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**POWER FROM THE POPULATION: AN  
ANALYSIS OF TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL  
ORGANIZATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA**

Vargas, Antony V.

Monterey, CA; Naval Postgraduate School

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**NAVAL  
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**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**POWER FROM THE POPULATION:  
AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL  
ORGANIZATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA**

by

Antony V. Vargas

December 2019

Thesis Advisor:  
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| <b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>  |   |  | <i>Form Approved OMB<br/>No. 0704-0188</i>              |  |
| Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.  |   |  |   |  |
| <b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY<br/>(Leave blank)</b>   |   | <b>2. REPORT DATE</b><br>December 2019                         |   | <b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b><br>Master's thesis |
| <b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b><br>POWER FROM THE POPULATION: AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA   |   |  | <b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>                               |  |
| <b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Antony V. Vargas  |   |  |   |  |
| <b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b><br>Naval Postgraduate School<br>Monterey, CA 93943-5000   |   |  | <b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>         |  |
| <b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b><br>N/A   |   |  | <b>10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b> |  |
| <b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.   |   |  |   |  |
| <b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b><br>Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.  |   |  | <b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b><br>A                      |  |
| <b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b><br><p>Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), particularly drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), are a growing concern for the United States and Latin America. Relatively little research, however, focuses on how TCOs build relationships with local populations as part of their overall operations. This thesis draws from counterinsurgency literature to consider the role that populations play in TCO and counter-TCO efforts. It uses a controlled case study comparison between the Medellín Cartel in Colombia from 1976 to 1993, and a study of the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico from 1988 to 2019 to investigate the ways TCOs engage populations, both positively and negatively; the steps the governments take to conduct counter-TCO operations and their effects on the population; and the measures the governments take to positively engage the population. It finds that both of these cartels have actively sought to win the support of populations by providing resources to local communities, including infrastructure development, aid, and other resources. The governments of Colombia and Mexico, by contrast, initially did little to positively engage affected populations. The thesis concludes by posing steps that governments can take to better engage these populations.</p> |   |  |   |  |
| <b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b><br>transnational criminal organization, TCO, drug trafficking organization, DTO, counter transnational organized crime, CTOC, counter transnational organized crime, C-TCO, counterinsurgency, COIN, DEA, FBI, Medellín, Sinaloa, Pablo Escobar, Colombia, Mexico, Joaquín Guzmán, El Chapo, drugs, cocaine, marijuana, eradication, extradition, crime, corruption, cartel, homeland security, border, terrorism, narcoterrorism, narcotics, government, population, influence  |   |  | <b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b><br>101                       |  |
|   |   |  | <b>16. PRICE CODE</b>                                   |  |
| <b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b><br>Unclassified  | <b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b><br>Unclassified | <b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b><br>Unclassified | <b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b><br>UU                 |  |

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**POWER FROM THE POPULATION: AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSNATIONAL  
CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA**

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Major, United States Army  
BS, U.S. Military Academy, 2008

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS  
(IRREGULAR WARFARE)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), particularly drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), are a growing concern for the United States and Latin America. Relatively little research, however, focuses on how TCOs build relationships with local populations as part of their overall operations. This thesis draws from counterinsurgency literature to consider the role that populations play in TCO and counter-TCO efforts. It uses a controlled case study comparison between the Medellín Cartel in Colombia from 1976 to 1993, and a study of the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico from 1988 to 2019 to investigate the ways TCOs engage populations, both positively and negatively; the steps the governments take to conduct counter-TCO operations and their effects on the population; and the measures the governments take to positively engage the population. It finds that both of these cartels have actively sought to win the support of populations by providing resources to local communities, including infrastructure development, aid, and other resources. The governments of Colombia and Mexico, by contrast, initially did little to positively engage affected populations. The thesis concludes by posing steps that governments can take to better engage these populations.



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|             |  |           |
|-------------|--|-----------|
| <b>I.</b>   | <b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
|             | <b>A. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM.....</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
|             | <b>B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....</b>  | <b>2</b>  |
|             | <b>C. METHODOLOGY .....</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
|             | <b>D. FINDINGS.....</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
|             | <b>E. OUTLINE OF THESIS .....</b>  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>II.</b>  | <b>TCOs, POPULATIONS, AND GOVERNMENT<br/>COUNTERMEASURES .....</b>                                 | <b>7</b>  |
|             | <b>A. WHAT IS A TCO?.....</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
|             | <b>B. WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS THAT CREATE TCOS? .....</b>  | <b>14</b> |
|             | <b>C. TCOS AND THE POPULATION.....</b>   | <b>18</b> |
|             | <b>D. COMBATTING TCOS.....</b>   | <b>23</b> |
|             | <b>E. CONCLUSION .....</b>   | <b>27</b> |
| <b>III.</b> | <b>CASE STUDY 1: THE MEDELLÍN CARTEL, THE POPULATION,<br/>AND GOVERNMENT COUNTERMEASURES .....</b> | <b>29</b> |
|             | <b>A. HISTORY OF THE MEDELLÍN CARTEL.....</b>  | <b>30</b> |
|             | <b>B. THE MEDELLÍN CARTEL’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE<br/>POPULATION.....</b>                          | <b>34</b> |
|             | <b>C. THE GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE TO THE MEDELLÍN<br/>CARTEL.....</b>                                | <b>41</b> |
|             | <b>1. Eradication .....</b>  | <b>41</b> |
|             | <b>2. Military and Police Confrontation .....</b>  | <b>42</b> |
|             | <b>3. Partnering with the United States .....</b>  | <b>43</b> |
|             | <b>4. Negotiations .....</b>   | <b>46</b> |
|             | <b>D. ANALYSIS: THE CARTEL, THE GOVERNMENT, AND THE<br/>POPULATION.....</b>                        | <b>49</b> |
|             | <b>E. CONCLUSION .....</b>   | <b>50</b> |
| <b>IV.</b>  | <b>CASE STUDY 2: THE SINALOA CARTEL, THE POPULATION,<br/>AND GOVERNMENT COUNTERMEASURES .....</b>  | <b>51</b> |
|             | <b>A. HISTORY OF THE SINALOA CARTEL .....</b>  | <b>52</b> |
|             | <b>B. THE SINALOA CARTEL’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE<br/>POPULATION.....</b>                           | <b>54</b> |
|             | <b>C. THE GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE TO THE SINALOA<br/>CARTEL.....</b>                                 | <b>57</b> |
|             | <b>1. Eradication .....</b>  | <b>57</b> |

|    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
| 2. | Police, Judicial, and Military Operations ..... | 59 |
| 3. | The Government's Treatment of the Press .....   | 63 |
| 4. | Partnering with the United States .....         | 64 |
| 5. | Other Government Programs .....                 | 66 |
| D. | ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION .....                   | 68 |
| V. | CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....            | 71 |
| A. | FINDINGS .....                                  | 72 |
| B. | RECOMMENDATIONS .....                           | 74 |
|    | LIST OF REFERENCES .....                        | 79 |
|    | INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....                 | 87 |

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

|      |                                       |
|------|---------------------------------------|
| COIN | counterinsurgency                     |
| CTOC | counter transnational organized crime |
| DEA  | Drug Enforcement Agency               |
| JP   | joint publication                     |
| TCO  | transnational criminal organization   |
| TTO  | transnational terrorist organization  |
| UN   | United Nations                        |

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my family for the love and support throughout this journey. They have sacrificed alongside me as I dedicated long hours to doing coursework and writing a thesis I can be proud of. I would like to thank Dr. Sepp for providing top-notch instruction and proven academic methods that set me up for success at NPS and will undoubtedly help me throughout my career in the military and beyond. I would especially like to thank Dr. Gregg for sticking with me from start to finish and helping me develop an idea for a thesis that was truly fulfilling. Her shared interest in the subject, detailed feedback, and positive attitude were invaluable throughout this process. I truly appreciate the time and effort allocated to advise this thesis. Lastly, I would like to thank my thesis processor, Michele D'Ambrosio, for helping me across the finish line and publishing my work.

My time at the Naval Postgraduate School has been a challenging and rewarding experience. I owe a great deal of gratitude to the gifted individuals that have contributed to my education at this prestigious institution. I am a better student and officer as a result of your guidance, support, and professionalism. Thank you.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), particularly drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), have been a significant concern for the United States since the 1980s. President Ronald Reagan’s declaration of the War on Drugs in 1982 marked the unofficial beginning of combatting DTOs, which had been importing massive amounts of drugs into the United States from the mountains of Colombia.<sup>1</sup> Efforts to counter TCOs and DTOs have continued since the 1980s as new criminal organizations have formed and tactics have evolved over the last several decades. The threat is significant. In President Donald Trump’s 2017 National Security Strategy, he concedes that TCOs have “established global supply chains comparable to Fortune 500 corporations.”<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, TCOs have effective and long-standing practices in place to circumnavigate the United States’ defenses and to conduct trafficking of illicit materials.<sup>3</sup>

As experts in their trade, TCOs can often become more powerful than the governments of the countries in which they operate and, in many circumstances, conduct much of the governing and even become de facto governments.<sup>4</sup> Their astonishing ability to accumulate wealth and provide a variety of resources facilitates influence within local populations and even within governments, often eroding a government’s legitimacy and destabilizing the region.<sup>5</sup> This proliferation of illicit activities is a clear threat to the

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<sup>1</sup> Yulia Vorobyeva, “Illegal Drugs as a National Security Threat,” in *Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime, and Violence in the Americas Today* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), 51.

<sup>2</sup> The President of the United States, “National Security Strategy of the United States of America” (Washington, DC, December 2017), 11–12, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> David A. Shirk, “Law Enforcement and Security Challenges in the U.S.-Mexican Border Region,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 18, no. 2 (September 1, 2003): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2003.9695604>.

<sup>4</sup> Angel Rabasa et al., *Counternetwork: Countering the Expansion of Transnational Criminal Networks* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), V, <https://doi.org/10.7249/RR1481>.

<sup>5</sup> Rabasa et al., 8.



stabilization of Central and South America and ultimately a threat to the security and prosperity of the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Local populations are a common link between the government and TCOs. TCOs emerge from the population and garner support and resources from their surroundings. Furthermore, given the amount of resources that TCOs often possess, including financial resources and private militias, TCOs can influence and control the population and compete with the government for authority and legitimacy.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, governments need the support of the population. The majority of Latin American countries practice some form of democracy, which requires popular participation and support in order for governments to succeed.<sup>8</sup> Even dictatorships require some degree of compliance from the population in order to survive. Therefore, much of the power of the government, regardless of the regime type, is derived from the population.

Given this dynamic between the population, TCOs, and governments, better understanding how TCOs influence local populations, and how governments attempt to address this influence, is an important topic of research for countering TCOs.

## **B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This thesis aims to investigate the following research questions: How do TCOs build and maintain their relationship with the surrounding population? What positive and negative actions do TCOs take to build this relationship, if any? How can governments break apart that relationship as part of an overall effort to counter TCOs and their operations?

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<sup>6</sup> The President of the United States, “National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” 51.

<sup>7</sup> Anne Clunan and Harold Trinkunas, “Alternative Governance and Security,” in *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*, ed. Anne Clunan and Harold Trinkunas (Stanford University Press, 2010), 276.

<sup>8</sup> Marta Lagos Cruz-Coke, “Between Stability and Crisis in Latin America,” *Journal of Democracy* 12, no. 1 (2001): 137, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2001.0009>.

## **C. METHODOLOGY**

This thesis investigates these questions by, first, conducting a literature review that explores various aspects of TCOs and the population. Specifically, it covers definitions of TCOs in the literature and the conditions that create them. It then focuses on research that examines TCOs and their relationship with the population, noting that this body of literature is relatively thin and requires further investigation. The review then turns to counterinsurgency literature, which provides a basis for further exploring how TCOs may influence the population for their own gains, and the need for governments to also positively engage populations in their counter-TCO operations. Lastly, the literature review explores current strategies used in the fight against TCOs, noting the paucity of strategies that focus specifically on the population.

From this literature review, the thesis proposes focusing on three broad aspects of TCOs and government-led counter-TCO efforts: how TCOs engage populations, both positively and negatively in their operations; how governments counter TCOs and how these operations affect the population; and what measures the government has taken to positively engage the population.

The thesis uses a controlled case study comparison to investigate these questions. Specifically, it conducts a longitudinal study of the Medellín Cartel in Colombia from 1976 to 1993, and a study of the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico from 1988 to 2019 with the goal of better understanding how these two cartels influence the population, government-led counter-TCO operations and their effects on the population, and positive measures taken by the government to win its support.

## **D. FINDINGS**

This investigation yielded the following findings:

The population played a significant role in the rise and fall of the Medellín Cartel. Pablo Escobar, the leader of the Medellín Cartel, cared for the people of Medellín by providing for their socioeconomic needs, including infrastructure improvements and other resources. The Colombian government, by contrast, focused more on directly targeting the Medellín Cartel and its narco-trafficking than on winning the support of the population,

including conducting raids in urban areas and crop eradication, which negatively affected the livelihood of Colombian farmers. This dynamic changed when the cartel engaged in terrorist acts against innocent civilians, assassinations of police officers and government officials. Ultimately, the Colombian government did not win the population away from the cartel. Rather, the cartel lost the population's support.

Similarly, El Chapo and the Sinaloa Cartel established a positive relationship with the population that benefitted their operations. El Chapo fashioned himself as a local hero to the population by investing in local communities through repairing infrastructure, and providing jobs in impoverished cities. As in Colombia, the Mexican government did little to engage the population during its ongoing fight with the Sinaloa Cartel and engaged in actions that negatively affected the population, including the use of chemicals to eradicate illicit crops, human rights violations, and its failure to protect the press. Beginning in 2002, the government initiated programs that aim to positively affect the population by improving socioeconomic issues, providing humanitarian assistance, and even hiring a public relations firm to boost the image of the Mexican military. While polling data suggest that the population remains suspicious of the police, government, and military, these programs may improve their relationship with the population over time.

## **E. OUTLINE OF THESIS**

The thesis proceeds as follows: Chapter II provides a literature review of TCOs, noting that few pieces consider the role of the population in aiding or undermining TCOs. The chapter also draws from counterinsurgency literature, which extensively covers the importance of relationship building between insurgents and populations for successful insurgencies and the need for governments to win back the population in a counterinsurgency. Chapter II ends by posing three broad research questions: how have TCOs engaged populations, both positively and negatively in their operations; how have governments countered TCOs and how these operations have affected the population; and what measures have governments taken to positively engage the population?

Chapters III and IV use three broad lines of investigation to analyze two TCOs in Latin America—the Medellín Cartel in Colombia and the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico—to

better understand the points at which these cartels built positive relationships with the population, the times when they did not, and how government counter-TCO operations directly and indirectly engaged the population. Chapter III provides a brief history of the Medellín Cartel, including its key leaders, organization and operations. It focuses specifically on the cartel's relationship with the population and how it used positive and negative actions toward the population to build and maintain that relationship. Lastly, it describes the Colombian government's counter-TCO response—including its eradication campaign; its military and police confrontations; its negotiations with the cartel; and its partnership with the United States—and the effect these operations had on the population, and actions it took to engage the population to undermine the capacity of the cartel.

Chapter IV provides a brief history of the Sinaloa Cartel, including its key leaders and operations. It then describes the cartel's relationship with the surrounding population and highlights the various positive and negative actions the cartel took toward the population. It also considers the Mexican government's response to the Sinaloa Cartel—including its eradication campaign; its police, judicial, and military operations; the government's treatment of the press; its partnership with the United States; and other government programs—and how these operations affected the population. The chapter ends with an analysis of these factors with emphasis on how the cartel and the government have engaged the population.

Chapter V offers concluding thoughts on how TCOs build relationships with local populations and how governments understand and address the needs of populations in their counter-TCO efforts. The chapter reviews the findings from both the Medellín Cartel and Sinaloa Cartel case studies as well as the governments' responses to their operations. This chapter ends with recommendations for governments to improve their fight against TCOs while maintaining an amicable relationship with the population.

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## II. TCOs, POPULATIONS, AND GOVERNMENT COUNTERMEASURES

Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) are massive enterprises that have the resources to “outman, outspend, and outgun the formal governments of the countries where they reside.”<sup>9</sup> Their presence undermines the legitimacy of governments and creates security gaps that reduce a government’s abilities to effectively rule, creating fragile environments in which crime and terror can thrive.<sup>10</sup> The U.S. military is frequently called to deploy to such fragile regions to establish rule of law and work toward increased stability for its inhabitants. Therefore, it is in the U.S. military’s best interests to understand TCOs so the threat they pose can be addressed.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a basis of knowledge of TCOs by summarizing literature to determine what they are and what they are not, what causes them to form, and how they are organized. Additionally, this chapter highlights the relationship between TCOs and their surrounding populations and demonstrates the need for further study on this specific aspect of TCOs. Lastly, this chapter provides a foundation for current techniques and strategies to combat TCOs, noting a dearth in efforts aimed at engaging populations as a counter-TCO strategy.

### A. WHAT IS A TCO?

Prior to discussing causes of TCOs and strategies to combat them, it is important to highlight varying definitions of TCOs with the aim of coming to a working definition. Providing a working definition of TCOs along with discussing how they operate and how they are organized will aid in developing effective strategies to combat them.

Criminologists Petrus van Duyne and Mark Nelemans explain that the term “transnational organized crime” was first introduced in Geneva in 1974 during the early

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Miklaucic, “World Order or Disorder: The SOF Contribution,” in *SOF Role in Combating Transnational Organized Crime*, ed. William Mendel and Peter McCabe (MacDill Air Force Base, FL: Joint Special Operations University Press, 2016), 178.

<sup>10</sup> Miklaucic, 180.

stages of the Fifth United Nations' Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, where members discussed criminal acts that spanned two or more countries.<sup>11</sup> During the Eighth United Nations' Convention in 1991, committee members convened the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Strategies to Deal with Transnational Crime.<sup>12</sup> During this meeting, the committee agreed that an "organized criminal group" would be defined as "a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offenses established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit."<sup>13</sup> Arguably, this is one of the first definitions of a TCO.

More recently, the Obama administration's 2011 Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime proposes that TCOs are

self-perpetuating associations of individuals who operate transnationally for the purpose of obtaining power, influence, monetary and/or commercial gains, wholly or in part by illegal means, while protecting their activities through a pattern of corruption and/or violence, or while protecting their illegal activities through a transnational organizational structure and the exploitation of transnational commerce or communication mechanisms.<sup>14</sup>

The Obama administration's definition of transnational organized crime builds upon the UN's definition by adding intangible aspects of a TCO like power, influence and the organization's ability to exploit existing systems for personal gain. These intangible aspects highlight a TCO's underlying motives and bring attention to the complexity of their operations.

