drug offenders, 501,500 existed in 2011 compared to 41,000 in 1980.³³ Today, half of the federal prison population is incarcerated for drug-related crimes.³⁴

Law enforcement officials arrested 853,838 individuals in 2010 for violating marijuana laws.³⁵ The United States cannot afford to continue jailing millions of Americans as the average cost of prison has continued to increase over time.³⁶ Research indicates that the United States spends \$80 billion on jails and prisons each year.³⁷ It costs more than \$75,000 to incarcerate someone in California, which is more than it would cost to send an inmate to Harvard for a year.³⁸

Having a criminal record can also be very problematic for people trying to apply for jobs and universities because people who are arrested often are labeled as troublemakers and have a red flag next to their record. Said differently, it is hard enough to find employment and much harder if you have a criminal record because employers label you and are hesitant to hire ex-cons. Michelle Alexander, an expert on the drug war, argues that “[n]early every state allows private employers to discriminate on the basis of past criminal convictions. In fact, employers in most states can deny jobs to people who were arrested but never convicted of any crime. Only ten states prohibit all employers and licensing agencies from considering arrests, and three states prohibit some employers and occupational and licensing agencies from doing so. Employers in a growing number of professions are barred by state licensing agencies from hiring people with a wide range of criminal convictions, even convictions unrelated to the job or license sought.”³⁹ In addition, a young person who has a felony on his or her record is automatically denied public housing by the Federal government and continues to be punished even after serving time for such wrongdoings. In addition, states deny felons student loans. Felons are not allowed to vote in certain states, and, worst of all, felons are stigmatized and shunned by the community. Employers often do not want to hire felons for a plethora of reasons.⁴⁰

While the United States faces many challenges with its correction system, other countries also confront prisons that are bursting at the seams with inmates. Drug sentences are harsher in some countries in Latin America than individuals charged with murder. In Ecuador, the maximum prison sentence for drug trafficking is 16 years compared to 12 years for murder. In Mexico, on the other hand, the maximum sentence for murder is 24 years, while the maximum sentence for drug trafficking is 25 years.

Astonishingly, Bolivia's maximum sentence for murder (20 years) is five years less than the maximum sentence for drug trafficking.⁴¹ These harsh drug sentences have resulted in the explosion of prison populations throughout the region. In Mexico, for example, the prison population spiked from 128,902 in 1998 to 227,021 in 2009. In addition, the total population in pretrial detention has increased from 54,403 in 1998 to 91,128 in 2009. The total population convicted of a crime increased from 74,499 in 1998 to 133,893 in 2009.⁴² Steven Dudley argues, "Mexico is living through a prison boom not unlike that seen in the United States. Since the mid-1990s, the proportion of the population in prison has nearly doubled, going from 103 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants in 1996, to 204 per 100,000 in 2012."⁴³

Prisoners in Mexico—like other countries throughout the region—live in inhumane conditions as a result of major levels of overcrowding. Prisons in Mexico fail to provide adequate living conditions for inmates because of overcrowding. Mexican prisons are ineffective and fail to rehabilitate inmates. In fact, it is estimated that inmates control 60 percent of the prisons in the country.⁴⁴ Gangs and drug trafficking organizations dominate many Mexican prisons and control operations from behind prison walls. As a result, there have been seemingly countless prison escapes.⁴⁵

In Colombia, 9,485 men were incarcerated for drug-related charges compared to 1,969 women in 2003. In 2009, the number of men incarcerated for drug-related offenses increased to 10,492, while the total number of women behind bars for the same offenses also increased to 2,124.⁴⁶ In particular, young people have suffered a great deal as a result of such harsh penalties. Between 2007 and 2009, 22 percent (4,788) of the number of people incarcerated from drug-related offenses were between 18 and 25 years old. During the same period, 37 percent (8,060) of the prison population incarcerated from drug-related charges were between the ages of 26 and 35.⁴⁷ Colombian prisons have not been able to accommodate the exploding prison population. In 1997, Colombia had a prison population of 42,454, yet the prisons only had the capacity to hold 29,217. As the prison population increased, Colombia continued to face a severe crisis. In 2004, the Colombian prison population was 68,020 with a capacity for 49,722, meaning that Colombian prisons had an excess of 18,298 (36.8 percent). In 2009, the prison population in Colombia swelled to 76,471, yet prisons were constructed to house 55,042, signifying that prisons had 21,429 prisoners more than they could handle.⁴⁸ The overcrowding situation has become so bad that 70 prisoners were being

detained in a park in the capital city in September 2014. Kyra Gurney contends, “Aside from the obvious safety and human rights issues inherent in housing prisoners in a city park, the current situation also highlights the government’s failure to provide sustainable solutions to prison overcrowding. Measures like releasing prisoners early are only temporary fixes...”⁴⁹

