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THESIS

**POSSIBLE ORGANIZED CRIME AND TERRORISM
NEXUS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

by

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June 2023

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**POSSIBLE ORGANIZED CRIME AND TERRORISM NEXUS IN TRINIDAD
AND TOBAGO**

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ABSTRACT

The fight against terrorism and organized crime is a global struggle for most nations, including Trinidad and Tobago (TT). This thesis investigates how an understanding of organized criminal networks can inform counterterrorism strategies and, in turn, shape policies to combat crime. It recommends steps to “harden” existing approaches to fighting terrorist cells and criminal networks. Using a case study analysis, the thesis draws parallels from Mexico and Colombia. It also draws on scholarly publications, government records, and databases such as the Global Terrorism Database and Global Organized Crime Index. Using Phil Williams’s crime-terror framework for analysis, the thesis shows that both types of groups use violence to destabilize governmental authority and undermine the state’s reputation by positioning themselves as a politically and economically viable supplier of services. The findings reveal that such groups have shown extraordinary flexibility and versatility in circumventing law enforcement and security measures. Yet, the findings also show that a small island nation under effective governance, such as TT, may be best positioned to combat these threats, leading to greater security in the Caribbean region and beyond.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	PROBLEM STATEMENT: THE THREAT OF RISING CRIME IN THE CARIBBEAN HAS BROADER IMPLICATIONS	1
B.	RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS	3
C.	RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY	3
D.	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	6
E.	LITERATURE REVIEW	6
	1. Terrorism and Organized Crime Definitions.....	7
	2. Terrorism and Organized Crime Interactions.....	8
	3. Terrorism and Organized Crime in Latin America and the Caribbean	13
	4. Global Responses to Terrorism and Organized Crime	14
F.	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	16
	1. Relationships between Terrorists and Criminals— Cooperation and Conflict	18
	2. Hybrid Organizations.....	19
	3. Appropriation.....	20
	4. Transformation	20
G.	RESEARCH GAP.....	22
H.	METHODOLOGY	22
I.	THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE.....	23
II.	CASE STUDY: MEXICO	25
A.	ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND	25
B.	VIOLENCE IN MEXICO	26
C.	TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS.....	27
D.	APPLICATION OF VIOLENCE FOR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES	29
E.	DOMESTIC RADICALIZATION AND THE TRANSNATIONAL TERROR NEXUS.....	30
F.	RESILIENCE IN MEXICO.....	36
G.	CONCLUSION	37
III.	CASE STUDY: COLOMBIA	39
A.	BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW	39
B.	FARC: ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND	41

C.	TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME ORGANIZATIONS.....	44
D.	APPLICATION OF VIOLENCE FOR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES.....	46
E.	DOMESTIC RADICALIZATION AND THE TRANSNATIONAL TERROR NEXUS	48
F.	RESILIENCE IN COLOMBIA.....	53
G.	CONCLUSION.....	54
IV.	ANALYSIS.....	55
A.	OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, AND ENTITIES.....	55
1.	Proposition 1	56
2.	Proposition 2	57
3.	Proposition 3	58
4.	Proposition 4	59
B.	RESILIENCE, GOVERNANCE, AND CORRUPTION.....	60
C.	CONCLUSION.....	62
V.	CONCLUSION	63
A.	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR “HARDENING” THE SYSTEM	63
B.	FINAL THOUGHTS	66
	LIST OF REFERENCES.....	69
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	85

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Possible relationships and transformations between terrorist organizations and criminal enterprises.....	18
Figure 2.	The Global Organized Crime Index Report for Mexico—Criminality scores.....	34
Figure 3.	The Global Organized Crime Index Report for Mexico—Resilience scores.....	35
Figure 4.	The Global Terrorism Database—Types of attacks conducted by TCOs in Mexico.....	36
Figure 5.	The Global Organized Crime Index Report for Colombia—Criminality scores.....	51
Figure 6.	The Global Organized Crime Index Report for Colombia—Resilience scores.....	52
Figure 7.	The Global Terrorism Database—Types of attacks conducted by TCOs in Colombia.	53

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AUC	United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
CoP	Commissioner of Police
CSDI	Colombian Strategic Development Initiative
CT	counter terrorism
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DTO	drug trafficking organizations
ELN	National Liberation Army
EPL	Popular Liberation Army
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FTF	foreign terrorist fighter
GOCI	Global Organized Crime Index
GTD	Global Terrorism Database
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JAM	Jamaat Al Muslimeen
M-19	19th April Movement
OC	organized crime
OCG	organized crime groups
PCC	Colombian Communist Party
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PKK	Kurdish Workers Party
TCO	transnational crime organizations
TT	Trinidad and Tobago
TTPS	Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
U.S.	United States
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UP	Patriotic Union