Organized crime expert Jerome Bjelopera points out that the Obama administration's 2011 definition is comprised of three key elements: transnationality,

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<sup>11</sup> Petrus C. van Duyne and Mark D. H. Nelemans, "Transnational Organized Crime: Thinking in and out of Plato's Cave," in *Routledge Handbook of Transnational Organized Crime* (Routledge, 2011), 37, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203698341.ch2>.

<sup>12</sup> Petrus C. van Duyne and Mark D. H. Nelemans, 41.

<sup>13</sup> Petrus C. van Duyne and Mark D. H. Nelemans, 43.

<sup>14</sup> The White House, *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime: Addressing Converging Threats to National Security* (Washington, DC: Executive Office of the President, 2011).

organization, and crime.<sup>15</sup> He further defines the degree of transnationality as any of the following three elements: the residence of the organization, the origin of the product, and the complexity of its supply chain.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, Bjelopera analyzes the concept of organization by looking at two of its baseline aspects: routine and size.<sup>17</sup> The frequency of routine cooperation among a group of individuals and the size of that group constitute the degree to which a group would be considered an organization.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the larger the group and the more frequently it cooperates, the more like an organization it is. Conversely, the smaller the group and the less frequently it cooperates, the less like an organization it is. Lastly, Bjelopera provides a list of ten examples that constitute illicit activities:

1. Penetration of state institutions, corruption, and threats to governance
2. Threats to the economy, U.S. competitiveness, and strategic markets
3. Crime-terror-insurgency nexus
4. Expansion of drug trafficking
5. Human smuggling
6. Trafficking in persons
7. Weapons trafficking
8. Intellectual property theft
9. Cybercrime

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<sup>15</sup> Jerome P. Bjelopera and Kristin M. Finklea, "Organized Crime: An Evolving Challenge for U.S. Law Enforcement" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012), 30, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41547.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Bjelopera and Finklea, 30.

<sup>17</sup> Bjelopera and Finklea, 32.

<sup>18</sup> Bjelopera and Finklea, 32.



10. Those that act as facilitators to TCOs<sup>19</sup>

In addition to the definitions provided by the UN and the 2011 Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime, academics and other practitioners have provided definitions of TCOs. For example, political scientist Angel Rabasa et al. defines TCOs as organizations that covertly carry out illicit activities to meet the demands of illicit markets to maximize profits.<sup>20</sup> Criminal law Professor Yuriy A. Voronin proposes that a TCO is an “organized group of people, which continuously practices its criminal activity and whose main goal is to make a profit everywhere, without reference to national boundaries.”<sup>21</sup> Political scientist Samuel Huntington defines a TCO as an organization that “carries on significant centrally-directed operations in the territory of two or more nation-states.”<sup>22</sup> David Marvelli, deputy chief at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and organized crime expert James Finckenauer define transnational organized crime as “crime committed by criminal organizations that consist of three or more people engaged in criminal activity, that operates across national boundaries, and that demonstrate continuity across crimes and across time.”<sup>23</sup> They further identify size, stability, sophistication, authority of reputation, structure, and self-identification as important factors of TCOs.<sup>24</sup>

Additionally, Finckenauer offers a framework of organized crime and criminal organizations that contains eight elements: ideology, continuity, structure or organized hierarchy, violence or threat of force, illegal enterprises, restricted membership, corruption,

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<sup>19</sup> Bjelopera and Finklea, 32.

<sup>20</sup> Rabasa et al., *Counternetwork*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Yuriy A. Voronin, “Measures to Control Transnational Organized Crime, Summary” (American Psychological Association, 2000), 1, <https://doi.org/10.1037/e523402006-001>.

<sup>22</sup> Samuel Huntington, “Transnational Organizations in World Politics,” *World Politics* 25, no. 3 (1973): 336, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010115>.

<sup>23</sup> David A. Marvelli and James O. Finckenauer, “The Threat of Harm by Transnational Organized Criminals,” in *Routledge Handbook of Transnational Organized Crime* (Routledge, 2011), 510, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203698341.ch35>.

<sup>24</sup> David A. Marvelli and James O. Finckenauer, 510.

and the penetration of legitimate businesses.<sup>25</sup> He contends that, during his study of organized crime groups, they “did not espouse a particular radical, liberal, conservative, or other political ideology” and “their interest in government was only in its nullification—through bribery, payoffs, and corruption.”<sup>26</sup> In short, TCOs have no hidden political agendas. They are solely motivated by profit and take necessary measures to further their interest. He posits that they are “loosely-affiliated networks” and their structure is “much more amorphous, free floating, and flatter, and thus lacking a rigid hierarchy.”<sup>27</sup>

By contrast, organized crime and terrorism expert, Jennifer Hesterman, argues that TCOs are incredibly sophisticated organizations, similar to multinational corporations. Multinational corporations seek joint ventures and alliances to improve their levels of success.<sup>28</sup> Both multinational corporations and TCOs operate on a worldwide scale. They invest heavily in supply chain management and adjust their business models when the future of their organization is at risk. They employ experts to maximize profits and embrace technology, transportation, and communication systems to remain competitive.<sup>29</sup>

Several scholars note the importance of differentiating TCOs from other types of illicit organizations. For example, Hesterman argues that transnational terrorist organizations (TTOs), while sharing some similarities, differ from TCOs by their ideological motivations rather than a desire for wealth.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, terrorists use acts of violence as a means to instill fear and garner momentum for their ideological agendas, whereas TCOs are less likely to do this because they need the population’s compliance in order to operate, and terrorists will stop at nothing until their ideological goal is achieved,

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<sup>25</sup> James O. Finckenauer, “Problems of Definition: What Is Organized Crime?,” *Trends in Organized Crime* 8, no. 3 (March 1, 2005): 65, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-005-1038-4>.

<sup>26</sup> Finckenauer, 65.

<sup>27</sup> Finckenauer, 65–66.

<sup>28</sup> Jennifer L. Hesterman, *The Terrorist-Criminal Nexus: An Alliance of International Drug Cartels, Organized Crime, and Terror Groups* (Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis, 2013), 8.

<sup>29</sup> Hesterman, 8–9.

<sup>30</sup> Hesterman, 43.

including incarceration and even death.<sup>31</sup> TCOs by contrast, are purely motivated by the advancement of their illicit enterprises.

The distinction between TCOs and TTOs is illustrated by the Mexican ambassador to the United States, Arturo Sarukhan, in his rebuttal to a 2011 *Dallas Morning News* op-ed titled “Let’s Call Mexico’s Cartels What They Are: Terrorists,” when he argues

These transnational criminal organizations, which operate in both our countries, are not terrorist organizations. They are very violent criminal groups that are well-structured and well-financed. They pursue a single goal. They want to maximize their profits and do what most businesses do: hostile takeovers and pursue mergers and acquisitions. They use violence to protect their business from other competitors as well as from our two governments’ efforts to roll them back. There is no political motivation or agenda whatsoever beyond their attempt to defend their illegal business.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, despite both TTOs and TCOs using violence, they have very different motivations for their actions.<sup>33</sup>

Despite these key differences, Hesterman notes that criminal and terrorist organizations often study each other’s successes and failures to perfect their own organization’s operations.<sup>34</sup> The use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, is a successful tactic used by insurgents and terrorist organizations that has taken a significant toll on U.S. and Coalition Forces; nearly half of the casualties have been a result of IEDs.<sup>35</sup> This successful tactic has been adopted by TCOs as well. On July 15, 2010, the first recorded narco-trafficker’s use of a vehicle-borne IED occurred in Ciudad Juárez and killed three Mexican Federal Police officers and wounded nine.<sup>36</sup> The Juárez Cartel was responsible for this particular attack and was

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<sup>31</sup> Hesterman, 55–56.

<sup>32</sup> Arturo Sarukhan, “Choose Labels Carefully,” *Dallas Morning News*, Letter to the Editor, April 11, 2011, quoted in Jennifer L. Hesterman, *The Terrorist-Criminal Nexus: An Alliance of International Drug Cartels, Organized Crime, and Terror Groups* (Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis, 2013), 159.

<sup>33</sup> Hesterman, 159.

<sup>34</sup> Hesterman, 273.

<sup>35</sup> Hesterman, 273.

<sup>36</sup> Barnard Thompson, “The Mexican Drug War: Is It ‘Narcoterrorism?’” openDemocracy, accessed August 3, 2019, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/mexican-drug-war-is-it-narcoterrorism/>.

followed by several more attacks targeting the former leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada Garcia.<sup>37</sup>

Security experts Louise Shelley and John Picarelli similarly argue that the relationship between organized crime and terrorism is increasing, and they can no longer be viewed as completely separate entities.<sup>38</sup> Shelley and Picarelli developed what they call the “terror-crime interaction spectrum,” which depicts the process whereby terrorists and criminals become intertwined.<sup>39</sup> They argue that terrorists and criminals typically begin their relationships by adopting successful techniques from one another, a process known as “activity appropriation.”<sup>40</sup> Over time, these organizations grow to appreciate the technical expertise of the other and start outsourcing activities to the other organization rather than trying to master them themselves.<sup>41</sup> TCOs and TTOs begin to converge by sharing goals and methods in what Shelley and Picarelli call “a symbiotic relationship.”<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, when the two organizations converge and become closely aligned, it is known as a “hybrid group.”<sup>43</sup> Lastly, the transformation stage occurs when one organization becomes so involved in the other that it no longer conducts its previous activities.<sup>44</sup>

The preceding definitions and characteristics of TCOs contain a variety of key aspects, including groups of people, criminal activity, motives, and transnationality. After examining definitions from the UN, the U.S. government, and several authorities on organized crime, this thesis defines a TCO as a group of individuals who operate across at least one border to further their illicit enterprises with the principal purpose of achieving financial or material gain.

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<sup>37</sup> Thompson.

<sup>38</sup> Louise Shelley and John Picarelli, “Methods and Motives: Exploring Links between Transnational Organized Crime and International Terrorism,” *Trends in Organized Crime* 9, no. 2 (2005): 52, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-005-1024-x>.

<sup>39</sup> Shelley and Picarelli, 53.

<sup>40</sup> Shelley and Picarelli, 53.

<sup>41</sup> Shelley and Picarelli, 53.

<sup>42</sup> Shelley and Picarelli, 53.

<sup>43</sup> Shelley and Picarelli, 54.

<sup>44</sup> Shelley and Picarelli, 54.

## B. WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS THAT CREATE TCOS?

Several theories aim to explain the conditions under which TCOs form. For example, political scientist Phil Huntington argues that TCOs have emerged, in part, due to the onset of the “global village” and the drastic changes in which organizations operate in a new interconnected environment.<sup>45</sup> He asserts that, “Increased interdependence between nations, the ease of international travel and communications, the permeability of national boundaries, and the globalization of international financial networks have facilitated the emergence of what is, in effect, a single global market for both licit and illicit commodities.”<sup>46</sup> In other words, the interconnectedness of today’s world has presented a business opportunity for organizations of all types to benefit, including TCOs.

Similar to Huntington, organized crime expert James Finckenauer attributes the proliferation of transnational organized crime primarily to globalization in a changing economy.<sup>47</sup> Through advances in technology and transportation, he argues, the world is becoming much more interconnected and goods and services move with ease across international borders.<sup>48</sup> This interconnectedness encourages and facilitates nefarious groups that seek to advance their enterprises and operate transnationally.

Criminal networks expert Phil Williams posits that criminal organizations, which he describes as networks, have become transnational because it is advantageous to the TCO’s bottom line. He argues that going transnational “enables them to supply markets where the profit margins are largest, operate from and in countries where risks are the least, complicate the tasks of law enforcement agencies that are trying to combat them, commit crimes that cross jurisdictions and therefore increase complexity, and adapt their behavior to counter or neutralize law enforcement initiatives.”<sup>49</sup> Going transnational enables these networks to operate where they will be most effective while simultaneously making it more

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<sup>45</sup> Huntington, “Transnational Organizations in World Politics,” 316.

<sup>46</sup> Huntington, 316.

<sup>47</sup> Finckenauer, “Problems of Definition: What Is Organized Crime?,” 79.

<sup>48</sup> Finckenauer, 79–80.

<sup>49</sup> Phil Williams, “Transnational Criminal Networks,” in *Networks and Networks the Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), 78.

difficult for law enforcement to disrupt their efforts. Although Williams does not believe that criminal networks follow a rigid hierarchy, he does discern that organizers provide direction and issue orders within the network; insulators protect the core of the network from infiltration and information leaks, and communicators ensure that information flows from node to node to facilitate continuous operations.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, guardians enforce security measures within the network and minimize damage from defectors; extenders recruit new members through bribery, coercion, and blackmail; monitors provide oversight and notify core members when problems arise; and crossovers, or moles that continue to work outside of the network for legitimate institutions, send valuable information back to the network.<sup>51</sup>

Enterprise theory provides another example for why TCOs exist. Organized crime theorist Dwight C. Smith Jr. asserts that the fundamental flaw that most theorists have when analyzing organized crime is that they relate it to villainous crimes like armed robbery rather than commonplace business transactions.<sup>52</sup> Smith's enterprise theory claims that illicit enterprises are driven by the same motivations as legitimate enterprises and are simply trying to earn and capitalize on their share of the market.<sup>53</sup> Smith defines an illicit enterprise as "the extension of legitimate market activities into areas normally proscribed, for the pursuit of profit and in response to latent illicit demand."<sup>54</sup> For example, in the banking business a loan shark would be satisfying an illicit demand in an extension of a legitimate market.<sup>55</sup> This theory operates with the underlying assumptions that "the range of activity in any marketplace is continuous in character, from the saintly to the most sinful; and that organizational concepts ordinarily applied only to legitimate businesses are

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<sup>50</sup> Williams, 82–83.

<sup>51</sup> Williams, 82–83.

<sup>52</sup> Dwight Smith, "Organized Crime and Entrepreneurship," *International Journal of Criminology and Penology* 6, no. 2 (1978): 163.

<sup>53</sup> Smith, 164.

<sup>54</sup> Smith, 164.

<sup>55</sup> Smith, 164.

applicable to that entire range of activity.”<sup>56</sup> A prime example of enterprise theory is the illicit alcohol industry and “bootleggers” after U.S. Congress implemented the Volstead Act in 1920.<sup>57</sup> The demand for alcohol remained after the government restricted its production and distribution, providing criminals the opportunity to meet the existing demand. In other words, when governments restrict and regulate a market with existing demand, this creates opportunities for criminal organizations to fill the void and meet the existing demand through illicit means.

In addition to considering the conditions under which TCOs form, scholars also consider how TCOs are organized. One of the original theories regarding the structure of organized crime is criminologist Donald Cressey’s bureaucracy organization model. His theory describes the organization and function of Italian organized crime operating in major metropolitan areas within the United States, what many refer to as the “mafia.” Cressey bases his model on the workings of a criminal fraternity known as “La Cosa Nostra” which literally translates to “our thing.”<sup>58</sup> This fraternity adheres to “its own body of ‘law’ and ‘justice’ and, in so doing, thwarts and usurps the authority of legally constituted judicial bodies.”<sup>59</sup> La Cosa Nostra is a hierarchy of both economic and political positions and exists independently of individual personnel. It is an enduring rigid structure that will continue regardless of personnel turnover due to resignation or death.<sup>60</sup> At the top of La Cosa Nostra is the “commission” that acts as a board of directors and the “supreme court” for the organization. Beneath the commission is the “council,” which is made up of key leaders from each family within an area or metropolis, that determines local policy. Within each council are dozens of families, each with a designated “boss” that runs operations and maintains order at a local level. Beneath bosses are underbosses and “button

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<sup>56</sup> Smith, 164.

<sup>57</sup> Michael D. Lyman and Gary W. Potter, “Theories of Organized Criminal Behavior,” in *Organized Crime*, 4th ed (Upper Saddle River, N.J: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2007), 70–71.

<sup>58</sup> Donald Ray Cressey, *Theft of the Nation; the Structure and Operations of Organized Crime in America*, [1st ed.] (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 10.

<sup>59</sup> Cressey, 10.

<sup>60</sup> Cressey, 110.

men” that act as soldiers and carry out duties prescribed by their immediate supervisors.<sup>61</sup> From top to bottom, La Cosa Nostra is an organized and self-sustaining system.

Contrary to Cressey, political scientist Michael Kenney challenges if TCOs are actually structured like organizations at all. Kenney posits that much of the war on drugs over the past several decades has been based on a misunderstanding of what the U.S. government and the general public refer to as a drug “cartel.”<sup>62</sup> Kenney contends that the term “cartel” is a misnomer and was a creation of the U.S. government and the media. He argues that it had very little structure and conducted business by the networking of small groups through pre-existing contacts like friends and family.<sup>63</sup> He describes the drug trade in Colombia as “fluid social systems where flexible exchange networks expand and retract according to market opportunities and regulatory constraints.”<sup>64</sup>

On an organizational level, Kenney categorizes Colombian drug trafficking into two types: wheel and chain networks. Wheel networks are made up of core groups that manage the organization in its entirety and peripheral nodes that execute tasks at the direction of the core groups.<sup>65</sup> Core groups steer the networks by providing expertise in organizing transactions, resolving disputes, and supplying resources while the peripheral nodes act as supporting entities.<sup>66</sup> Conversely, chain networks are decentralized and conduct their trafficking without the direction of the core group. They are organized more horizontally than vertically and deal directly with other nodes without the supervision of a core group. This style of organization can facilitate trust between nodes, but also lacks security from a supervising authority and leaves them more vulnerable to theft and government seizures.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Cressey, 112–15.

<sup>62</sup> Michael Kenney, “The Architecture of Drug Trafficking: Network Forms of Organisation in the Colombian Cocaine Trade,” *Global Crime* 8, no. 3 (August 2007): 233, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17440570701507794>.

<sup>63</sup> Kenney, 234.

<sup>64</sup> Kenney, 235.

<sup>65</sup> Kenney, 242.

<sup>66</sup> Kenney, 243.

<sup>67</sup> Kenney, 245.



While these studies help explain why criminal organizations exist and how they are structured, there is considerably less written on TCOs' relationship with relevant populations.