Unless major reforms occur, many prisons throughout Latin America will continue to function as schools of crime.⁵⁰ One way to combat high levels of overcrowding is to provide people who have committed non-violent drug-related crimes with the opportunity to partake in treatment and rehabilitation programs. Some prisons that are facing high levels of gang and organized crime-related activity must seek to regain control of the facilities and focus on methods of reinserting these populations back into society. While this is not an easy task, the failure to reform prisons and focus on rehabilitation will result in a revolving door behind prisons and the streets because of the high recidivism rates. In other words, inmates will continue to commit crimes upon being released unless they have the necessary skills to compete in the formal economy.

REDUCING THE DEMAND FOR DRUGS

The US-led drug war has focused on interrupting the supply of drugs from coming into the United States, yet it remains the number one drug consuming country in the world. Just like any other commodity, drugs are produced and trafficked because a demand for drugs exists.⁵¹ As the leading proponent of counter-narcotic strategies, perhaps the United States should rethink the strategy since drugs are purer and cheaper than when the drug war began. The United States could reduce the demand for drugs by spending more money on treatment and rehabilitation. The 2012 National Drug Control Strategy report called for more resources to be spent reducing demand within the United States. Reducing addiction and drug use in the United States—or anywhere else—is a long process and takes a great deal of time and resources. Said differently, it does not happen overnight. When done effectively, prevention and education work and can be more effective than policies that focus solely on stopping the supply of drugs. This does not mean that major challenges still do not exist in terms of reducing demand. Many criminologists, for example, have criticized popular programs such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), arguing that they have been inefficient and not worth the resources spent on such efforts. Some experts argue that drug education

programs need to start earlier and be reinforced as young students continue their education.⁵² While treatment and education programs have been proven to be effective, participants have an uphill battle as hard drugs are very addictive and they must constantly battle the urge to use. Unfortunately, many participants in drug rehabilitation programs do not complete the treatment process.

Today, the United States is not only the number one drug consuming country in the world, but it is facing an opioid epidemic. The opioid epidemic has killed more than 60,000 people in one year.⁵³ The crisis is not impacting one particular group, but rather it has affected groups of all demographics. President Trump vowed to combat the opioid epidemic as a presidential candidate. He has declared the crisis as a “national emergency” but he has not allocated financial resources to combat the problem. Instead, he has stressed the need to educate people about the dangers of drugs.⁵⁴

FINAL THOUGHTS

This work has examined the various elements that contribute to fragility and violence. A major issue that must be addressed to combat fragile states, drug trafficking, organized crime, and violence are the structural challenges. Countries that are plagued by high levels of poverty and inequality present ripe places for organized criminal actors to recruit youth. The disconnected youth phenomenon across Latin America where youth neither work nor study highlights the vast number of obstacles that exist. Youth who neither work nor study are vulnerable to being recruited by organized crime groups. Addressing the long-term structural problems present in many countries throughout the world is an extremely arduous task. Change will not happen overnight, but it is essential that the socio-economic problems are addressed if countries desire to combat the high levels of violence and fragility present.

Along with structural problems, government policies contribute to the high levels of violence. While “tough on crime” strategies are often popular among the general public, these strategies only generate more violence. As seen in many Latin American countries, iron fist strategies designed to combat gangs lead to fighting between gangs as well as the government and foment violence. Policies of rounding up gang members only contribute to a proliferation in the prison population. Prisons in many other countries function as schools of crime.

Major reforms in the penitentiary systems are required. Minor offenders for non-violent drug crimes should be re-routed to treatment and rehabilitation. Incarceration is costly. For instance, it costs more to incarcerate someone in the State of California for one year than to send that person to Harvard for a year. Prisons in many countries fail to rehabilitate inmates. Major reforms are needed in prison systems throughout the Americas.⁵⁵ Countries like the United States incarcerate more people than any other country on the planet. Such policies, however, have come at a high cost as the United States cannot continue to afford to incarcerate so many people.

Ultimately, countries that are plagued by high levels of corruption and institutional weaknesses will continue to serve as ripe places for organized crime groups and gangs to operate.⁵⁶ In addition, poverty and inequality only compound the problems. These variables can lead to high levels of violence.⁵⁷

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