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In comparison to the rest of the world, Latin America and the Caribbean have far higher rates of violent crime and homicide.¹ Conditions attributed to organized crime, is considered to have a substantial impact on the economies and societies of Caribbean nations.² The region is particularly vulnerable to the menace of transnational organized crime due to its geographical positioning, limited law enforcement capabilities, and susceptibility to external disturbances. The widespread outbreak of violence is a direct outcome of the proliferation of drug and weapon trafficking, as well as gang activities in the region.

This thesis examines the following questions:

1. To what extent can an understanding of Trinidad and Tobago's organized criminal networks inform the country's counterterrorism strategy?
2. Should a common set of measures be implemented to "harden" Trinidad and Tobago's national security system against terrorist cells and criminal networks to enhance crime prevention in Trinidad and Tobago?

Criminal networks in the Latin American and Caribbean region are on the rise, and that trend is accompanied by violence and numerous illicit activities. Jamaica, for example, registered its highest per capita homicide rate, regionally, in 2022.³ Meanwhile, the twin island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, has become a trusted hub for the transshipment of illegal goods destined for the North American and European markets due to its convenient location. Consequently, the Caribbean region is confronted with the task of comprehending the interdependence between terrorism and organized crime, as they have the potential to

¹ IEP, *Economic Value of Peace 2021: Measuring the Global Economic Impact of Violence and Conflict* (Sydney: IEP, 2021), 17, <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources>.

² Heather Sutton, Laura Jaitam, and Jeetendra Khadan, "Violence in the Caribbean: Cost and Impact," in *Unleashing Growth and Strengthening Resilience in the Caribbean*, ed. Krishna Srinivasan et al. (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2017), 329, <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/display/book/9781484315194/ch15.xml>.

³ Statista, "Homicide Rate in Latin America by Country," Statista, March 2, 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/947781/homicide-rates-latin-america-caribbean-country/>.

reinforce each other. Despite the significant allocation of resources by governments towards national security, the prevalence of drug and weapon trafficking, organized crime, and gang activity has resulted in a pervasive outbreak of violence that has far-reaching effects throughout the region.

The research on the crime-terror nexus generally agrees that these interconnections strengthen terrorist organizations by centralizing their funding, making them more potent and resilient, and thereby increasing the threat of terrorism. This study, which adopts a case study approach, applies the framework developed by Phil Williams to highlight how links between criminal and terrorist organizations can be forged along three main trendlines: growing but still limited cooperation, the employment of illicit tactics by terrorist factions, and the radicalization of criminal syndicates.⁴

The first case study presented in this thesis examines the permeable borders between criminal and terrorist groups in Mexico, as well as between domestic terrorist groups and Mexican drug cartels. According to the Global Initiative's Global Organized Crime Index (GOCI), Mexico has a criminality score of 7.56⁵ and a resiliency score of 4.46,⁶ with cocaine, synthetic drug trade, human smuggling, arms trafficking, cannabis, and the heroin trade being the highest scorers. Furthermore, transnational crime organizations (TCO) in that country engage in behaviors similar to those of terrorists to support their cause and pose a danger to the Mexican government. Due to strong distribution networks and mutually beneficial ties with U.S.-based gangs and their use of violence for political ends, such groups have expanded internationally. At the same time, corruption plays an integral part of the problems plaguing Mexico's judicial system. Mexico's below average resilience score (4.46) suggests that the country's policy measures have had only a moderate impact on criminal activity.

⁴ Phil Williams, "Terrorist Financing and Organized Crime: Nexus, Appropriation, or Transformation?," in Thomas J. Biersteker and Sue E. Eckert, eds., *Countering the Financing of Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2007), chap. 6, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203944639>.

⁵ Global Organized Crime Index, "Criminality in Mexico – The Organized Crime Index," Global Organized Crime Index, accessed April 18, 2023, <https://ocindex.net/country/mexico>.

⁶ Global Organized Crime Index, "Resilience in Mexico – The Organized Crime Index," Global Organized Crime Index, accessed April 18, 2023, <https://ocindex.net/country/mexico>.