### C. TCOS AND THE POPULATION

The population plays a critical role in the workings of a TCO and they require, on some level, the compliance of the populations where they work in order to carry out their illicit operations. Despite the important role of populations for TCOs, there is minimal literature written specifically regarding TCOs' relationships with relevant populations. However, counterinsurgency (COIN) literature extensively covers the importance of insurgents' and governments' relationships with populations. Therefore, it is helpful to outline a few key theories from COIN literature on how insurgents build relationships with the population.

The U.S. military's Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, provides some useful insights into the role of the population in fighting a successful counterinsurgency. It argues that, "The development of an effective COIN approach starts with the acceptance of the relevant population as key to a COIN operation."<sup>68</sup> The United States' COIN strategy is a blended effort between the United States and host nation governments to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the population, protect the population from the insurgent threat, and maintain the ability to exert political influence.<sup>69</sup> The U.S. government aids the host nation in increasing its legitimacy in the eyes of the population by appropriately allocating resources to provide a "secure, predictable, and acceptable living environment for the population."<sup>70</sup> Therefore, a successful counterinsurgency strategy requires an understanding of the operational environment, which largely entails understanding how the population thinks as well as the population's history of interaction with the insurgents and

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<sup>68</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency*, JP 3-24 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018), x, [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3\\_24.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_24.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, I-3.

<sup>70</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, I-4.

counterinsurgents.<sup>71</sup> In other words, the population is the center of the gravity in a counterinsurgency; therefore, one must have a thorough understanding of the population and be comfortable working with and around them.<sup>72</sup> The population is of such importance in a counterinsurgency, that while conducting stability activities, JP 3-24 asserts that the focus should be on the population more so than on the insurgents themselves.<sup>73</sup>

COIN literature further stresses the importance of governance and legitimacy with the population. JP 3-24 defines governance as “the ability to serve the population through the rules, processes, and behavior by which interests are articulated, resources are managed, and power is exercised in a society.”<sup>74</sup> To accomplish this, a government needs to be capable of setting the conditions through establishing a series of rules and procedures that allow the population to receive public services in an acceptable manner.<sup>75</sup> JP 3-24 describes legitimacy as a “significant indicator of the extent to which systems of authority, decisions, and conduct are accepted by the local population.”<sup>76</sup> Illegitimate governments are more likely to require intimidation or coercion to gain compliance from the population while legitimate governments tend to gain compliance through general consent of a trusting population.<sup>77</sup> Whoever best meets the expectations of the population and earns their trust is more likely to be seen as legitimate.<sup>78</sup>

Counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen offers a useful theory for studying TCOs and their relationship with the surrounding population. His theory of competitive control argues that “the local armed actor that a given population perceives as best able to establish a predictable, consistent, wide-spectrum normative system of control is most likely to

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<sup>71</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, I-4-I-5.

<sup>72</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, xiii.

<sup>73</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, xvi.

<sup>74</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, I-6.

<sup>75</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, I-6.

<sup>76</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, I-7.

<sup>77</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, I-7.

<sup>78</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, I-8.

dominate that population and its residential area.”<sup>79</sup> These armed actors design systems that exist in the everyday lives of the surrounding communities as a means to “corral, control, manipulate, and mobilize populations.”<sup>80</sup> These systems lure populations into supporting armed groups by filling basic needs and maintain their support by providing stability and incentivizing collaboration.<sup>81</sup> Kilcullen argues that insurgents and criminal organizations fill the gaps left by weak or ineffective governance including setting rules, making improvements to infrastructure, and supplying necessities to the people. Kilcullen further argues that the actor who successfully makes and enforces the rules, provides rewards for the population, and punishes those who break the rules become the de facto government.<sup>82</sup> In effect, the non-state actor and the government are in competition to win the support of the population, and whichever side wins their support becomes the authority.

Another study that looks at the connection between TCOs and the population comes from criminologists Alexandra Abello-Colak and Valeria Guarneros-Meza, who focus on the relationship between criminals and local governments. They argue that criminals build influence with local governments as a means of improving their standing in the community.<sup>83</sup> For example, criminals often coercively intertwine themselves in community activities, forcing contractual obligations for services that both further their enterprises and build relationships with the local government.<sup>84</sup> In other words, they seek to establish relationships with persons of influence within the community and local government to facilitate criminal activities.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 126.

<sup>80</sup> Kilcullen, 167.

<sup>81</sup> Kilcullen, 167.

<sup>82</sup> Kilcullen, 132.

<sup>83</sup> Alexandra Abello-Colak and Valeria Guarneros-Meza, “The Role of Criminal Actors in Local Governance,” *Urban Studies* 51, no. 15 (November 2014): 3270, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098013519831>.

<sup>84</sup> Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza, 3280.

<sup>85</sup> Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza, 3285.

Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza offer three examples of how criminal actors weave themselves into arrangements between the government and the population. First, criminal actors interact and provide services for members of the community and even officers of the government. This dependency and frequent interaction results in difficulty drafting policy that is contradictory to the criminal actors' desires, thus, creating more favorable conditions for the criminal actor.<sup>86</sup> Second, although criminal actors can be forceful and violent, the population can also view them as a means of protection and security. In Colombia, the Medellín Cartel established an illegal credit system that allowed people to purchase goods that were necessary for survival when they would not be able to afford it under the government system. Those who decided to buy into their illicit activities were offered opportunities that they would not otherwise have and were shielded from violence so long as they were compliant with the cartel's rules.<sup>87</sup> Third, criminal actors persist despite resistance from local and state governments. When governments are weak and cannot effectively provide services for their communities, the criminal actors become legitimized through their ability to effectively deliver goods and services to the population.<sup>88</sup>

Similarly, political scientist Enrique Arias argues that "armed groups collaborate with state officials to maintain systems of local governance in exchange for state resources and the support of politicians."<sup>89</sup> He proposes that governments are content to allow criminal groups to govern select parts of what would otherwise be ungoverned territory to avoid conflict and use resources more efficiently.<sup>90</sup> This mindset started during the debt crisis in Latin America in the 1980s where state-building efforts slowed to a standstill without sufficient resources allocated outside of major cities.<sup>91</sup> The weakened state of

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<sup>86</sup> Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza, 3284–85.

<sup>87</sup> Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza, 3285.

<sup>88</sup> Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza, 3285.

<sup>89</sup> Enrique Arias, "Understanding Criminal Networks, Political Order, and Politics in Latin America," in *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*, ed. Anne Clunan and Harold Trinkunas (Stanford University Press, 2010), 116.

<sup>90</sup> Arias, 119.

<sup>91</sup> Arias, 119.

government presented a unique opportunity for armed criminal groups to fill the void and come to power.<sup>92</sup> However, increased democratization within Latin America led some politicians to reach out to these ungoverned spaces and solicit votes and resources from areas controlled by armed actors. This new opportunity emboldened the armed actors' relationship with politicians to further the armed actors' agenda. Although in some cases, armed actors accumulated enough clout that they did not need the support of politicians and offered political candidates of their own to run for office.<sup>93</sup> This was apparent when the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) became a legitimate political party in 2017 and offered candidates to run for office under the party's new name, the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force.<sup>94</sup>

National security scholars Anne Clunan and Harold Trinkunas offer another hypothesis for how criminal organizations compete with governments to establish legitimacy and authority.<sup>95</sup> They posit that alternative modes of governance, particularly in ungoverned spaces, can be more effective at providing populations with a sense of security than the actual government itself.<sup>96</sup> Clunan and Trinkunas argue that "the state's inability or unwillingness to provide personal and economic security may lead citizens to turn to non-state actors to provide such security."<sup>97</sup> In other words, it is only natural that the population will follow the entity that is best able to provide for them. They further argue that liberalism and globalization have weakened the sovereignty of states and provided an opportunity for alternative governing authorities to assume control of the population as was seen with Hezbollah in Lebanon or with populist leaders in Latin America like Hugo

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<sup>92</sup> Arias, 120.

<sup>93</sup> Arias, 120.

<sup>94</sup> Alexandra Phelan, "Engaging Insurgency: The Impact of the 2016 Colombian Peace Agreement on FARC's Political Participation," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 42, no. 9 (September 2, 2019): 836–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1432027>.

<sup>95</sup> Clunan and Trinkunas, "Alternative Governance and Security," 276.

<sup>96</sup> Clunan and Trinkunas, 276.

<sup>97</sup> Anne Clunan and Harold Trinkunas, "Conceptualizing Ungoverned Spaces," in *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*, ed. Anne Clunan and Harold Trinkunas (Stanford University Press, 2010), 26.

Chávez.<sup>98</sup> Even without an existing threat within an ungoverned space, the government will always be weary of potential competition over the loyalty of the surrounding population.<sup>99</sup>

#### **D. COMBATTING TCOs**

The threat of TCOs is daunting, and it is imperative that the United States and its international partners maintain an effective strategy to combat these resilient organizations. The 2011 Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime summarized the challenge of countering TCOs:

Despite a long and successful history of dismantling criminal organizations and developing common international standards for cooperation against transnational organized crime, not all of our capabilities have kept pace with the expansion of 21st century transnational criminal threats. Therefore, this strategy is organized around a single, unifying principle: to build, balance, and integrate the tools of American power to combat transnational organized crime and related threats to our national security – and to urge our partners to do the same.<sup>100</sup>

Specifically, the 2011 strategy names the following six priority actions:

- Deny funding of criminal organizations by reducing the demand of illegal substances within the United States
- Reduce the access to drugs by continuing to attack trafficking networks
- Disrupt the transnational flow of illicit materials by targeting criminal leadership and infrastructure
- Target corruption within government and corporations within the United States

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<sup>98</sup> Clunan and Trinkunas, 27.

<sup>99</sup> Clunan and Trinkunas, 27.

<sup>100</sup> The White House, *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime: Addressing Converging Threats to National Security*.

- Ratify the inter-American convention that targets the manufacturing of illegal firearms, explosives, and related paraphernalia
- Supplement the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime by guarding against the production and trafficking of illegal firearms and related materials<sup>101</sup>

This list requires a whole of U.S. government approach, in addition to stepping up alliances with affected countries and cooperating with international organizations, like the UN.

In 2019, the Trump administration released its National Drug Control Strategy. The strategy has made combatting TCOs a national priority and identifies nine key focus areas to reduce the availability of illicit drugs in the United States:

1. Disrupting, dismantling, and defeating drug traffickers and their supply chains
2. Working with international partners
3. Combating illicit internet drug sales
4. Focusing federal government effort against illicit drug delivery through the mail and express consignment networks
5. Interdicting the flow of drugs across physical borders and into the United States
6. Disrupting and dismantling the illicit drug production infrastructure
7. Leveraging the full capabilities of Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force Programs
8. Interrupting the financial activities of drug traffickers
9. Enhancing law enforcement capacity<sup>102</sup>

Attacking the essential elements of TCOs with a cohesive law enforcement effort hinders their ability to operate and diminishes TCO profits by disrupting their finances and manufacturing capabilities as well as interdicting drugs before they reach the United States.

The military also has a role in combatting TCOs. Since the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the military has moved away from the traditional

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<sup>101</sup> The White House, 16.

<sup>102</sup> Executive Office of the President of the United States, “National Drug Control Strategy” (Washington, DC: Office of National Drug Control Policy, January 2019), 13–18, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NDCS-Final.pdf>.

counternarcotic missions, which focused on interdicting and eradicating the substance, and closer to the counter transnational organized crime (CTOC) strategy, which aims to neutralize the organization itself by targeting critical nodes within the criminal network.<sup>103</sup> In previous efforts, the military measured success in terms of pounds of drugs seized, which was easy to measure but ineffective because the organization producing the drugs still remained intact.<sup>104</sup> The new approach focuses on degrading the effectiveness of TCOs by attacking critical nodes within their networks.<sup>105</sup> This is measured by the arrest of key facilitators that are essential to the functionality of TCOs. These facilitators often have both legitimate and illegitimate practices and include attorneys, bankers, and other specialists that operate for or in conjunction with TCOs.<sup>106</sup> CTOC is still in its early stages, in part because of a lack of funding and because CTOC operations require a demanding and difficult interagency approach.<sup>107</sup> However, CTOC is gaining traction. For example, former USSOUTHCOM Commander General John F. Kelly recognized the importance of a counter-network strategy in his 2015 address to the Senate Armed Services Committee and praised the committee for expanding section 1004 authorities that allowed for an increase in CTOC funding.<sup>108</sup>

After decades of combatting TCOs, the U.S. State Department has developed four overarching lessons learned that can help future policymakers and even those that are fighting TCOs on the ground.<sup>109</sup> First, cooperation at the regional and international level is imperative to combatting TCOs. This cooperation aids in building the partner nation's capacity and undermines the proliferation of TCO activities. Second, embracing the unique

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<sup>103</sup> Rabasa et al., *Counternetwork*, 5–7.

<sup>104</sup> Rabasa et al., 5.

<sup>105</sup> Rabasa et al., 140.

<sup>106</sup> The White House, *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime: Addressing Converging Threats to National Security*, 8.

<sup>107</sup> Rabasa et al., *Counternetwork*, 7.

<sup>108</sup> USSOUTHCOM, "Posture Statement of General John F. Kelly, United States Marine Corps, Commander, United States Southern Command, Before the 114th Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee," March 12, 2015, 13.

<sup>109</sup> Hesterman, *The Terrorist-Criminal Nexus*, 39.



strengths of different agencies within the government and increasing the level of interagency coordination and information sharing can greatly aid in the fight against TCOs. Third, making agreements with host-nation countries to embark on specific counter-TCO projects creates a shared sense of responsibility and buy-in. Lastly, host-nation strategies must be nested within the overarching U.S. strategy to ensure that efforts are not counter-productive in the overall goal of defeating TCOs.<sup>110</sup>

In 2017, RAND published a report that identified characteristics of TCOs, the ways they threaten the interests of the United States, and the policies to combat them.<sup>111</sup> They identify the CTOC strategy as aiming to disrupt illicit supply chains that primarily extend from South America through Central America and Mexico to deter illicit activity from entering the United States.<sup>112</sup> Within the report, political scientist Angel Rabasa et al. asserts that, to most effectively combat TCOs, one must understand how they are organized and target nodes within the organization that are critical to the TCOs operations.<sup>113</sup> The report asserts that the manner in which a TCO is organized revolves around links within their supply chain and the cost of their supply chain transactions. The cost of the transactions determines whether TCOs will move the supplies on their own or outsource them, thus, increasing the size of their network and consequently making it more vulnerable.<sup>114</sup> Ultimately, to improve CTOC effectiveness, the RAND report recommends that the United States improve interagency cooperation, develop joint doctrine for CTOC, and address multi-layered corruption within weak and failing states.<sup>115</sup>

The preceding strategies focus on disrupting and dismantling TCOs by working with international partners to conduct interdiction efforts, target key nodes and infrastructure, as well as enhance law enforcement capabilities, but none of the strategies

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<sup>110</sup> Hesterman, 39–40.

<sup>111</sup> Rabasa et al., *Counternetwork*, vi.

<sup>112</sup> Rabasa et al., xiv.

<sup>113</sup> Rabasa et al., xv.

<sup>114</sup> Rabasa et al., xv.

<sup>115</sup> Rabasa et al., xviii–xix.

focus on the surrounding population as the key factor to defeating TCOs. As seen in counterinsurgency literature, the population is the center of gravity and should be the focus of operations proceeding forward.

From this review, the thesis will focus on three broad aspects of TCOs and government efforts to counter them: how TCOs engage populations, both positively and negatively in their operations; how governments counter TCOs and how these operations have affected the population; and what measures the government has taken to positively engage the population.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

This chapter began by highlighting definitions of TCOs from various sources including the fundamental 2011 Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime document to establish a groundwork for discussion throughout this thesis and a definition with which to proceed forward. It covered key characteristics of TCOs and laid out similarities and differences with TTOs as well as the nexus between the two. This chapter discussed theories for what causes TCOs and how they are organized. It provided a brief overview of COIN literature and theory as well as identified the gap in literature regarding TCOs and their relationship with relevant populations. Lastly, this chapter covered current strategies for combatting TCOs and some of the organizations that are leading this effort.

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### III. CASE STUDY 1: THE MEDELLÍN CARTEL, THE POPULATION, AND GOVERNMENT COUNTERMEASURES

The Medellín Cartel is arguably the most infamous organization in the history of drug trafficking. At its peak in 1990, the cartel had a gross income of over \$5 billion a year.<sup>116</sup> Its financial might allowed the cartel to purchase arsenals of sophisticated weapons including Uzis, rocket launchers, grenades and a failed attempt to purchase 120 anti-aircraft Stinger missiles.<sup>117</sup> During a congressional hearing on September 12, 1989, the Assistant Administrator for Operations of the DEA claimed that the cartel was responsible for over 4,000 murders in Colombia, including politicians, judges, journalists, and law enforcement personnel.<sup>118</sup> The Medellín Cartel was organized, financially savvy, and expertly managed its logistical capabilities, proving to be a formidable adversary for the governments of Colombia and the United States.<sup>119</sup> In addition to these capabilities, the cartel also devoted considerable time to building a relationship with the population in Colombia, including providing social services, constructing neighborhoods for the poor, and giving hope to the neglected people in the barrios of Colombia.

This chapter begins by providing a brief history of the Medellín Cartel, including its key leaders, organization and operations. It then will focus specifically on its relationship with its surrounding population, including how it built and maintained its relationship with the population. It will also describe the government's response to the Medellín Cartel and the ways it engaged the population to undermine the capacity of the cartel.

The chapter finds the population of Colombia was a critical element to the Medellín Cartel's successes and failures. Pablo Escobar, the cartel's leader, was able to establish a relationship with the people of Colombia and maintain elements of that relationship despite

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<sup>116</sup> Rensselaer W. Lee, "Colombia's Cocaine Syndicates," *Crime, Law and Social Change* 16, no. 1 (July 1, 1991): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00389736>.

<sup>117</sup> Lee, 6.

<sup>118</sup> Lee, 8.

<sup>119</sup> Lee, 7.

his campaign of terror throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Colombian government's failure to consider the importance of the population resulted in ineffective strategies to combat the Medellín Cartel.

#### **A. HISTORY OF THE MEDELLÍN CARTEL**

Medellín, Colombia, became the world's largest exporter of cocaine throughout the 1970s and 1980s with the help of leading narco-traffickers, including Carlos Lehder, José Gacha, the Ochoa family and, most importantly, Pablo Escobar.<sup>120</sup> Pablo Escobar was born in the outskirts of Medellín in the small town of Rionegro on December 1, 1949, and entered the criminal world at an early age selling bogus lottery tickets and stolen cigarettes. He went from a petty thief to a billionaire drug lord by the time he was elected to Congress in 1982.<sup>121</sup> Escobar used his fortunes to buy land all over Colombia, including his private estate, Hacienda Nápoles in Magdalena, which included his own private zoo complete with hippos, giraffes, elephants, and an assortment of other exotic animals.<sup>122</sup>

Escobar was critical to the Medellín Cartel because he oversaw all aspects of the Medellín Cartel's cocaine operations, including its production in Colombia, as well as its shipment and distribution to the United States.<sup>123</sup> Perhaps more importantly, as Colombian Journalist Alonzo Salazar noted, Pablo Escobar was idolized among the poor and "became a symbol of rebellion against the establishment."<sup>124</sup> Although Escobar was demonized by the state, the poor viewed him as a powerful man and a "benefactor of society."<sup>125</sup> His essence was engrained into Colombian society and affected people of all ages. A poll in

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<sup>120</sup> Scott B. MacDonald, *Mountain High, White Avalanche: Cocaine and Power in the Andean States and Panama*, The Washington Papers, 137 (New York: Praeger, 1989), 21.

<sup>121</sup> Elaine Shannon, *Desperados: Latin Drug Lords, U.S. Lawmen, and the War America Can't Win* (New York: Viking, 1988), 99.

<sup>122</sup> Shannon, 99–100.

<sup>123</sup> David Westrate, "Structure of International Drug Trafficking Organizations: Hearings Before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Governmental Affairs," § Congress, Senate, Committee on Governmental Affairs (1989), 34.

<sup>124</sup> Alonzo Salazar, "Young Assassins of the Drug Trade," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 27, no. 6 (May 1, 1994): 26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714839.1994.11724617>.

<sup>125</sup> Salazar, 26.

1993 determined that 56.5% of school-age children had a positive view of Pablo Escobar and, when asked who they thought was the most important man in Colombia was, 21% said Pablo Escobar, 19.6% said the president, and 12.6% said the goalkeeper of Colombia's national soccer team.<sup>126</sup> Salazar notes that for many, Escobar was an idol and philanthropist, but for others he was the "principal violent protagonist of a decade filled with drug trafficking, terrorism, murder, and political assassination."<sup>127</sup>

Another critical member of the Medellín Cartel was José Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, commonly known as "The Mexican," who was one of Pablo Escobar's top enforcers.<sup>128</sup> He was a key organizer of the cartel's use of violence and hired Israeli paramilitary experts to train assassins to enforce his drug trafficking operations.<sup>129</sup> One of his primary duties was ensuring that police and military units, often on a large scale, were sufficiently paid to facilitate trafficking operations.<sup>130</sup> He was also largely responsible for acquiring large areas of land in the jungles and overseeing lab operations for cocaine production.<sup>131</sup>

The Ochoa family also played a key role in the cartel and was heavily rooted in the city of Medellín. The Ochoa brothers (Fabio, Juan, and Jorge) were the main players in the family smuggling business, but the oldest brother Jorge was the mastermind that transformed the family from small-time criminals to a refined drug trafficking organization.<sup>132</sup> They were significant because they were among the first to become

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<sup>126</sup> Salazar, 27.

<sup>127</sup> Salazar, 24.

<sup>128</sup> Ron Chepesiuk, *The Bullet or the Bribe: Taking down Colombia's Cali Drug Cartel* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003), 61–62.

<sup>129</sup> Justin Delacour, "Plan Colombia: Rhetoric, Reality, and the Press," *Social Justice; San Francisco* 27, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 61–62.

<sup>130</sup> William M. LeoGrande and Kenneth E. Sharpe, "Two Wars or One? Drugs, Guerrillas, and Colombia's New Violencia," *World Policy Journal; Durham* 17, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 3.

<sup>131</sup> Chepesiuk, *The Bullet or the Bribe: Taking down Colombia's Cali Drug Cartel*, 62.

<sup>132</sup> Chepesiuk, 61.

involved in the cocaine trafficking business in Colombia in the late 1970s.<sup>133</sup> With no real competition, they quickly dominated the cocaine market in South America.<sup>134</sup>

The Ochoas ran a formidable operation and became even more powerful when they aligned with former marijuana smuggler and car thief, Carlos Lehder Rivas.<sup>135</sup> Lehder was a native Columbian, but lived in the United States until he was deported back to Colombia in 1976 after establishing a criminal record.<sup>136</sup> His stint in the United States sparked the idea for what would be his major contribution to the Medellín Cartel, cocaine smuggling from Colombia to the United States via airplanes.<sup>137</sup> He even purchased an island in the Bahamas, Norman's Cay, to facilitate fuel stops for small aircraft transporting cocaine from Colombia to Miami.<sup>138</sup> Prior to Lehder's innovation, human smugglers, commonly known as "mules," would transport small amounts of cocaine on their person or in luggage to a buyer or a wholesaler point of contact in the United States.<sup>139</sup> The Medellín Cartel moved away from the traditional "mule" model of transport and embraced the efficiency of aircraft that could carry upward of 1000 kilograms of cocaine in a single trip.<sup>140</sup> Robert Filippone, an expert on the Medellín Cartel, argues that transitioning from smuggling with human "mules" to small airplanes completely changed the dynamic of the cocaine industry.<sup>141</sup> These individuals began to form what would become the Medellín Cartel.

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<sup>133</sup> MacDonald, *Mountain High, White Avalanche: Cocaine and Power in the Andean States and Panama*, 22.

<sup>134</sup> MacDonald, 22.

<sup>135</sup> MacDonald, 22.

<sup>136</sup> Chepesiuk, *The Bullet or the Bribe: Taking down Colombia's Cali Drug Cartel*, 61.

<sup>137</sup> Robert Filippone, "The Medellín Cartel: Why We Can't Win the Drug War," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 17, no. 4 (January 1994): 324, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576109408435960>.

<sup>138</sup> Chepesiuk, *The Bullet or the Bribe: Taking down Colombia's Cali Drug Cartel*, 61.

<sup>139</sup> Rensselaer Lee and Patrick Clawson, *The Andean Cocaine Industry*, 1st ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 37.

<sup>140</sup> Lee and Clawson, 38.

<sup>141</sup> Filippone, "The Medellín Cartel," 324.

A critical turning point for the formation of the Medellín Cartel was the kidnapping of Fabio Ochoa's daughter, Marta, in 1981, by M-19 guerillas.<sup>142</sup> After his sister's kidnapping, Jorge Ochoa called a meeting with several of the top narcotraffickers in the area, including Pablo Escobar, Manuel Garces, José Gacha, and Gustavo Gaviria and formed the MAS (Muerte a Secuestradores: Death to Kidnappers) to intimidate and coerce Marta's captors.<sup>143</sup> MAS apprehended, tortured, and murdered several of the M-19 guerillas before they eventually released Marta unharmed.<sup>144</sup> This coordinated effort between key leaders prompted the formation of what would be known as the Medellín Cartel.<sup>145</sup>

The coordination between key drug traffickers in Medellín over the kidnapping of Marta Ochoa coincided with revolutionary changes in the Colombia cocaine industry. In the mid-1970s, the cocaine industry was small, simplistic, and unable to distribute mass quantities of cocaine.<sup>146</sup> Most of the operations were conducted using small improvised laboratories out of private homes in the outskirts of populated areas. The growing demand for cocaine within the United States incited major changes in the methods of producing and transporting cocaine within Colombia. Over the next decade, traffickers expanded their use of small aircraft and found success using cargo jets, submarines, and merchant ships to transport their valuable product.<sup>147</sup>

There were several members of the Medellín Cartel, but Pablo Escobar was the mastermind behind the operation. Over the course of a decade, he built an empire that controlled most of the drug trade in Colombia and ruled with an iron fist. Although Escobar

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<sup>142</sup> MacDonald, *Mountain High, White Avalanche: Cocaine and Power in the Andean States and Panama*, 22–23.

<sup>143</sup> MacDonald, 23.

<sup>144</sup> Chepesiuk, *The Bullet or the Bribe: Taking down Colombia's Cali Drug Cartel*, 64.

<sup>145</sup> MacDonald, *Mountain High, White Avalanche: Cocaine and Power in the Andean States and Panama*, 23.

<sup>146</sup> Lee and Clawson, *The Andean Cocaine Industry*, 37.

<sup>147</sup> Lee and Clawson, 38.



was feared by many in the drug trade, he also built a lasting relationship with his surrounding community, which was instrumental to his operations.

## **B. THE MEDELLÍN CARTEL’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POPULATION**

A critical component of Pablo Escobar’s success as a narco-trafficker was his connection to the local population. Escobar invested heavily into improving the living conditions for the people of Medellín. Political scientist, Robert Filippone, described Escobar’s actions as a sort of “narco-philanthropy.”<sup>148</sup> For example, Filippone notes that Escobar spent millions of dollars improving his hometown by building roads, providing electricity and erecting the “Barrio Pablo Escobar” housing development in an impoverished part of the city, which was a result of his “Medellín without Slums” campaign where he used his fortune to build houses and provide shelter for 2,000 families in financial need.<sup>149</sup>

Political scientist Rensselaer Lee also describes Escobar’s narco-philanthropy but highlights his suspected motivations behind the giving. He states that Escobar “made a conscious effort to purchase political support among the urban and rural poor” and “earned the gratitude of local residents and sympathy for the cocaine industry.”<sup>150</sup> Lee highlights that Escobar’s generosity toward the poor cost him only a small fraction of his earnings yet politically, winning the support of the people, provides him with a substantial return on investment.<sup>151</sup> Escobar’s zoo at his Nápoles residence, for example, was free of charge for all Colombians to enjoy. Escobar proudly explained, “The fact is that the Nápoles Zoo belongs not to us but to the Colombian people—and the people cannot pay to visit that which it owns.”<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Filippone, “The Medellín Cartel,” 337.

<sup>149</sup> Filippone, 337.

<sup>150</sup> Rensselaer W. Lee, *The White Labyrinth: Cocaine and Political Power* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 132.

<sup>151</sup> Lee, 133.

<sup>152</sup> Lee, 134.

Pablo Escobar developed the reputation as someone who listened to the needs of the people and used his wealth and social status to meet those needs. Journalist David Thompson asserts that Escobar outperformed the historical corrupt politicians of Colombia and droves of people volunteered to work on his civil action programs.<sup>153</sup> Thompson further notes that Escobar garnered the support of the population simply by showing up in the barrios where no politicians dared to go.<sup>154</sup> He directed members of his cartel to frequently visit the neighborhoods in need and ask what could best improve their quality of life.<sup>155</sup> Filippone notes that Escobar met the needs of the people by ensuring poor neighborhoods were well-lit and churches and schools were in good operating condition. He even built 80 sports arenas to ensure his people could enjoy life and escape the monotony of poverty.<sup>156</sup> Escobar boasted that his actions “filled a vacuum created by the indifference, the apathy, the negligence, and the irresponsibility of the municipal administration.”<sup>157</sup>

Pablo Escobar also built a relationship with the surrounding population by putting significant effort into crafting his long-lasting public image. Journalist Mark Bowden notes that even the former president of Colombia, César Gaviria, admitted that Pablo Escobar had “a kind of native genius for public relations.”<sup>158</sup> He frequently showed up to ribbon-cutting ceremonies and dedications, putting himself at the center of attention and basking in the public eye.<sup>159</sup> Bowden stresses that, far from being a typical criminal or narco-trafficker, he desired admiration, respect, and love.<sup>160</sup> He even walked the slums of Medellín with priests, who presumably approved or tolerated his actions, to check on the

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<sup>153</sup> David P. Thompson, “Pablo Escobar, Drug Baron: His Surrender, Imprisonment, and Escape,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 19, no. 1 (January 1996): 56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576109608435996>.

<sup>154</sup> Thompson, 56.

<sup>155</sup> Filippone, “The Medellín Cartel,” 337.

<sup>156</sup> Filippone, 337.

<sup>157</sup> Lee, *The White Labyrinth: Cocaine and Political Power*, 135.

<sup>158</sup> Mark Bowden, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World’s Greatest Outlaw*, 1st ed. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2001), 15.

<sup>159</sup> Bowden, 29.

<sup>160</sup> Bowden, 15.

condition of his countrymen.<sup>161</sup> Bowden stresses that he saw himself as a friend of the people and would do everything in his power to gain their appreciation and respect.<sup>162</sup>

In return, Escobar believed that his people supported and adored him.<sup>163</sup> When asked about the functionality of such a large fortune after Escobar's first capture, he asserted, "My money obeys a social function."<sup>164</sup> The people of Medellín endearingly referred to him as *El Patrón* [The Boss] and *El Doctor*.<sup>165</sup> Filippone notes that most of the population remembers him fondly as the man who helped them in their time of need, providing food, shelter, and a better quality of life.<sup>166</sup>

Escobar also used the media to sustain and control his popular image. He owned the Colombian newspaper, *Medellín Civico*, and Bowden asserts that he expertly used it to craft his image as a legend of Medellín and a savior of the people.<sup>167</sup> One article in the newspaper quoted an admirer of Escobar stating,

His hands, almost priestlike, drawing parabolas of friendship and generosity in the air. Yes, I know him, his eyes weeping because there is not enough bread for all the nation's dinner tables. I have watched his tortured feelings when he sees street children—angels without toys, without a present, without a future.<sup>168</sup>

Filippone notes that, especially among the poor, he is still thought of as a member of the family and endearingly referred to as simply "Pablo."<sup>169</sup>

In addition to building strong ties with the population in Medellín, Escobar sought national recognition as a politician. Escobar first entered the political arena in 1978 as a

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<sup>161</sup> Bowden, 32.

<sup>162</sup> Bowden, 29.

<sup>163</sup> Bowden, 47.

<sup>164</sup> Bowden, 163.

<sup>165</sup> Bowden, 237.

<sup>166</sup> Bowden, 237.

<sup>167</sup> Filippone, "The Medellín Cartel," 337.

<sup>168</sup> Bowden, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw*, 32.

<sup>169</sup> Filippone, "The Medellín Cartel," 337.

city council member. In 1982, he ran for congress and won a seat.<sup>170</sup> Mark Bowden argues that his new position served two functions. First, he was officially an elected man of the people and, by Colombian law, could not be prosecuted for his crimes.<sup>171</sup> Second, his entrance into political office boosted his public image and was commonly referred to by the press as “Colombia’s Robin Hood”.<sup>172</sup> Escobar’s foray into politics, however, also presented challenges to his illegal drug trafficking business. In April 1984, Colombian Minister of Justice Rodrigo Lara called out Escobar as a drug trafficker in front of Congress, acknowledging the problem of having a member of congress engaged in these illicit activities.<sup>173</sup>

Another tactic that Pablo Escobar used to build his relationship with the people of Colombia was to harness the existing anti-American sentiments within Colombia. Bowden argues that Escobar’s tactics were revolutionary in that they were “sucking out Yankee dollars and corrupting the brains and bloodstreams of decadent *norteamericano* youth.”<sup>174</sup> Bowden claims that Escobar likened his actions to those of the infamous Mexican revolutionary Francisco “Pancho” Villa by challenging the authorities of the United States as well as the government of Colombia.<sup>175</sup>

Despite Pablo Escobar’s many acts of benevolence and constant pursuit of public admiration, he was still a hardened narco-trafficker that eventually turned into a narco-terrorist. His brutal war with the Colombian government resulted in thousands of deaths. Fulbright Scholar Ron Chepesiuk notes that, following a 1984 raid on one of Escobar’s largest cocaine laboratories, the Minister of Justice Rodrigo Lara Bonilla was murdered by one of Escobar’s hitmen.<sup>176</sup> Prior to his death, he took a strong stance against drug

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<sup>170</sup> Bowden, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World’s Greatest Outlaw*, 30–31.

<sup>171</sup> Bowden, 31.

<sup>172</sup> Bowden, 33.

<sup>173</sup> Luz Estella Nagle, “Colombia’s Faceless Justice: A Necessary Evil, Blind Impartiality or Modern Inquisition?,” *University of Pittsburgh Law Review* 61, no. 4 (2000): 896.

<sup>174</sup> Bowden, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World’s Greatest Outlaw*, 28.

<sup>175</sup> Bowden, 28.

<sup>176</sup> Chepesiuk, *The Bullet or the Bribe: Taking down Colombia’s Cali Drug Cartel*, 124.

traffickers and his murder was a significant loss to the Colombian government.<sup>177</sup> Political scientist Rensselaer Lee argues that Lara's death, among many other significant Colombian figures, "has been the destruction of the confidence of Colombians in their political institutions."<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, in a 1987 survey of the Colombian people, almost half of those polled believed that the cartels had become too powerful to defeat.<sup>179</sup> Even Colombian President Belisario Betancur himself stated in a 1988 interview that "we are up against an organization stronger than the state."<sup>180</sup>

In 1984, President Betancur went on the offensive against the Medellín Cartel, declared war on the narcotraffickers of Colombia and reversed his stance against extraditing traffickers to the United States.<sup>181</sup> The president stated, "we are unleashing a war without quarter against the crooks who sow terror in cities, towns, and the countryside."<sup>182</sup> In response to growing government pressure and fear of extradition, professor of National Security Studies, Paul Rexton Kan, claims that Escobar funded M-19, a Marxist guerilla movement, to attack the Colombian Palace of Justice in Bogota on November 6, 1985.<sup>183</sup> The guerrillas held the Colombian Supreme Court members and its staff hostage for over 24 hours and the ordeal left fifty federal employees dead, including eleven Supreme Court justices.<sup>184</sup> During the attack, the extradition and criminal casefiles against Pablo Escobar were destroyed.<sup>185</sup> This event led to a dramatic change in the relationship between Escobar and the population. Eduardo Pizarro, political analyst and brother of M-19 leader Carlos Pizarro, stated that "M-19 lost its Robin Hood image. Today,

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<sup>177</sup> MacDonald, *Mountain High, White Avalanche: Cocaine and Power in the Andean States and Panama*, 35–36.

<sup>178</sup> Lee, *The White Labyrinth: Cocaine and Political Power*, 125.

<sup>179</sup> Lee, 125.

<sup>180</sup> Lee, 125.

<sup>181</sup> Chepesiuk, *The Bullet or the Bribe: Taking down Colombia's Cali Drug Cartel*, 124.

<sup>182</sup> MacDonald, *Mountain High, White Avalanche: Cocaine and Power in the Andean States and Panama*, 36.

<sup>183</sup> Paul Rexton Kan, "What We're Getting Wrong about Mexico," *Parameters; Carlisle Barracks* 41, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 39.

<sup>184</sup> Bowden, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw*, 53.