The second case study presented is on Colombia, which is the second most vulnerable country to organized crime, scoring 7.67 in terms of criminality.⁷ A prime example of the crime-terror nexus, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has used organized crime as the backbone of its terrorist actions. In response, the country has implemented strong legal, political, and strategic frameworks. Nevertheless, these policies have only had a mediocre effect in the fight against organized crime, as evidenced by Colombia's average score of 6 on the GOCI scale.⁸ Despite its reputation as a leader among Latin American countries in terms of open government, Colombia still struggles to restore the public's faith in its institutions due to persistent corruption, the pervasiveness of organized crime and violence, and civil society's difficulty in achieving its goals.

To sum up, this thesis identifies the interdependent and synergistic relationships between organized criminal entities and terrorist organizations that enable them to leverage each other's resources, knowledge, and connections. Furthermore, this study argues that to enhance resilience against criminal activities and acts of terrorism, countries must prioritize effective governance and anti-corruption measures.

Island nations and smaller countries may possess an inherent advantage in curtailing organized criminal syndicates owing to their insular characteristics. And tapping this advantage is critical as crime has the potential to impede the growth of an island or smaller country to an insurmountable magnitude and degree. In the hypothetical scenario of a government that is corrupt and compromised, the size and geographical location of the nation becomes inconsequential as the governing authority is not effectively involved in monitoring and remedying domestic security threats. When a government of an island nation or smaller country operates with integrity and efficacy, on the other hand, it poses a significant challenge for organized criminal factions to carry out their activities. This is because the limited size of the populace and the requisite economies of scale in these countries make it increasingly difficult for criminal organizations to operate. In a small

⁷ Global Organized Crime Index, "Criminality in Colombia," Global Organized Crime Index, accessed March 2, 2023, <https://ocindex.net/country/colombia>.

⁸ Global Organized Crime Index, "Resilience in Colombia," Global Organized Crime Index, accessed March 2, 2023, <https://ocindex.net/country/colombia>.

country or an island nation, a government with integrity and efficacy has magnified importance.

Specifically, this study recommends that the most effective course of action to combat criminal organizations in Caribbean states would be to enhance the coherence of current legislative measures through modification. The implementation of durable solutions should prioritize the resolution of concerns such as political grievances, ideological differences, and societal seclusion. Additionally, it is imperative for policy makers to undertake a thorough and analytical evaluation of regional interagency task forces, while simultaneously fostering interregional confidence and cooperation among the constituent states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Finally, it is advisable to establish a comprehensive legal and regulatory structure that would aid in the demarcation of protocols for interregional cooperation among the member states of CARICOM.

This thesis emphasizes continuous learning, adjustment, and collaboration at the national, regional, and international levels to guarantee the sustained effectiveness of these pursuits. Given its status as a small island nation, Trinidad and Tobago faces unique challenges and opportunities within its specific context. The prosperity of this nation has the potential to contribute substantially to enhancing security and stability not only in the Caribbean area but also in other regions.

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In conclusion, I dedicate this thesis to my dear father, Reginald. Your untimely passing during my stint at NPS was a profound loss, yet your enduring spirit continues to guide and inspire me. Until the very end, you were my biggest supporter, always urging me to strive for excellence. Your legacy lives on in this thesis and in all my future endeavors. I hope to make you proud.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT: THE THREAT OF RISING CRIME IN THE CARIBBEAN HAS BROADER IMPLICATIONS

The rates of violent crime and homicide in Latin America and the Caribbean are significantly higher than in other parts of the world.¹ Crime is responsible for over one-third of the economic cost of violence in Latin America and the Caribbean. Due to these high rates, more people in the Caribbean see crime and security issues as the most pressing issues in their country, even more pressing than either poverty or inequality.² The prevalence of crime, especially violent crime, places a significant economic and social strain on Caribbean countries. Furthermore, it has been theorized that when there is a sudden shift in the rate of violent crime, the explanation is typically connected to organized crime.³

The Caribbean is particularly vulnerable to the danger of transnational organized crime and its many incarnations because of its geographical position, the limited law enforcement capabilities to effectively monitor extensive coastlines, and the region's sensitivity to external disturbances.⁴ Additionally, some of the world's most heavily traveled drug smuggling routes pass through the Caribbean, connecting the southernmost drug-producing countries to the northernmost consumer markets.⁵ As a result of this vulnerability, concerns about terrorists forming partnerships with criminal organizations

¹ IEP, *Economic Value of Peace 2021: Measuring the Global Economic Impact of Violence and Conflict* (Sydney: IEP, 2021), 17, <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources>.