<sup>185</sup> Bowden, 53.

few people believe in the group's good faith, and its members are referred to as terrorists."<sup>186</sup> As the financier to the guerrillas responsible for the massacre, Pablo Escobar's image was further tarnished and labeled as a terrorist as well.

Another event that soured the relationship between the Medellín Cartel and the people was the assassination of frontrunner presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán, which political scientist Bruce Bagley notes was a major blow to the morale of the Colombian people. In April of 1989, four months prior to his murder on August 18, 63% of Colombians opposed extraditing drug traffickers in a poll in Bogota's *El Tiempo* newspaper. In late August, 77% of Colombians favored extradition.<sup>187</sup> Colombian President Virgilio Barco Vargas increased pressure on the drug traffickers and extradited four members of the Medellín Cartel to the United States.<sup>188</sup> Although the extraditions were a victory for Colombia, Bagley points out that the Medellín Cartel's terror tactics were "designed to demoralize the government and the Colombian people, and to convince them that the war cannot be won at an acceptable cost to the country's democratic institutions."<sup>189</sup> Bagley also asserts that, despite their terror tactics, the cartel wanted to reach an agreement with the government and "consolidate their economic position and win social acceptance while insulating themselves from legal prosecution."<sup>190</sup>

In perhaps his most controversial act of violence, Pablo Escobar ordered the bombing of the commercial airliner Avianca flight 203 in November of 1989. In an attempt to assassinate five alleged Colombian Police informants, the bombing killed all 107 people on board.<sup>191</sup> An excerpt from the *Wall Street Journal* notes that "Polls show Colombians strongly favor an end to the war, and the drug lords have made several gestures recently in

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<sup>186</sup> Rex A. Hudson, "Colombia's Palace of Justice Tragedy Revisited: A Critique of the Conspiracy Theory," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7, no. 2 (June 1, 1995): 138, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559508427301>.

<sup>187</sup> Bruce Michael Bagley, "Dateline Drug Wars: Colombia: The Wrong Strategy," *Foreign Policy*, no. 77 (1989): 156, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148774>.

<sup>188</sup> Bagley, 157.

<sup>189</sup> Bagley, 158.

<sup>190</sup> Bagley, 158.

<sup>191</sup> Stan Yarbrow, "Colombian Jet Crashes, Killing 107," *The Washington Post*, November 28, 1989, A1.

an apparent bid to develop public support for a deal.”<sup>192</sup> In a 1989 article in the *New York Times*, President César Gaviria stated that, “Colombia is paying a high cost” and without increased foreign aid to curb drug trafficking efforts and drug consumption “it will be increasingly difficult for the Colombian people to understand that their sacrifice is not being matched and could be in vain.”<sup>193</sup> Additionally, the president of the Colombian National Association of Tourism, Oscar Rueda Garcia, asserted that tourism in Colombia was suffering because of Escobar’s bombing campaign.<sup>194</sup> He claimed that the bombings deterred foreign investors and the country lost \$80 million in tourism dollars in the wake of the violence.<sup>195</sup>

The hijacking was followed by several terrorist attacks in Bogota. On Easter Sunday, a truck filled with 500 pounds of explosives detonated near a bridge in Medellín packed full of holiday travelers, killing 16 people and injuring 109.<sup>196</sup> Authorities stated that the alleged target was a truck filled with police from an anti-terrorism unit. A high-ranking government official responded to the attack by stating, “The cartel wants to convince the public that the war against them is too costly, and then press for some sort of accommodation. But it will not work with this government.”<sup>197</sup>

In May of 1984, *Wall Street Journal* journalist Gary Kohn captured that the Colombian people were growing tired of the drugs and the violence. One Medellín shopkeeper stated in anger toward the cartels, “I think they should fumigate those people.”<sup>198</sup> When asked about his position the drugs and violence in Colombia, one

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<sup>192</sup> Thomas Kamm, “Fortress Colombia Awaits Bush’s Drug Proposals,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 15, 1990, A11.

<sup>193</sup> James Brooke, “High Cost of Fighting Drugs Strains U.S.-Colombian Ties,” *New York Times*, 1990, D6.

<sup>194</sup> Brooke, D6.

<sup>195</sup> Brooke, D6.

<sup>196</sup> Douglas Farah, “Truck Bomb Is Fatal to 16 in Colombia,” *The Washington Post*, April 12, 1990, A1, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/307279978/abstract/E3D1FCD4BD684AB7PQ/1>.

<sup>197</sup> Farah, 1.

<sup>198</sup> Gary Cohn, “The Colombian Connection: Pervasive Crime,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 24, 1984, 2.

Medellín painter and father of six asserted, “the youth have been very corrupted” and the new pressure on the cartels was “very good for the future of my family.”<sup>199</sup>

Ultimately, the DEA and the Colombian government hunted down Escobar and shot him dead on a rooftop in Medellín on December 2, 1993.

## **C. THE GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE TO THE MEDELLÍN CARTEL**

The Colombian government has gone through several iterations of strategies and tactics to counter its drug traffickers since their rise to power in the late 1970s. Some of these counternarcotic approaches include eradication, military and police actions, partnering with the United States to counter drug trafficking, and negotiating with the cartels. Each of these approaches is explored briefly below.

### **1. Eradication**

Rensselaer Lee argues that “the last hope of winning the war against cocaine in South America is the large-scale application of herbicides against coca plants.”<sup>200</sup> This became one of the first strategies of the Colombian government. INDERENA, the Colombian National Institute of Renewable Natural Resources and Environment, reported in 1985 that herbicide spraying caused \$10 million in damages to the country, and was poisoning fish, destroying crops, and killing livestock.<sup>201</sup> A Colombian Justice Ministry official argued in April of 1986 that spraying coca plants with herbicides would create social and economic problems and likely result in the expansion of violent guerilla activities.<sup>202</sup> Eradicating coca plants within Colombia and surrounding Andean nations seemed like an obvious method to counter the drug trafficking industry, but doing so negatively affected thousands of farmers, arguably doing more to anger the population than eradicate the cartels.

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<sup>199</sup> Cohn, 2.

<sup>200</sup> Lee, *The White Labyrinth: Cocaine and Political Power*, 204.

<sup>201</sup> Lee, 209.

<sup>202</sup> Lee, 204.



## 2. Military and Police Confrontation

RAND analyst Kevin Riley argues that the national police and the military shared the responsibility of counter-narcotics operations within Colombia, but the national police, which was half the size of the Army, was responsible for about 75% of the raids and seizures within the country.<sup>203</sup> Although the Army has helped in counter-narcotics missions since 1978, their primary duty was to combat guerillas, such as the FARC, in rural areas to which they had retreated.<sup>204</sup> Furthermore, in addition to being tasked to other missions, Riley notes that the Colombian military was ill-equipped to combat the narco-traffickers.<sup>205</sup> Lee concurs with Riley and notes that the Colombian military and the cartels shared a common belief in nationalism and an animosity toward the subverting guerillas.<sup>206</sup> Consequently, there was an inherent reluctance for the military to hunt narco-traffickers. The Seventh Brigade Chief of Staff once stated, “it is not the mission of the army to control the cocaine problem, but rather to combat guerillas.”<sup>207</sup> Although this was not the official stance of the Colombian Army, many of its members shared this sentiment and paid the price. In 1983, Attorney General Carlos Jiménez Gómez indicted 59 soldiers and officers for membership of the Medellín Cartel’s MAS (Death to Kidnappers).<sup>208</sup>

Another example of the Colombian Army’s inability to effectively combat the cartels occurred on July 21, 1992 when Fourth Brigade failed to successfully transport Pablo Escobar from “La Catedral [The Cathedral],” a lavish and self-designed prison, to a high security prison.<sup>209</sup> Within a day of Pablo Escobar’s escape from “La Catedral,” graffiti in his honor appeared all over the streets of Medellín. Journalist David Thompson

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<sup>203</sup> Kevin Jack Riley, *Snow Job?: The War against International Cocaine Trafficking* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 216.

<sup>204</sup> Riley, 216.

<sup>205</sup> Riley, 217.

<sup>206</sup> Lee, *The White Labyrinth: Cocaine and Political Power*, 215.

<sup>207</sup> Lee, 217.

<sup>208</sup> Lee, 216.

<sup>209</sup> Lee and Clawson, *The Andean Cocaine Industry*, 113–14.

notes that statements like, “Pablo es Pablo [Pablo is just Pablo],” and “El derecho eres tú Pablito [You were in the right, Pablo],” and “El gobierno quebro su palabra [The government representatives broke their word],” “Gobierno asesinos [Government assassins],” and “Pablo es parcerero [Pablo is one of us],” were available for the whole town to see.<sup>210</sup> Thompson also notes that the mayor of Envigado was angered that he was not notified of the raid in his own town. The mayor asserted, “It was the government who violated the accords,” and relayed his disapproval with how the government handled the situation.<sup>211</sup> Thus, the Colombian government’s actions negatively affected the relationship with the people and boosted Escobar’s image.

Despite the failures of the Colombian police and military, they did have some marginal success in countering the cartels. Following presidential candidate Galán’s murder, Bagley notes that Colombian Army and Police forces confiscated 367 airplanes, 710 vehicles, 989 buildings, 1,279 firearms, and 4.7 tons of drugs during the first month of President Barco’s campaign in 1989.<sup>212</sup> However, Bagley notes that despite Colombia’s efforts, the traffickers adapted and successfully transitioned to smaller scale operations and used intimidation, bribery, and murder to avoid prosecution.<sup>213</sup>

### **3. Partnering with the United States**

The United States played a significant role in defeating Pablo Escobar and dismantling the Medellín Cartel. Former DEA Chief of International Relations, Robert Nieves, argues that Operation Snowcap was the largest and most controversial U.S. effort to combat the cocaine epidemic following the formation of Colombian drug cartels.<sup>214</sup> Beginning in 1987, Operation Snowcap targeted means of cocaine production like laboratories and raw chemical materials as well as means of transport like aircraft and

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<sup>210</sup> Thompson, “Pablo Escobar, Drug Baron,” 85.

<sup>211</sup> Thompson, 85.

<sup>212</sup> Bagley, “Dateline Drug Wars,” 157.

<sup>213</sup> Bruce Bagley, “Colombia and the War on Drugs,” *Foreign Affairs* 67, no. 1 (1988): 83, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20043675>.

<sup>214</sup> Robert J. Nieves, “Colombian Cocaine Cartels: Lessons from the Front,” *Trends in Organized Crime* 3, no. 3 (March 1, 1998): 18, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-998-1081-z>.

staging fields within source countries that grew coca in Central and South America.<sup>215</sup> The DEA combined efforts with the Bureau of International Narcotics Matters (INM) within the State Department and conducted Operation Snowcap in 12 countries, including Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru to disrupt the processing of coca, the primary ingredient in cocaine.<sup>216</sup> In addition to coca disruption, the DEA and the INM conducted vehicle interdictions, chemical control and maritime operations all over Central and South America with the aim of interdicting narcotics trafficking.<sup>217</sup>

After the assassination of presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán in August of 1989, and Colombian President Virgilio Barco's declaration of war against drug traffickers, U.S. President George H.W. Bush sent a \$90 million support package that ultimately funded the counter-Medellín Cartel effort, Operation Bolivar, later that year.<sup>218</sup> Operation Bolivar targeted the structure of the Medellín Cartel with coordination with Colombian law enforcement in an effort to defeat it.<sup>219</sup> It was a massive operation that involved 15 countries, 51 DEA offices, and 80 informants.<sup>220</sup>

Although Operation Bolivar was marginally successful, Bagley argues that the aid from the United States was largely symbolic and focused on the wrong part of the Colombian government.<sup>221</sup> Rather than helping the national police, the entity responsible for most counternarcotic operations, the aid focused on the Colombian Armed forces and funded new fighter planes and other equipment that was not relevant to countering the

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<sup>215</sup> Nieves, 18.

<sup>216</sup> Drug Enforcement Administration, "The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) 1985–1990," n.d., 63, <https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2018-07/1985-1990%20p%2058-67.pdf>.

<sup>217</sup> Drug Enforcement Administration, 63.

<sup>218</sup> Michael Kenney, "The Evolution of the International Drugs Trade," in *Routledge Handbook of Transnational Organized Crime* (Routledge, 2011), 209–10, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203698341.ch13>.

<sup>219</sup> Westrate, Structure of International Drug Trafficking Organizations: Hearings Before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Governmental Affairs, 31.

<sup>220</sup> Westrate, 31–32.

<sup>221</sup> Bagley, "Dateline Drug Wars," 164.

narco threat.<sup>222</sup> Bagley argues that intelligence gathering equipment, helicopters, and listening devices would have been a greater help to police efforts.<sup>223</sup>

William Bennett, the director of the American National Drug Control Policy, asserts that the United States should have sent American troops to Colombia and any other Andean country that asked for their assistance in combatting narco-activities.<sup>224</sup> More importantly, Bagley argues that significant involvement of the U.S. military in Colombia would have seriously undermined the Colombian president and would have most likely resulted in the loss of popular support for his initiatives.<sup>225</sup>

Robert Nieves of the DEA argues that the last element of the DEA's strategy against the drug cartels was to target their money.<sup>226</sup> After realizing that the "cartel's ability to produce cocaine far exceeded our capability to seize it," the DEA constructed a different approach by targeting the drug kingpins rather than the drugs themselves.<sup>227</sup> Kingpin operations began in 1991 and, although successful, terminated in 1994 after a reorganization of the DEA.<sup>228</sup> Despite the success of targeting kingpins, Nieves argues that "the price, purity, and availability of cocaine on the streets of the United States did not change dramatically."<sup>229</sup>

In July 1992, following the escape of Escobar, U.S. Southern Command began launching small planes equipped with scanning devices onboard that could simultaneously monitor thousands of telephone and hand-held radio conversations throughout Medellín.<sup>230</sup> The computer responsible for the scanning conversations was known as Centra Spike. It was programmed to sift through the airwaves and search for Escobar's

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<sup>222</sup> Bagley, 164.

<sup>223</sup> Bagley, 164.

<sup>224</sup> Bagley, 165.

<sup>225</sup> Bagley, 165.

<sup>226</sup> Nieves, "Colombian Cocaine Cartels: Lessons from the Front," 20.

<sup>227</sup> Nieves, 20.

<sup>228</sup> Nieves, 22.

<sup>229</sup> Nieves, 23.

<sup>230</sup> Thompson, "Pablo Escobar, Drug Baron," 89.

voice to pinpoint his whereabouts and was capable of identifying the location of a cellphone signal within radius of a few hundred meters.<sup>231</sup> This technology pinpointed Escobar's location during a phone call on December 2, 1993, and eventually led to his death.

#### 4. Negotiations

Finally, beginning in 1984, Colombia entered into negotiations with drug kingpins in an effort to curb violence within society.<sup>232</sup> In return for leniency during sentencing, the government encouraged drug traffickers to turn themselves in and collaborate with law enforcement. This approach aimed to benefit the government by reducing the effectiveness of the drug trade. It also aimed to benefit the trafficker through reduced sentences, amnesty, and possibly a second chance at a positive and productive life.<sup>233</sup>

On several occasions, the Medellín Cartel offered to give up drug trafficking and surrender key assets, including airstrips, planes, and laboratories in exchange for concessions with the Colombian government. Political scientists Rensselaer Lee and Patrick Clawson argue that these offers were an attempt to alter the terms or expunge the extradition treaty between the United States and Colombia.<sup>234</sup> The first offer happened in May 1984 when Pablo Escobar and Jorge Ochoa were on the run in Panama following the assassination of Colombia's Minister of Justice Rodrigo Lara Bonilla. Through communication with Colombia's Attorney General Carlos Jiménez Gómez, they offered to end their entire drug operation and pay off Colombia's \$10 billion debt in exchange for not being extradited to the United States.<sup>235</sup> The idea of openly negotiating with narco-traffickers incited opposition from the political establishment and, ultimately, the government did not agree to the terms.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Bowden, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw*, 73.

<sup>232</sup> Lee and Clawson, *The Andean Cocaine Industry*, 90.

<sup>233</sup> Lee and Clawson, 90.

<sup>234</sup> Lee and Clawson, 102.

<sup>235</sup> Lee and Clawson, 103.

<sup>236</sup> Lee and Clawson, 104.

In 1988, President Virgilio Barco gave a speech that suggested room for negotiations between the narcotraffickers and the government. The Medellín Cartel sent a second proposal, and the Colombian government entered secret dialogues with the Medellín Cartel through the president's chief of staff, Germán Montoya.<sup>237</sup> However, after the government declined their preceding offer, the Medellín Cartel did not offer the repatriation of drug money to the government and they demanded that the government cease extradition to the United States in exchange for dismantling their drug operations. Lee and Clawson argue that the dialogues did not gain any traction because Montoya felt that the United States must be involved in negotiations and that they strongly opposed this approach.<sup>238</sup> Following the breakdown of these negotiations, Escobar ordered the kidnapping of Alvaro Diego, Germán Montoya's son, the murder of his sister Marina, and the assassination of presidential candidate and front-runner Luis Carlos Galán. Following these actions, the government and the Medellín Cartel declared war against each other in 1989, as previously described.<sup>239</sup>

In the midst of the violent conflict between the Medellín Cartel and the government, the cartel reached out to a group of ex-political figures, "Los Notables," including the former Colombian President Alfonso López Michelsen.<sup>240</sup> Los Notables acted as an intermediary between the Medellín Cartel and the Colombian government to negotiate the terms of surrender for the cartel as well as the release of twenty hostages from high-profile Colombian families that the Medellín Cartel had kidnapped.<sup>241</sup> Ultimately, the negotiations led to the successful release of several hostages along with bomb-making equipment and three cocaine laboratories.<sup>242</sup> However, U.S. President George H. W. Bush maintained a strong stance against negotiating with the narcotraffickers and continued to play a role in the war against Pablo Escobar and the Colombian cartels.

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<sup>237</sup> Lee and Clawson, 104.

<sup>238</sup> Lee and Clawson, 104–5.

<sup>239</sup> Lee and Clawson, 106.

<sup>240</sup> Lee and Clawson, 106.

<sup>241</sup> Lee and Clawson, 106.

<sup>242</sup> Lee and Clawson, 107.

From 1990 to 1994, the César Gaviria administration took a different approach to countering the Medellín Cartel. In September 1990, they guaranteed that leaders would not be extradited to the United States and promised to reduce sentences by one-third if they surrendered to the government, identified all of their criminal assets, and confessed to the entirety of their crimes. Additionally, upon surrendering, if they identified other people and their assets involved in the confessed crimes, they would be granted an additional one-sixth off of their sentencing.<sup>243</sup> The cartel countered by offering to surrender 300 traffickers on the condition that there was no requirement to confess to their crimes, extradition was not an option, and they would serve in a special prison that would be off limits to police, government, and military.<sup>244</sup>

Under these conditions, Fabio Ochoa surrendered himself to a judge in Medellín on December 18, 1990, followed by Jorge Luis Ochoa, Juan David Ochoa, and finally, Pablo Escobar on June 19, 1991.<sup>245</sup> The leaders served in a self-designed prison, “La Catedral,” where Escobar and his business associates came and went as they pleased and even attended special events in the nearby city of Envigado.<sup>246</sup> When the lavish and relaxed conditions in the prison became well-known, the Colombian government ordered the Army to raid “La Catedral” and they attempted to forcibly remove Escobar and relocate him to a maximum-security facility.<sup>247</sup> During the poorly executed raid, Escobar and nine of his fellow prisoners escaped, leaving the Colombian government in utter embarrassment in their failure to maintain control of the leader of the Medellín Cartel.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Lee and Clawson, 110.

<sup>244</sup> Lee and Clawson, 110.

<sup>245</sup> Lee and Clawson, 112.

<sup>246</sup> Lee and Clawson, 113.

<sup>247</sup> Lee and Clawson, 113.

<sup>248</sup> Lee and Clawson, 113–14.

#### **D. ANALYSIS: THE CARTEL, THE GOVERNMENT, AND THE POPULATION**

The rise and fall of the Medellín Cartel can be explained in part by how the cartel, especially Escobar, built a relationship with the population. Escobar won the population over by caring for the people of Medellín and filling the void where the Colombian government failed to perform. He built schools, improved infrastructure, and enacted civil action programs that had a lasting impact on the surrounding community. These actions allowed Escobar to enjoy celebrity status within Colombia and to operate freely, including running for and holding a seat in Colombia's congress.

The government, by contrast, did surprising little to build relationships with the population in its war against the Medellín Cartel. The Colombian government focused almost exclusively on defeating the narcothreat and, in doing so, lost sight of the population. The government shifted resources away from the population to counter the cartels, which had a negative effect on the relationship between the people and the government. More specifically, the government directly and negatively affected portions of the population by conducting invasive raids in urban areas and eradicating coca fields using harsh chemicals that affected the well-being of Colombian farmers. Bruce Bagley asserts that the "key to an effective international drug control policy is to support and strengthen Colombia's institutional capability to maintain public order and meet the needs of its citizens."<sup>249</sup> Furthermore, Bagley asserts that Colombia needs to enhance its ability to perform government services in the rural parts of Colombia where the narcos and guerilla forces maintain influence and control.<sup>250</sup> Hence, the key to success revolves around the support of the population.

Ultimately, the fall of the Medellín Cartel can be attributed more to Escobar losing the support of the population, rather than the government gaining their support. The assassinations of prominent government figures and police officers, the bombing of innocent civilians, and the erratic behavior of the once beloved savior of Medellín

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<sup>249</sup> Bagley, "Dateline Drug Wars," 166.

<sup>250</sup> Bagley, 167.



eventually led to his demise. Escobar's disregard for human life and terror tactics gradually eroded the support he once had with the Colombian people.

Despite its success in countering the Medellín Cartel, Colombia did not eradicate its narco-trafficking problem. The Medellín cartel was quickly overshadowed by the neighboring Cali Cartel.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Pablo Escobar and the Medellín Cartel revolutionized the drug trade in Colombia, built an empire that the criminal world had never seen before, and expanded their reach around the globe. Pablo Escobar's relationship with the population was unique in that he loved his country and its people, but his willingness to sacrifice everything to fight the Colombian and U.S. governments strained his relationship with the population, ultimately contributing to his downfall.

The next chapter will consider the rise of drug cartels in Mexico, their relationship with the population, and the ways that the government of Mexico and the United States have aimed to counter this transnational threat.

## IV. CASE STUDY 2: THE SINALOA CARTEL, THE POPULATION, AND GOVERNMENT COUNTERMEASURES

The Sinaloa Cartel is the largest and one of the oldest drug cartels in Mexico.<sup>251</sup> Not only does the Sinaloa Cartel control over 23,000 square miles of territory throughout Mexico, its reach extends through all of Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, in addition to operating in nearly 80 cities in the United States.<sup>252</sup> Within Mexico, the Sinaloa Cartel primarily operates along the Pacific coast of Mexico and the southern border of the United States.<sup>253</sup> Along with other Mexican drug cartels, the Sinaloa Cartel is believed to be responsible for thirty to fifty percent of over 150,000 total homicides from 2012–2018, according to Mexico’s National Public Security System (SNSP).<sup>254</sup> These homicides often have distinct characteristics such as beheadings, torture, dismemberment, and mass executions.<sup>255</sup> In addition to the violence and murder it has caused, the Sinaloa Cartel is believed to have used its fortune to facilitate the corruption of law enforcement, court officials, politicians, and even parts of the Mexican military.<sup>256</sup>

This chapter begins by providing a brief history of the Sinaloa Cartel, including its key leaders and operations. Second, it describes the cartel’s relationship with the surrounding population and looks at the various positive and negative aspects of this relationship. Third, it considers the Mexican government’s response to the Sinaloa Cartel. Specifically, it looks at the government’s eradication campaign; its police, judicial, and military operations; the government’s treatment of the press; its partnership with the United

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<sup>251</sup> Malcolm Beith, *The Last Narco: Inside the Hunt for El Chapo, The World’s Most Wanted Drug Lord* (New York, N.Y.: Grove Press, 2010), xviii.

<sup>252</sup> Beith, xviii.

<sup>253</sup> Tomas Kellner and Francesco Pipitone, “Inside Mexico’s Drug War,” *World Policy Journal* 27, no. 1 (2010): 31, <https://doi.org/10.1162/wopj.2010.27.1.29>.

<sup>254</sup> Laura Y. Calderón et al., “Organized Crime and Violence in Mexico: Analysis through 2018,” *Organized Crime and Violence in Mexico* (University of San Diego, April 2019), 7–8, <https://justiceinmexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Organized-Crime-and-Violence-in-Mexico-2019.pdf>.

<sup>255</sup> Calderón et al., 14.

<sup>256</sup> George W. Grayson, *The Cartels: The Story of Mexico’s Most Dangerous Criminal Organizations and Their Impact on U.S. Security*, Praeger Security International (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014), 72.

States; and other government programs. The chapter ends with an analysis of these factors, paying particular attention to how the cartel and the government have engaged the population.

This chapter finds that the Sinaloa Cartel has been able to establish a relationship with the surrounding population by providing goods and services as well as maintaining connections with the communities from which its members came. Historically, the Mexican government has only marginally considered the effects of the surrounding population while attempting to combat the cartel. More recently, it has instituted programs aimed at providing an alternative for Mexico's youth to a life of crime. However, most of these programs are new and it is too soon to tell if they will improve the government's relationship with the population.

#### **A. HISTORY OF THE SINALOA CARTEL**

Political scientist Fernando Celaya Pacheco argues that the drug trade in Mexico dates back to the 1940s, when poppy was cultivated in the mountains of Sinaloa to meet pharmaceutical needs during World War II.<sup>257</sup> The drug trade was largely disorganized from that time until 1982, when Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo “El Padrino [The Godfather]” founded the Guadalajara Cartel and began to mass produce drugs and sell them illicitly.<sup>258</sup> Joaquín “El Chapo [Shorty]” Guzmán Loera got his start by working under Gallardo as head of logistics, receiving cocaine from Colombia via boats, trucks, and planes.<sup>259</sup> When the Guadalajara Cartel murdered DEA agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena in 1985, it splintered to avoid capture by the authorities.<sup>260</sup> However, Félix Gallardo was eventually captured in Culiacán, Sinaloa, in April 1989, and was charged with Agent Camarena's

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<sup>257</sup> Fernando Celaya Pacheco, “Narcofearance: How Has Narcoterrorism Settled in Mexico?,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 12 (2009): 1026, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903319797>.

<sup>258</sup> Pacheco, 1026–27.

<sup>259</sup> Beith, *The Last Narco: Inside the Hunt for El Chapo, The World's Most Wanted Drug Lord*, 39.

<sup>260</sup> “Sinaloa Cartel,” InSight Crime, March 29, 2019, <https://www.insightcrime.org/mexico-organized-crime-news/sinaloa-cartel-profile/>.

murder. He is still incarcerated and serving a 40-year sentence in Guadalajara, Mexico.<sup>261</sup> After El Padrino's capture, several cartels began to form and took advantage of a rural and somewhat lawless region known as the *Golden Quadrangle*, which encompassed the Mexican states of Sinaloa, Sonora, Chihuahua, and Durango. This area was ideal for illicit activities due to its remoteness and proximity to the U.S. border.<sup>262</sup> El Chapo remained in the Sinaloa area and formed what is now known as the Sinaloa Cartel.<sup>263</sup>

Journalist Malcom Beith argues that, although the Sinaloa Cartel is a complex organization consisting of thousands of members, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán is the mastermind that controls the empire.<sup>264</sup> Joaquín Guzmán was born in the mountains of La Tuna, Badiraguato, and was the son of an opium farmer.<sup>265</sup> As the leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, he amassed a huge fortune and made *Forbes* magazine's "Billionaires" list in 2012 and "Most Powerful People" list in 2013.<sup>266</sup> His ventures were so successful, the Chicago Crime Commission deemed El Chapo "Public Enemy Number One" in 2013, a title that had not been used since Al Capone in 1930.<sup>267</sup> Mexican authorities first captured El Chapo in 1993 and again in 2014; he escaped both times. He was captured a third time 2016 and extradited to the United States in 2017. He is currently serving a life sentence for his crimes. Despite this, the Sinaloa Cartel continues to operate.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Christopher Woody, "The 'Godfather' of Mexico's Cartels Has Been Sentenced for Killing of a DEA Agent," *Business Insider*, accessed October 31, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/miguel-angel-felix-gallardo-godfather-of-mexicos-cartel-sentenced-2017-8>.

<sup>262</sup> Pacheco, "Narcoterrorism: How Has Narcoterrorism Settled in Mexico?," 1026.

<sup>263</sup> "Sinaloa Cartel."

<sup>264</sup> Beith, *The Last Narco: Inside the Hunt for El Chapo, The World's Most Wanted Drug Lord*, xviii.

<sup>265</sup> Grayson, *The Cartels: The Story of Mexico's Most Dangerous Criminal Organizations and Their Impact on U.S. Security*, 67.

<sup>266</sup> "Joaquín Guzmán Loera," *Forbes*, accessed October 25, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/profile/joaquin-guzman-loera/>.

<sup>267</sup> Chicago Crime Commission, "Public Enemy No. 1 - Chicago Crime Commission," February 2013, [http://commission.clubexpress.com/content.aspx?page\\_id=22&club\\_id=783436&module\\_id=142291](http://commission.clubexpress.com/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=783436&module_id=142291).

<sup>268</sup> Edward Helmore, "El Chapo: Mexican Drug Lord Sentenced to Life in Prison," *The Guardian*, July 17, 2019, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/17/el-chapo-sentence-life-prison-mexican-drug-lord-trial>.

As of 2019, Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada, an original founder of the cartel, and two of El Chapo’s sons control the Sinaloa Cartel while El Chapo is in prison.<sup>269</sup> Ismael Zambada was born in El Alamo, Badiraguato, and is a close ally of El Chapo. He assisted in leading the Sinaloa Cartel from its early stages.<sup>270</sup> Journalist Malcolm Beith argues that El Mayo is mature, opportunistic and strategic in his actions and, as a Mexican official put it, “learned early on how to hitch his wagon to other bigger organizations, and this has given him entry.”<sup>271</sup> When given the chance to run the Sinaloa Cartel with El Chapo, he made his contributions by figuring out how to efficiently launder money, and by controlling the street value of drugs in the United States through limiting the supply that crossed the border.<sup>272</sup>

Although the Sinaloa Cartel is responsible for considerable violence, illicit activities and corruption in Mexico and the United States, it still has managed, at times, to maintain a positive relationship with the surrounding population.

## **B. THE SINALOA CARTEL’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POPULATION**

Latin America analyst George Grayson argues that El Chapo, by and large, cultivated a positive relationship with the population and that the poor especially viewed him as a “benevolent Godfather.”<sup>273</sup> He was well known for repairing roads and churches as well as providing jobs for thousands of people.<sup>274</sup> Journalist Malcom Beith also notes that

[d]rugs are the only way to get ahead in Sinaloa. And with a government that largely doesn’t care and a formal economy that takes pity on no one,

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<sup>269</sup> Kate Linticum and Cecilia Sanchez, “Eight Killed in Mexico as Cartel Gunmen Force Authorities to Release El Chapo’s Son,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 18, 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-10-17/chaos-in-mexico-as-el-chapos-son-a-leader-of-the-sinaloa-cartel-is-reportedly-captured>.

<sup>270</sup> Grayson, *The Cartels: The Story of Mexico’s Most Dangerous Criminal Organizations and Their Impact on U.S. Security*, 68.

<sup>271</sup> Beith, *The Last Narco: Inside the Hunt for El Chapo, The World’s Most Wanted Drug Lord*, 105.

<sup>272</sup> Beith, 105–6.

<sup>273</sup> Grayson, *The Cartels: The Story of Mexico’s Most Dangerous Criminal Organizations and Their Impact on U.S. Security*, 69.

<sup>274</sup> Grayson, 69.

the narco-elders [leaders within a drug cartel] remain the most respectable patrons of society. While politicians have stolen from the state coffers and failed to follow up on promises to provide education and medical care, Sinaloa's narcos have paid for schools and hospitals, and poured money into churches and homes. Locals are still indebted to them.<sup>275</sup>

Cartels often fill a void and provide the population what the government does not.

Journalist Malcom Beith argues that the people of Sinaloa are, for the most part, proud of the drug lords that represent their state. He likens them, including their secrecy and protectiveness, to the Sicilian mob and how they took care of their own.<sup>276</sup> In particular, the people of Culiacán, Sinaloa, compare much of drug lords' philanthropic efforts to Robin Hood and even erected a statue of a mythical Robin Hood like bandit, Jesus Malverde, in honor of the cartel bosses.<sup>277</sup> Beith quotes a law student in charge of managing the shrine as saying, "Often, the government doesn't give to the people, so they turn to the narcos."<sup>278</sup> Beith further notes that many criminals refer to Jesus Malverde as a proverbial "narco-saint," while police and government recognize his popularity as a menace to society.<sup>279</sup>

Beith also notes that El Chapo has been known to act as de facto law enforcement and keep kids and teenagers in line.<sup>280</sup> During his interviews with the people of Badiraguato in 2008, they elaborated on several stories in which El Chapo personally countered crime and violence. For example, after the police failed to act, El Chapo reportedly rounded up a group of teenagers that had stolen gas cans from a local depot and left the culprits at the police station for processing.<sup>281</sup> Locals also reported that El Chapo

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<sup>275</sup> Beith, *The Last Narco: Inside the Hunt for El Chapo, The World's Most Wanted Drug Lord*, 87.

<sup>276</sup> Beith, xxiii–xxiv.

<sup>277</sup> Beith, xxiv.

<sup>278</sup> Beith, 33.

<sup>279</sup> Beith, 33.

<sup>280</sup> Beith, 85–86.

<sup>281</sup> Beith, 86.

intervened when violence started to get out of hand in their area and attracted too much attention from federal authorities.<sup>282</sup>

Furthermore, El Chapo is not the only leader that the local population admires within the Sinaloa Cartel. Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada is reputed for visiting the people of his hometown, El Alamo, each Christmas and giving away money and alcohol in celebration.”<sup>283</sup> Additionally, Zambada founded *Estancia Infantil Nino Feliz* [Happy Child Daycare], which offers care and food for single mothers and children of low-income families.<sup>284</sup>

Although the Sinaloa Cartel has provided resources for the population, it also has engaged in considerable negative actions as well. An infamous example occurred in 1978, when the Sinaloa Cartel murdered a well-respected journalist, Roberto Martínez Montenegro, who spoke out against them.<sup>285</sup> He regularly and publicly made efforts to expose the narco-violence and corruption in Sinaloa and refused to be bought by the narco-traffickers. His murder enraged the public.<sup>286</sup>

The Sinaloa Cartel has also had a negative influence on youth, particularly young men, in the areas in which they operate. Beith notes that “young Sinaloans want to be like people like Chapo. He has what they think is everything—money, power, women, weapons. But we need to change that.”<sup>287</sup> A historian in Sinaloa also stated, “What can a kid in Culiacán do? Work in a Wal-Mart? Study? Or be a narco? There’s nothing he can do to rise up. Obviously for a boy, the better option is to break the neck of poverty, and become a narco. I don’t condemn it, I understand it.”<sup>288</sup> Joining the cartels is often the only way to

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<sup>282</sup> Beith, 86.

<sup>283</sup> “Los Tres Rostros de [The Three Faces of] ‘El Mayo’ Zambada,” *El Universal*, June 7, 2007, <https://archivo.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/429771.html>.

<sup>284</sup> “Los Tres Rostros de [The Three Faces of] ‘El Mayo’ Zambada.”

<sup>285</sup> Richard Craig, “Human Rights and Mexico’s Antidrug Campaign,” *Social Science Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (1980): 694.

<sup>286</sup> Craig, 694.

<sup>287</sup> Beith, *The Last Narco: Inside the Hunt for El Chapo, The World’s Most Wanted Drug Lord*, 87.

<sup>288</sup> Beith, 88.

end an endless cycle of poverty. Unfortunately, for many, Beith notes that the average narco serves in a cartel for about three and a half years before they are jailed or killed.<sup>289</sup>

### **C. THE GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE TO THE SINALOA CARTEL**

Overall, the Mexican government has done very little to protect average citizens in their war against the Cartel, nor have they tried to defend those that fought against the cartels. This section outlines the actions that the Mexican government has taken to try to eradicate cartels in Mexico, including the Sinaloa Cartel, and their effects on the population. Specifically, it considers drug eradication efforts; police, judicial, and military operations; the government’s treatment of the press; and partnering with the United States.