² Heather Sutton, Laura Jaitam, and Jeetendra Khadan, "Violence in the Caribbean: Cost and Impact," in *Unleashing Growth and Strengthening Resilience in the Caribbean*, ed. Krishna Srinivasan et al. (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2017), 329, <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/display/book/9781484315194/ch15.xml>.

³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide 2019* (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019), 20, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/global-study-on-homicide.html>.

⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *UNODC Regional Programme 2014–2016 in Support of the CARICOM Crime and Security Strategy* (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013), 7, <https://www.unodc.org/ropan/en/unodc-regional-programme-2014-2016-in-support-of-the-caricom-crime-and-security-strategy.html>.

⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 7.

are exacerbated by the rise of organized crime in the Caribbean and the difficulties governments in the region have in addressing institutional issues.

The widespread belief that the Caribbean provides an ideal environment for criminal organizations to prosper has contributed significantly to the region's rise in worldwide drug trafficking.⁶ In this instance, the transshipment location of Trinidad and Tobago (TT) has caused this small island Caribbean nation to become a reliable waypoint for the receipt and shipment of illicit items to North America and Europe. According to TT local news, a cargo ship which departed from Trinidad containing 332 kilograms of cocaine concealed within juice tins, resulted in the greatest narcotics bust in the history of the Norfolk Port in Virginia, the United States, in 2013.⁷ In 2020, news outlets reported that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) confiscated approximately a ton of marijuana in a container arriving from the port of Port of Spain. The marijuana is suspected to have belonged to a criminal group with ties to Jamaica, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada.⁸

The aforementioned incidents have led to a ripple effect, which has been observed in the escalation of criminal behavior and violent acts throughout TT. Recently, there have been reports of elevated homicide rates, violence associated with gang activity, and a prevailing sense of insecurity within the nation.⁹ Furthermore, this situation has potential ramifications not only for Trinidad and Tobago, but also for the wider Caribbean territory. These include the deterioration of institutions and the proliferation of corrupt practices, as well as the depletion of law enforcement resources and potential repercussions on a

⁶ Wendell Wallace, "An Exploratory Study on the Impact of Organized Crime on Societies in Small Island Developing States: Evidence from Five (5) Caribbean Countries," *Perspectivas*, March 2017, 1, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321808834_An_Exploratory_Study_on_the_Impact_of_Organized_Crime_on_Societies_in_Small_Island_Developing_States_Evidence_from_Five_5_Caribbean_Countries/citations.

⁷ Nalini Seelal, "\$640m Cocaine in Juice Tins," *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*, January 18, 2014, <http://archives.newspaper.co.tt/2014/01/18/640m-cocaine-in-juice-tins/>.

⁸ Guillermo Saavedra, "Trinidad and Tobago Forces Seize Almost 1 Ton of Marijuana," *Dialogo Americas*, October 7, 2020, <https://dialogo-americas.com/articles/trinidad-and-tobago-forces-seize-almost-1-ton-of-marijuana/>.

⁹ Peter Appleby et al., *InSight Crime's 2022 Homicide Round-Up* (Washington, DC: Center for Latin American & Latino Studies, 2023), <https://insightcrime.org/news/insight-crime-2022-homicide-round-up/>.

regional and global scale. Despite the significant allocation of resources by governments towards national security, the prevalence of drug and weapon trafficking, organized crime, and gang activity has resulted in a pervasive outbreak of violence that has far-reaching effects throughout the region. As such, the attainment of a viable solution to this issue appears to be a formidable challenge.

B. RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

As the potential connections between terrorism and organized crime become more intricate, the Caribbean region faces an increasing challenge in terms of its ability to better grasp the nature of the two threats and distinguish between them. In addition, given that organized crime and terrorism operate in the same space, they can easily become mutually supportive, and therefore, their evolving relationship and evident nexus cannot be overlooked. To some extent, one could argue that this potential space already exists in TT. Therefore, once an in-depth understanding of these illegal activities can be systematically specified, then appropriate measures can be taken towards lessening the severity of the problems these activities pose. With this context in mind, this thesis focuses on answering the following questions:

1. To what extent can an understanding of the Trinidad and Tobago's organized criminal networks inform the country's counterterrorism strategy?
2. Should a common set of measures be implemented to "harden" the Trinidad and Tobago's national security system against terrorist cells and criminal networks to enhance crime prevention in Trinidad and Tobago?

C. RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

In Trinidad and Tobago, acts of terrorism and/or violent extremism, have been dormant for several years, with the last major recorded attack taking place during the 1990 attempted coup. Imam Yasin Abu Bakr directed this extremist act on July 27, 1990, when

he captured the Prime Minister and other government representatives in the Red House.¹⁰ The TTPS headquarters was destroyed, and the local television station where he declared his intentions, was also captured. Abu Bakr's mentor, Muammar Qaddafi, was responsible for encouraging his revolutionary ideas which subsequently led to the formation of this Muslimeen coalition known as the Jamaat al Muslimeen (JAM). Qaddafi provided the funds to support the recruiting and training of TT citizens for this venture whilst the arms and ammunitions were sourced from Libya.

JAM's influence encouraged recruitment numbers to grow in the upcoming years through charitable offerings that were distributed amongst communities.¹¹ Their claim was to fight against gang and drug violence in struggling communities. Nevertheless, this "cause" emulated acts of vigilantism and criminal violence. Due to the accumulation of arms and ammunition and the execution of combat training, JAM began to bear a resemblance to a paramilitary group.¹² As the years passed, the illegal operations associated with JAM expanded to encompass drug trafficking, firearm trafficking, abduction for ransom, money laundering, and extortion.¹³ Additionally, in 2017, it was reported that several persons from the JAM were recruited into the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) organization.¹⁴

At the same time, a large part of Central America has been destabilized by transnational criminal organizations (TCO), which often operate on a scale equivalent to that of multinational businesses. Consequently, the corrupting influence of the TCOs would have fatal repercussions on small regional nations. In response, units and agencies

¹⁰ Chris Zambelis, "Jamaat Al-Muslimeen on Trial in Trinidad and Tobago," *Terrorism Monitor* 4, no. 5 (March 2006): 1–5, <https://jamestown.org/program/jamaat-al-muslimeen-on-trial-in-trinidad-and-tobago/>.

¹¹ Daniel P. Aldrich and Raghunath Mahabir, "Countering Violent Extremism in Trinidad and Tobago: An Evaluation," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, June 2022, 5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2022.2059351>.

¹² Andrew Silke, "Jamaat-al-Muslimeen: The Blurred Lines between Organized Crime and Terrorism in Trinidad and Tobago," in *Historical Perspectives on Organized Crime and Terrorism*, ed. James Windle, John Morrison, and Aaron Winter (London: Routledge, 2018), chap. 11.

¹³ Zambelis, "Jamaat Al-Muslimeen on Trial in Trinidad and Tobago."

¹⁴ Emma Graham-Harrison and Joshua Surtees, "Trinidad's Jihadis: How Tiny Nation Became Isis Recruiting Ground," *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*, February 2, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/02/trinidad-jihadis-isis-tobago-tariq-abdul-haqq>.

have been established to combat organized crime and their effects in TT; however, crime and violence have continued to rise—intensifying citizens’ perceptions of insecurity. Between the years 2000 and 2010, there were 25.1 homicides for per 100,000 people in TT, which compares to 20.9 for the entire Caribbean region and 5.4 for the United States.¹⁵

Several local newspapers have reported skyrocketing crime rates, and some journalists have speculated that this rise may be the result of the radicalization effect.¹⁶ In a newspaper article, TT’s acting Commissioner of Police (CoP) described this type of behavior as ‘criminalized radicalization.’¹⁷ Consequently, defense against ever evolving and expanding crime requires constantly evolving legislation. However, for TT, due to the constantly changing nature of the illegal and interdependent activities, legislating or enforcing a specific definition of such activities and standard response to them may be difficult.

In the Caribbean region, multiple policies have been produced regarding terrorism and counterterrorism. At the 29th Inter-sessional Meeting of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) in 2018, a counterterrorism strategy was developed and disseminated accordingly. The bottom line from the strategy was that CARICOM states are “not immune from violent extremism, the foreign terrorist fighter (FTF) phenomenon or the global threat of terrorism.”¹⁸ Prior to this, the Trinidad and Tobago National Security Council authorized a counterterrorism plan in 2017. The TT policy focused on discouraging participation in and support for terrorism, increasing national counterterrorism capabilities, and creating national resilience in the event of an

¹⁵ Randy Seepersad, *Crime and Violence in Trinidad and Tobago: IDB Series on Crime and Violence in the Caribbean*, ed. Heather Sutton (Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2016), <https://publications.iadb.org/en/crime-and-violence-trinidad-and-tobago-idb-series-crime-and-violence-caribbean>.