#### **1. Eradication**

Mexico’s first major eradication attempt of drug production was in 1948, prior to the formation of the Sinaloa Cartel, and it was known as *La Gran Campaña* [The Great Campaign].<sup>290</sup> In addition to using the Mexican police, this was the first time that Mexico used the military to eradicate poppy and marijuana plants.<sup>291</sup> By the end of the 1950s eradication had become a national effort, targeting illegal crops beyond Sinaloa.<sup>292</sup>

Political scientist Richard Craig notes that, in 1975, narcotics officials in the United States convinced Mexico that using herbicides on a massive scale would have a greater impact on eliminating poppy and marijuana at their source than manual eradication.<sup>293</sup> He claims that “traditional stick-beating and burning programs were an exercise in futility in the face of some 40,000 opium plots and countless fields of marijuana.”<sup>294</sup> Operation Condor, which used herbicides to target illicit crops, allowed the government to regain

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<sup>289</sup> Beith, 88.

<sup>290</sup> María Celia Toro, *Mexico’s “War” on Drugs: Causes and Consequences*, Studies on the Impact of the Illegal Drug Trade ; v. 3 (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), 12.

<sup>291</sup> Toro, 12–13.

<sup>292</sup> Toro, 13.

<sup>293</sup> Richard Craig, “Illicit Drug Traffic and U.S.-Latin American Relations,” *Washington Quarterly* 8 (1985): 118.

<sup>294</sup> Craig, “Human Rights and Mexico’s Antidrug Campaign,” 692.



control of the unruly states of Chihuahua, Durango, and Sinaloa. The operation was so successful that government representatives from the Middle East, Asia, and other Latin American countries sought advice on how to achieve similar success with eradication campaigns in their countries.<sup>295</sup>

However, the success came with a cost. Richard Craig notes that agronomists and farmers claimed that the chemicals used to kill poppies and marijuana were contaminating their coffee crops, causing them to falter.<sup>296</sup> Marijuana smokers in the United States even assembled a well-organized campaign to address the Mexican marijuana that had been tainted by the herbicides. Public health experts even weighed in and determined that smoking chemically tainted marijuana over a prolonged period could lead to irreversible lung damage. In 1978, the Foreign Assistance Act was amended to require “the termination of foreign assistance funds to any nation utilizing chemicals deemed harmful to humans.”<sup>297</sup>

Furthermore, Craig argues that, although not common, the Mexican military committed human rights violations while carrying out Operation Condor and it negatively affected their relationship with the rural farming population.<sup>298</sup> In a 1978 interview with Craig, an American military attaché stated that “houses are ransacked, men beaten, women violated, and belongings confiscated. These tactics, even though they are definitely rare, don’t exactly endear the military to the *campesinos* [peasant farmers].”<sup>299</sup> Craig argues that more farmers than traffickers were being arrested during the eradication efforts, further damaging the relationship between the population and the military.<sup>300</sup>

Finally, Mexican studies scholar Roderic Ai Camp argues that, before the 1970s, the military typically confronted individual farmers. After the 1970s, however, eradication

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<sup>295</sup> Craig, “Illicit Drug Traffic and U.S.-Latin American Relations,” 119–20.

<sup>296</sup> Craig, “Human Rights and Mexico’s Antidrug Campaign,” 692.

<sup>297</sup> Craig, 692.

<sup>298</sup> Craig, 697.

<sup>299</sup> Craig, 697.

<sup>300</sup> Craig, 698.

efforts targeted the cartels, which produced considerable violence between the two forces. These clashes often involved innocent bystanders, straining the military's relationship with the surrounding population.<sup>301</sup> Eradication campaigns also created mixed emotions with the military because they knew that most farmers were just trying to make a living and provide for their families.<sup>302</sup>

## 2. Police, Judicial, and Military Operations

The Mexican government has also used both its police force and its military in an attempt to combat the cartels, with limited effects. In a 2012 interview with a retired Mexican police colonel, Latin America analyst George Grayson found that one of the bigger challenges with protecting the population is that Mexico has never had an uncorrupted and professional police force that is capable of gaining the trust of its citizens.<sup>303</sup> Grayson noted that, unlike the Mexican police, “professional police officers are taught to gain the confidence of citizens, separate adversaries, listen to their complaints, negotiate, bargain, and compromise before using force against trouble makers.”<sup>304</sup> These basic skills have not been instilled in the Mexican police.<sup>305</sup> Grayson adds that, because of the lack of confidence in the police, Mexican presidents Vicente Fox (2000-2006) and Felipe Calderón (2006-2012) relied heavily on the military to counter drug trafficking organizations.<sup>306</sup> This heavy-handed approach has resulted in civilian casualties and human rights violations.

According to Mexico's 2012 National Survey on Victimization and Perception of Public Security, 92 percent of crimes in Mexico went unreported primarily because the

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<sup>301</sup> Roderic A. Camp, *Generals in the Palacio: The Military in Modern Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 92.

<sup>302</sup> Camp, 93.

<sup>303</sup> Grayson, *The Cartels: The Story of Mexico's Most Dangerous Criminal Organizations and Their Impact on U.S. Security*, 118.

<sup>304</sup> Grayson, 136.

<sup>305</sup> Grayson, 118.

<sup>306</sup> Grayson, 118.

people had lost faith in law enforcement and the judicial system.<sup>307</sup> International criminal law professor Luz Nagle argues that, in addition to their lack of professionalization, poor wages and insufficient benefits of Mexican police officers make them more susceptible to corruption. With most earning less than \$250 a month, they are left with the temptation of supplementing their income by cooperating with drug cartels to carry out illicit activities or permitting such activities to occur.<sup>308</sup> Furthermore, denying a bribe could result in the police officer's death.<sup>309</sup> Luz argues that, overall, Mexican police, with the exception of the *Federales* [Federal Police], are undertrained, poorly educated, and insufficiently compensated.<sup>310</sup>

The federal court system presents similar challenges to countering the cartels. Mexican journalist Jorge Fernández Menéndez points out that, because drug trafficking is a federal crime, a small pool of appointed federal judges must oversee the prosecution.<sup>311</sup> With fewer judges able to prosecute these crimes, drug traffickers can more easily threaten judges, thwarting justice.<sup>312</sup> Not only are federal judges put in compromising and dangerous positions, but the oversight committee designated to uphold the integrity of the profession, the Federal Judicial Council (CFJ), also does not hold corrupt judges accountable for fear of retribution.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Claire O'Neill McCleskey, "92% of Crimes in Mexico Go Unreported: Survey," *InSight Crime* (blog), March 27, 2017, <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/crimes-mexico-unreported-inegi/>.

<sup>308</sup> Luz E. Nagle, "Corruption of Politicians, Law Enforcement, and the Judiciary in Mexico and Complicity across the Border," in *Narcos Over the Border: Gangs, Cartels and Mercenaries* (London: Routledge, 2011), 100.

<sup>309</sup> Nagle, 101.

<sup>310</sup> Nagle, 104.

<sup>311</sup> Jorge Fernández Menéndez, "Mexico: The Traffickers' Judges," in *Global Corruption Report 2007: Corruption in Judicial Systems*, ed. Transparency International, Global Corruption Report (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 77.

<sup>312</sup> Fernández Menéndez, 77.

<sup>313</sup> Fernández Menéndez, 77.

Additionally, in the process of trying to bring narcotraffickers to justice, Craig argues that due process and civil rights violations have been denied for people convicted or accused of narcotics involvement.<sup>314</sup> He states:

Mexican police at all levels, soldiers, prison officials and at one time even American DEA agents operating in Mexico have been accused of perpetrating, condoning or disregarding physical and mental torture, coerced confessions, failure to promptly notify foreign diplomats of the arrest of their compatriots, prolonged and patently unconstitutional pretrial detentions, collusion with unscrupulous attorneys, failure to return confiscated property, poor or nonexistent medical care, extortion, denial of commissioned or “good time” work, homosexual assaults, preferential treatment and management of their own in-prison drug networks.<sup>315</sup>

The judicial system, therefore, has had very little effect on countering the cartels.

In addition to eradication operations mentioned above, the Mexican government has also the military to target leaders and other key operators. Camp argues that, since Operation Condor in 1977, the Mexican military has functioned like a presidential SWAT team.<sup>316</sup> Camp quotes the Secretariat of Defense stating that there are as many as 12,000 Mexican soldiers working full-time combatting the drug trade.<sup>317</sup> Camp argues that the focus on the anti-drug campaign “has made the military the supreme authority, or in some cases, the only authority in parts of such states as Oaxaca, Sinaloa, Jalisco, and Guerrero.”<sup>318</sup> However, Camp contends that the population generally does not view this in a negative light. He states that the military’s “increased visibility has largely been positive, and there does not seem to be public resistance to its exercising such a role, opening up the possibility of engaging in other nontraditional roles in the future.<sup>319</sup> The population, in other words, would rather have the military in control than the narcotraffickers.

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<sup>314</sup> Craig, “Human Rights and Mexico’s Antidrug Campaign,” 695.

<sup>315</sup> Craig, 695–96.

<sup>316</sup> Camp, *Generals in the Palacio: The Military in Modern Mexico*, 91.

<sup>317</sup> Camp, 91.

<sup>318</sup> Camp, 92.

<sup>319</sup> Camp, 92.

The Mexican military has had several high-profile operations in its counter-cartel campaign. For example, Operation Gargoyle in February 2014 led to El Chapo's second capture. The operation was conducted using Mexican Marines (SEMAR) with the help of the DEA in Culiacán, Sinaloa.<sup>320</sup> The DEA was able to locate a close associate of El Chapo, Mario Hidalgo Argüello, through data they gained from confiscated phones in a previous operation.<sup>321</sup> When questioned, Hidalgo Argüello gave up El Chapo's location without hesitation. The Marines immediately acted on the information and stormed the apartment where El Chapo was hiding. In the presence of his wife and two young twin daughters, El Chapo surrendered without a single shot fired. With only a lone bodyguard traveling with him to avoid detection, he was clearly outnumbered.<sup>322</sup> The raid was a great success for the Mexican Military and President Enrique Peña Nieto's administration.

El Chapo's most recent capture, in January 2016, was another success for the Mexican Marines. Operation Black Swan took place in Los Mochis, Sinaloa, just six months after El Chapo escaped through a tunnel from a maximum-security Mexican prison.<sup>323</sup> Mexican Marines fought their way into Chapo's safehouse, resulting in the deaths of five cartel gunmen and one Mexican Marine injured. El Chapo fled through a tunnel system under the house, but he was apprehended by authorities when he tried to enter a nearby stolen vehicle.<sup>324</sup> Although U.S. Delta Force operators advised the operation and U.S. Marshalls helped locate him, it was a Mexican-led operation that helped President Peña Nieto regain some credit with the Mexican population following El Chapo's escape from custody.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Patrick R Keefe, "The Hunt for El Chapo," *The New Yorker* 5 (2014): 9–10.

<sup>321</sup> Keefe, 9.

<sup>322</sup> Keefe, 14.

<sup>323</sup> Joshua Partlow, "Mexican Drug Lord 'El Chapo' Recaptured Months after Brazen Escape," *Washington Post*, January 8, 2016, sec. The Americas, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the\\_americas/mexican-drug-lord-el-chapo-recaptured-months-after-brazen-escape/2016/01/08/b82f4cbc-b63a-11e5-8abc-d09392edc612\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/mexican-drug-lord-el-chapo-recaptured-months-after-brazen-escape/2016/01/08/b82f4cbc-b63a-11e5-8abc-d09392edc612_story.html).

<sup>324</sup> Jack Murphy, "JSOC's Secretive Delta Force Operators on the Ground for El Chapo Capture," SOFREP, January 11, 2016, <https://sofrep.com/news/jsoc-delta-force-operators-on-the-ground-for-el-chapo-capture/>.

<sup>325</sup> Partlow, "Mexican Drug Lord 'El Chapo' Recaptured Months after Brazen Escape."

On October 18, 2019, in Culiacán, Sinaloa, the Mexican government launched an operation to capture Ovidio Guzmán López, the son of imprisoned drug lord El Chapo Guzmán.<sup>326</sup> During the intense gun battle, authorities briefly detained Guzmán López, but released him and yielded to the Cartel after realizing they were outmatched. One press report notes that the citizens of Culiacán were outraged that the Federal Police gave up so easily.<sup>327</sup> A woman taking shelter during the shooting stated, “The government surrendered, and we saw that the people who really control things here are the narcos.”<sup>328</sup> The Mexican Security Secretary Alfonso Durazo insisted that “there is no pact with criminals... there is no failed state. There was a failed operation.”<sup>329</sup> Mexican President Andrés López Obrador further defended their actions by stating, “The capture of one criminal cannot be worth more than the lives of people.”<sup>330</sup> Yet, a Mexican researcher for the International Crisis Group stated that the surrender “sets a highly dangerous precedent” and “the message is: the Mexican government is not in control, and it can be successfully blackmailed.”<sup>331</sup>

### **3. The Government’s Treatment of the Press**

The Mexican government also did very little to protect those who spoke out against the cartels, especially the press. After the assassination of Roberto Martínez Montenegro, one of his colleagues asked Governor Alfonso Calderón what guarantees he would provide for reporters speaking out against the cartels. The governor replied, “Guarantees? What kind of guarantees? Do you want me to look after you, little boy?”<sup>332</sup> The Mexican government clearly did not care to protect those that challenged the cartels. Craig argues, “you can arrest the trafficker with important political connections, effectively overrule

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<sup>326</sup> Linthicum and Sanchez, “Eight Killed in Mexico as Cartel Gunmen Force Authorities to Release El Chapo’s Son.”

<sup>327</sup> Linthicum and Sanchez.

<sup>328</sup> Linthicum and Sanchez.

<sup>329</sup> Linthicum and Sanchez.

<sup>330</sup> Linthicum and Sanchez.

<sup>331</sup> Linthicum and Sanchez.

<sup>332</sup> Craig, “Human Rights and Mexico’s Antidrug Campaign,” 695.

corrupt local politicians in drug zones and journalistically attack the many evils of the narcotic *ambiente* [ambience]—but you may well do so at the risk of career and perhaps even life.”<sup>333</sup> Being a journalist in Mexico is a dangerous profession.

Calderón et al. argue in a 2018 report that journalists are more likely to fall victim to violence in Mexico than the average citizen.<sup>334</sup> According to a *Justice in Mexico* study in 2018, journalists are three times as likely to be murdered than someone from the general population.<sup>335</sup> The study identified 176 journalists and news organization personnel that were murdered as a result of their profession from 2000 to 2018.<sup>336</sup> Additionally, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) ranks Mexico as the “seventh deadliest country” on the Global Impunity Index, which “spotlights countries where journalists are slain and their killers go free.”<sup>337</sup> Without the support from their government, journalists fight a difficult battle while trying to inform the public about the narcos.

#### **4. Partnering with the United States**

The Mexican government has also worked with the U.S. government for decades to counter narco-trafficking. Political scientist Richard Craig argues relations between the United States and Mexico were strong after Operation Condor, in the 1970s, which greatly reduced the amount of drugs produced and transported across the U.S. border. From 1974 to 1980, the percentage of Mexican heroin hitting the U.S. market dropped from 85 percent to 37 percent. Similarly, the U.S. market for marijuana decreased from 90 percent to 20 percent.<sup>338</sup> However, relations between the United States and Mexico suffered after drug cartels kidnapped and murdered U.S. DEA Agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena in 1985.

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<sup>333</sup> Craig, 694.

<sup>334</sup> Calderón et al., “Organized Crime and Violence in Mexico: Analysis through 2018,” 35.

<sup>335</sup> Laura Y Calderón, “An Analysis of Mayoral Assassinations in Mexico, 2000–17,” *Justice in Mexico* (University of San Diego, January 2018), 3, [https://justiceinmexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/180117\\_CALDERON-WRKPPR\\_v3.0.pdf](https://justiceinmexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/180117_CALDERON-WRKPPR_v3.0.pdf).

<sup>336</sup> Calderón et al., “Organized Crime and Violence in Mexico: Analysis through 2018,” 35.

<sup>337</sup> Calderón et al., 34.

<sup>338</sup> Craig, “Illicit Drug Traffic and U.S.-Latin American Relations,” 120.

Mexico's failure to acknowledge the importance of the murder strained the relationship.<sup>339</sup> Craig argues that the majority of Mexicans were upset about his murder and acknowledged that narco-traffickers represented a serious problem in Mexico.<sup>340</sup>

Despite the strained relationship, the United States continued to support Mexico's anti-drug efforts by providing aid, equipment, technology, and training to reduce drugs flowing into the United States and with the overall goal of handing the fight to Mexico.<sup>341</sup> In an effort to stabilize the Southwest border region, the United States and Mexico created the Mérida Initiative in 2007.<sup>342</sup> Latin America analyst Claire Seelke argues that, prior to the Mérida Initiative, Mexico was reluctant to accept assistance from the United States, but former Presidents George W. Bush and Felipe Calderón decided that it would be in both countries' interests to increase efforts to fight crime and corruption.<sup>343</sup>

These concerns were carried over to the Obama administration. President Clinton's Director of National Drug Control Policy, General Barry McCaffrey, argued in 2008 that the Obama Administration "must immediately focus on the dangerous and worsening problems in Mexico, which fundamentally threaten U.S. national security."<sup>344</sup> He posited that, although the Mérida Initiative is a step in the right direction, "the proposed U.S. government spending in support of the government of Mexico is a drop in the bucket compared to what we have spent in Iraq and Afghanistan."<sup>345</sup> He noted the rising strength and boldness of cartels in Mexico and the possibility of cartels overwhelming the Mexican government if the United States did not increase efforts to counter them.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Craig, 120.

<sup>340</sup> Craig, 121.

<sup>341</sup> Craig, 122.

<sup>342</sup> Claire R. Seelke, "Mexico: Evolution of the Mérida Initiative, 2007–2020" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, June 28, 2019), 1, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10578>.

<sup>343</sup> Seelke, 1.

<sup>344</sup> Barry R. McCaffrey, "Narco-Violence in Mexico: A Growing Threat to U.S. Security," *American Diplomacy*, January 2009.

<sup>345</sup> McCaffrey.

<sup>346</sup> McCaffrey.



During the initial phase of the Mérida Initiative, which ran from 2008 to 2010, the United States invested \$1.5 billion and emphasized counternarcotics, counterterrorism, border security, the security of the population, and institution building.<sup>347</sup> Although the initiative increased cooperation between the United States and Mexico, U.S. Congress withheld 15 percent of the funding in 2010 until Mexico improved its historically poor human rights practices.<sup>348</sup>

## 5. Other Government Programs

Although the Mexican government did not engage the population directly to combat the Sinaloa Cartel, they did create a program to help build human capital in Mexico and offer better alternatives for employment of young adults. Mexico instituted the *Oportunidades* [Opportunities] program in 2002 that social psychologists Joaquina Palomar-Lever and Amparo Victorio-Estrada describe as a federal program “aimed at coordinating interinstitutional actions designed to contribute to overcoming poverty through the development of the basic capacities of individuals and their access to better opportunities for economic and social development.”<sup>349</sup> American economist Jere Behrman states that “the fundamental objective of the *Oportunidades* program is to break the intergenerational circle of poverty” and that the “objective will only be possible if the program focuses on strengthening human capital, to enable children and adolescents benefiting from this program to have more and better opportunities in their adult lives.”<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Seelke, “Mexico: Evolution of the Mérida Initiative, 2007–2020,” 1.

<sup>348</sup> Seelke, 1.

<sup>349</sup> Joaquina Palomar-Lever and Amparo Victorio-Estrada, “Determinants of Subjective Well-Being in Adolescent Children of Recipients of the ‘Oportunidades’ Human Development Program in Mexico,” *Social Indicators Research* 118, no. 1 (2014): 103.

<sup>350</sup> Jere Behrman, “Evaluación de Los Efectos a Diez Años de Oportunidades En El Desarrollo, Educación y Nutrición En Niños Entre 7 y 10 Años de Familias Incorporadas Desde El Inicio Del Programa [Evaluation of the Effects of Ten Years of Opportunities in Development, Education and Nutrition in Children between 7 and 10 Years of Age in Families Incorporated since the Beginning of the Program],” in *Evaluación Externa Del Programa Oportunidades 2008 [External Evaluation of the Opportunities Program 2008]*, 1st Edition (Secretaría de Desarrollo Social [Secretary of Social Development], 2008), 15.

Additionally, President López Obrador instituted the *Jovenes Construyendo el Futuro* [Youth Constructing the Future] program in January 2019, which international relations scholar Laura Calderón states “seeks to reverse [and] address the deep and chronic socioeconomic deficits that have stifled Mexican economic development for decades.”<sup>351</sup> At the head of the program, the Secretariat for Work and Social Welfare seeks to distribute 300,000 scholarships and 2.3 million monthly job training stipends to the youth of Mexico.<sup>352</sup> Calderón argues that “President López Obrador is attempting to tackle long-standing economic problems that make many Mexicans vulnerable to illicit activities to make a better life for themselves.”<sup>353</sup>

The Mexican government has also aimed to address human rights violations in Mexico. Mexican President Andrés López Obrador has tried to regain the trust of the population by instituting a special commission that continues to investigate the 2014 case of 43 missing students as well as the 40,000 people who have disappeared in Mexico over the last decade.<sup>354</sup> On July 12, 2019, he published the 2019–2024 National Development Plan that sought to legalize drugs and reallocate enforcement funds to aid in drug treatment programs while creating a new National Guard for the sole purpose of combatting crime.<sup>355</sup> He believes that “the only real possibility of reducing the levels of drug consumption resides in lifting the prohibition of [those] that are currently illegal and in the redirection of the resources dedicated to combatting drug trafficking, in order to apply them in – massive yet personalized – rehabilitation and detoxification programs.”<sup>356</sup> Yet, Journalist Gabriel Moysen notes that the National System of Public Security shows that

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<sup>351</sup> Calderón et al., “Organized Crime and Violence in Mexico: Analysis through 2018,” 45.

<sup>352</sup> Calderón et al., 45.

<sup>353</sup> Calderón et al., 45–46.

<sup>354</sup> Seelke, “Mexico: Evolution of the Mérida Initiative, 2007–2020,” 2.

<sup>355</sup> Seelke, 2.

<sup>356</sup> Gabriel Moysen, “Is the Decriminalization of Drugs in Mexico Possible?” *El Universal*, October 5, 2019, <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/english/decriminalization-drugs-mexico-possible>.

drug-related violence in Mexico has risen 12 percent during the first three months since President López Obrador took office.<sup>357</sup>

#### **D. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION**

This discussion on the rise of the Sinaloa cartel, the Mexican government's response to the cartel, and how each side has engaged the population reveals the following findings:

First, El Chapo and the Sinaloa Cartel built a relationship with the population that, arguably, helped their operations. Specifically, they engaged the population by providing services, including building and repairing roads, repairing schools and churches, and providing jobs and investing in the communities from which they came. As discussed, they even went so far as to create a daycare facility in Culiacán, Sinaloa that still operates today. In some areas of the country, El Chapo held celebrity status and young children and adolescents sought to emulate him.

The Mexican government, however, did little to positively or directly engage the population during most of the fight with the Sinaloa Cartel, particularly not until recently. During the eradication campaign, for example, the harsh chemicals used to destroy marijuana plants contaminated farmers' coffee crops as well, negatively affecting their livelihood. The Mexican military is also credited with committing human rights violations against farmers during eradication operations, further damaging the relationship between them and the government.

More recently, the government has initiated programs aimed at positively affecting the population. This includes the implementation of the *Oportunidades* program to dissuade youth from joining cartels during adulthood. Furthermore, the López Obrador administration instituted the *Jovenes Construyendo el Futuro* program that aims to provide scholarships and work stipends to lift youth out of poverty and address the systemic socioeconomic issues that Mexico continues to face. In addition to programs, the López Obrador administration has ordered a special commission to investigate the disappearance

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<sup>357</sup> Moyssen.

of over 40,000 people in Mexico over the last decade, and has announced the 2019–2024 National Development Plan, which aims to try new approaches to improving Mexico’s quality of life that differ from previous presidents.

Survey data suggest that the cartels, and the violence they have created, remain a concern to the Mexican population. According to a 2012 Pew Research Center poll, three out of four Mexican citizens say that cartel-related violence is a top concern for the country, yet nearly the same number say that military and police human rights violations are of equal concern.<sup>358</sup> In favorability ratings among the population, the military ranks the highest, with 73 percent approval, the court system 44 percent, and the police with the lowest approval rating of 38 percent.<sup>359</sup> The military, although not perfect, maintains a high approval rating among the population.

Although the population lacks overall trust toward the government, police and the military, these entities do make efforts to improve their relationship with the population. Latin America analyst George Grayson notes that the Mexican military reinforces its relationship with the surrounding population by annual Independence Day parades in downtown Mexico City, where families have the opportunity to take pictures and interact with soldiers and army equipment.<sup>360</sup> Furthermore, at the bicentennial celebration of Mexico’s independence in 2010, President Calderón announced that the Mexican military would “present miniature Mexican flags to every household in the country to symbolize their unity with the people.”<sup>361</sup> The Army even hired a public relations firm, McCann World Group, to boost their image among the population and increase their recruiting efforts.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Pew Research Center, “Mexicans Back Military Campaign against Cartels,” *Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project* (blog), June 20, 2012, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2012/06/20/mexicans-back-military-campaign-against-cartels/>.

<sup>359</sup> Pew Research Center.

<sup>360</sup> Grayson, *The Cartels: The Story of Mexico’s Most Dangerous Criminal Organizations and Their Impact on U.S. Security*, 139.

<sup>361</sup> Grayson, 139.

<sup>362</sup> Grayson, 139.

The Mexican military also conducts a wide variety of humanitarian work that benefits the population. The Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA), enacted the National Defense Plan III (Plan DN-III-E) in 1966, which places the military in charge of responding to disasters and enacting civil-action programs in times of crisis.<sup>363</sup> In such times, the military helps with repairing equipment and infrastructure, providing medical and dental care, and even assisting with literacy programs in remote areas of the country.<sup>364</sup> Despite all of these operations, the population remains suspicious of the police, as evidenced by the estimated number of crimes that go unreported, and of the courts and the military.

The next chapter will provide summary thoughts on the thesis and offer observations for engaging the population to counter transnational criminal organizations.

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<sup>363</sup> “Mexico Secretariat of National Defense - SEDENA,” GlobalSecurity.org, November 7, 2011, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/mexico/sedena.htm>.

<sup>364</sup> “Mexico Secretariat of National Defense - SEDENA.”

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis aimed to explore the dynamic between TCOs, the surrounding population, and the government in an effort to better understand how TCOs use populations for their operations and how governments understand and address the needs of populations in their counter-TCO efforts. Specifically, this thesis aimed to investigate the following research questions: How do TCOs build and maintain their relationship with the surrounding population? What positive and negative actions do TCOs take to build this relationship, if any? How can governments break apart that relationship as part of an overall effort to counter TCOs and their operations?

To investigate these questions, Chapter II provided a literature review of TCOs, noting that few pieces consider the role of the population in aiding or undermining TCOs. The chapter also drew from counterinsurgency literature, which extensively covers the importance of relationship building between insurgents and populations for successful insurgencies and the need for governments to win back the population in a counterinsurgency. From this review, the thesis proposed focusing on three broad aspects of TCOs and government-led counter-TCO efforts: how TCOs engage populations, both positively and negatively in their operations; how governments counter TCOs and how these operations have affected the population; and what measures the government has taken to positively engage the population.

Chapters III and IV used these three broad lines of investigation to analyze two TCOs in Latin America—the Medellín Cartel in Colombia and the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico—to better understand the points at which these cartels built positive relationships with the population, the times when they did not, and how government counter-TCO operations directly and indirectly engaged the population. Chapter III provided a brief history of the Medellín Cartel, including its key leaders, organization and operations. It focused specifically on the cartel’s relationship with the population and how it used positive and negative actions toward the population to build and maintain that relationship. Lastly, it described the Colombian government’s counter-TCO response—including its eradication campaign; its military and police confrontations; its negotiations with the

cartel; and its partnership with the United States—and the effect these operations had on the population, and actions it took to engage the population to undermine the capacity of the cartel.

Chapter IV provided a brief history of the Sinaloa Cartel, including its key leaders and operations. It then described the cartel’s relationship with the surrounding population and highlighted the various positive and negative actions the cartel took toward the population. It also considered the Mexican government’s response to the Sinaloa Cartel—including its eradication campaign; its police, judicial, and military operations; the government’s treatment of the press; its partnership with the United States; and other government programs—and how these operations affected the population. The chapter ended with an analysis of these factors with emphasis on how the cartel and the government have engaged the population.

## **A. FINDINGS**

This investigation yielded the following findings:

The Medellín Cartel’s relationship with the population, and its leader Pablo Escobar in particular, played a significant role in the rise and fall of the Medellín Cartel. Before becoming an enemy of the state, Escobar won the admiration and respect of the population by caring for the people of Medellín and filling the social, material, and economic needs of the people where the Colombian government failed to deliver. Specifically, the cartel improved the surrounding community by building schools, enacting civil action programs, and investing in long-term infrastructure that gave the people of Medellín hope for the future. Escobar’s philanthropic engagements allowed him to enjoy celebrity status within Colombia and to run his illicit trafficking business with minimal resistance.

The Colombian government, however, focused less on building relationships with the population and more on directly targeting the Medellín Cartel and its narco-trafficking. The government focused its efforts on conducting invasive raids in urban areas and eradicating coca fields with harsh chemicals that affected negatively affected farmers and their crops. Ultimately, Pablo Escobar and the Medellín Cartel’s demise was more a result of their negative actions toward the population, including several bombings of innocent

civilians, assassinations of police officers and government officials, and the seemingly unpredictable behavior of a once endeared man of the people, which lost their support. In this case, the Colombian government did not win the population away from the cartel. Rather, the cartel lost the population's support.

Similarly, El Chapo and the Sinaloa Cartel established a relationship with the population that benefitted their operations. First, El Chapo cultivated the persona of a local hero to the population. He was their Robin Hood and provided for the poor. He fostered this image by investing in the cartel's surrounding communities by building and repairing infrastructure, and providing jobs in impoverished cities. The cartel even went so far as to open a daycare in Culiacán, which currently still operates.

In contrast, until recently the Mexican government did little to engage the population during its ongoing fight with the Sinaloa Cartel. For example, the eradication campaign that the Mexican government initiated with the help of the United States negatively affected the livelihood of Mexican farmers by using harsh chemicals to destroy marijuana plants, which inadvertently eradicated their coffee crops as well. Further damaging the relationship with the population, the Mexican military has also been credited with committing human rights violations against farmers during eradication operations. Additionally, the Mexican government has been accused of not protecting the press, which has also harmed its relationship with the population.

More recently, the government has started programs that seek to positively affect the population. This includes the *Oportunidades* program that aims to dissuade youth from joining cartels as well as the *Jovenes Construyendo el Futuro* program that addresses the systemic socioeconomic challenges in Mexico by providing scholarships and work stipends. The López Obrador administration has also announced the 2019–2024 National Development Plan, which aspires to improve Mexico's quality of life. The military has aimed to improve its relationship with the population through an annual Independence Day parade in downtown Mexico City, humanitarian assistance in times of national emergencies, and by hiring a public relations firm to boost their image. While polling data suggest that the population remains suspicious of the police, government, and military, as



discussed in Chapter IV, these programs may improve their relationship with the population over time.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

TCOs, just like insurgents, benefit from a positive relationship with the population. Similarly, governments need the support of populations to successfully counter TCOs and their operations. If the government fails to consider the importance of a positive relationship with the population, this may strengthen the cartels and weaken the influence of the government. To reduce this possibility, governments should focus their efforts on minimizing undergoverned spaces and deny access and control to the areas and populations that are vulnerable to cartel influence. In this vein, Kilcullen argues, “the local armed actor that a given population perceives as best able to establish a predictable, consistent, wide-spectrum normative system of control is most likely to dominate that population and its residential area.”<sup>365</sup>

Specifically, governments should focus on providing necessary services for the population to survive and prosper. However, this is no easy task. Many countries within Latin America are underdeveloped, lack sufficient resources, and have struggled with rampant corruption throughout the government and security forces. Unlike cartels, who have seemingly unlimited resources, governments must allocate the little resources they have to combat the cartels and simultaneously provide for the population. With a persistent cartel presence threatening the security and legitimacy of the country, it is easy to justify appropriating resources to combat the immediate threat of the cartel and its operations, and lose sight of the long-term needs of the population. However, not providing these long-term needs and necessary services may allow cartels to fill this void and gain the support of the population.

Second, governments need to be consistent in their counter-cartel operations. For example, the government of Mexico has applied the law unevenly toward the Sinaloa Cartel, going after it at some points, and acquiescing at others. This is most notable in the

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<sup>365</sup> Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains*, 126.

October 2019 release of El Chapo's son. The Mexican government gave in to the demands of the Sinaloa Cartel in response to threats of widespread violence toward the population and the government. Somewhat similarly, the Colombian government cut deals with the Medellín cartel, including its decision to allow the cartel leaders, including Escobar, to effectively imprison themselves in a palace that they designed. When its lavish conditions became known to the public, the government attempted to relocate the leaders to a more uncompromising prison. However, they escaped in the process, causing considerable embarrassment to the government. Both the Mexican and Colombian examples highlight inconsistencies in the governments' policies against the cartels.

Although one may think that a government should take an unwavering stance against the cartels, one should also consider the reality that the cartels have proven to be violent and capable of inflicting massive casualties on innocent civilians when their demands are not met. In many cases, the government ends up having to choose between a hardline stance against the actions of the cartel and risk violence or compromise with the cartels and perhaps save lives of innocent civilians. In other words, consistently applying the law and operations toward the cartels is easier said than done. When governments increase pressure on the cartels, the cartels often respond with increased violence. As was seen in Colombia, the Medellín Cartel increased the frequency and severity of its bombing campaign when the government decided to pursue extradition of drug traffickers to the United States. Targeting civilians was a means for the Medellín Cartel to show the population that their government was incapable of protecting them. Often when the government responds, particularly when the military and police are outgunned and undermanned, the population will ultimately suffer.

Furthermore, when conducting kinetic operations against the cartels, every effort should be made to minimize collateral damage and keep the population's safety at the forefront of government operations. Not doing so will turn the population against the government and ultimately make the cartels stronger and more difficult to combat. As seen during raids and eradication campaigns throughout Colombia and Mexico, failure to consider the population while conducting counter-TCO missions led to long-term mistrust among the population and more difficult missions in the future.

One strategy that may yield positive results in countering cartels is to pursue key leaders, similar to what was conducted with the Kingpin Act described in chapter III. Although other members are likely capable of running the cartels, not all carry the same ability to build relationships with the population. Influential leaders like Pablo Escobar and Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán were not only capable of running cartels but, perhaps of equal importance, their charisma was important for winning over the population, making it difficult for the government to counter this movement. Focusing on capturing or killing these key leaders may send a message that these perceived invincible leaders are not above the laws of the states that govern them.

In addition to considering the well-being of the population when conducting kinetic operations against the cartels, governments should invest heavily in the youth of Latin American countries. Many young Latin Americans turn to a life of crime in the cartels because they have no other means to make a living. Governments should give youth opportunities and hope for a life outside of the cartels when they enter adulthood. However, as with broader social and physical infrastructure projects, this is easier said than done and requires considerable material resources in addition to political will.

Governments should also conduct information campaigns that highlight the destruction that cartels cause, both directly and as a byproduct of their business. Cartels directly inflict seemingly endless violence, recruit the youth of Latin America into a life of crime, and facilitate corruption within a government that is supposed to protect the population. As a byproduct of their business, cartels distribute products that poison people all over the world. They prey on addictions, destroy families, and leave their customers desperate for their next high. Governments should focus on these negative aspects and attempt to influence the population away from supporting the cartels. However, this recommendation also comes with its own set of challenges. If a population already does not trust its government, it is likely they will not trust or care to listen to its messages. They will view the messages as propaganda, and it will further damage the relationship. Furthermore, if the cartels continuously outperform the government by offering protection and providing necessary services, the government’s messages will likely fall on deaf ears. As Kilcullen alludes, the population will support the entity that provides for them the most.

Lastly, governments should strengthen partnerships among neighboring countries and facilitate intelligence sharing that allows law enforcement to operate freely across borders and jurisdictions. Just as TCOs are transnational, law enforcement needs to be able to freely operate transnationally with the most relevant and current intelligence possible. Multilateral and interagency cooperation should be paramount to defeat sophisticated and adaptable TCOs in Latin America. The United States has a role to play in this aspect. The United States has the global reach, the established agencies and systems in place, and the financial might to facilitate combatting TCOs. With decades of counter-TCO experience, agencies like the DEA, FBI, and the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics Matters (INM) stand ready to assist and offer insights on how to conduct efficient counter-TCO operations. Of equal importance, the United States has the ability to supplement funding for Latin American countries that struggle to meet the requisite financial thresholds to run effective counter-TCO campaigns as was seen in Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative in Mexico. Countries should band together with the United States to fight the persistent TCO threat and create a more stable and secure Latin America.

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