¹⁶ Paolo Kernahan, “Criminals Large and in Charge,” *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*, June 2, 2022, <https://newsday.co.tt/2022/06/02/criminals-large-and-in-charge/>.

¹⁷ Anna-Lisa Paul, “CoP: Gangs Now Specialising in Home Invasions,” *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*, May 30, 2022, <https://guardian.co.tt/news/cop-gangs-now-specialising-in-home-invasions-6.2.1499840.d89409369e>.

¹⁸ Heads of Government of CARICOM, *Crime and Violence in Trinidad and Tobago* (Haiti: Heads of Government of CARICOM, 2018), <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://caricomimpacs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CARICOM-COUNTER-TERRORISM-STRATEGY-Final.pdf>.

attack. However, as of today, neither the public nor any government agencies with a role to play, has officially been given access to the policy.¹⁹

D. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The escalation of criminal networks within the Latin American and Caribbean region shows no sign of abating in the immediate future. According to the Statista Research Department, homicide rates have escalated to concerning levels, with Jamaica exhibiting the highest rates per capita regionally for the year 2022.²⁰ In that same year, the research department also reported that Trinidad and Tobago ranked third, while Colombia and Mexico occupied the fifth and seventh positions, respectively. Criminal networks offer a conducive environment for the propagation of radicalization and violent extremism, rendering them more vulnerable to adopting extremist ideologies.

As such, by investigating the possibility of this nexus, policymakers and law enforcement agencies can develop targeted strategies to combat these threats, thereby enhancing regional security, stability, and economic development. Additionally, examining the interconnectedness of these activities promotes international cooperation, as global partners recognize the importance of a unified response to counter transnational organized crime and terrorism.

E. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides an overview of organized crime and terrorism, including their respective definitions, the nature of their interactions across various regions, and an examination of global responses to these phenomena. Studying the conduct of criminal and terrorist organizations can aid in assessing the potential for correlation between them and devising suitable measures of deterrence.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2017* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2018), https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/crt_2017.pdf.

²⁰ “Homicide Rate in Latin America by Country.”

1. Terrorism and Organized Crime Definitions

There is no generally accepted definition of terrorism, and scholars are divided on how to define it. The lack of a common understanding of what constitutes terrorism has led to the opportunistic appropriation of the term, which in turn has hampered international cooperation and resulted in isolated and ineffectual responses.²¹ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) describes terrorism as “another form of organized criminal behavior,” but it differs from organized crime in several respects.²² Leonard Weinberg, who has examined overlaps between definitions, concluded that terrorism can be characterized as “a politically motivated tactic involving the threat or use of violence in which the pursuit of publicity plays a significant role.”²³ Similarly, based on his examination of global terrorist events, author Alexander Aguirre, has identified the common features of terrorism as “the premeditated or deliberate use of force or violence, directed against civilians or non-combatants, perpetrated by non-state actors, to achieve a political purpose.”²⁴

According to a broad academic consensus, organized crime refers to persistent criminal organizations that systematically seek to maximize their financial gain through illegal activities that enjoy widespread popular support. Additionally, force, threats, monopoly control, and/or bribery of public authorities all play a role in ensuring the organization’s survival.²⁵ In terms of structure and purpose, UNODC defines organized crime 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 offences, in

²¹ Anthony Richards, “Conceptualizing Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37, no. 3 (February 2014): 214, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2014.872023>.

²² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Organized Crime Module 1 Key Issues: Similarities & Differences* (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), accessed July 15, 2022, [//www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org).

²³ Leonard Weinberg, in *Democracy and Terrorism: Friend or Foe?* (London: Routledge, 2013), 14, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203071977>.

²⁴ Alexander P. Aguirre, “The Philippine Response to Terrorism,” *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 4, no. 1 (August 2011): 47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18335300.2009.9686923>.

²⁵ Jay Albanese and Philip Reichel, eds., *Transnational Organized Crime an Overview from Six Continents* (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013), 1.

order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit.” The activities conducted by these groups include the trafficking of people, drugs, illicit goods and weapons, as well as activities such as armed robbery, counterfeiting, and money laundering.²⁶ The issue of organized crime has expanded from domestic to global proportions. Today’s organized crime syndicates operate in numerous nations at once to profit from both illicit and legal economies around the world.

2. Terrorism and Organized Crime Interactions

The nexus or probable relationship between organized crime and terrorism has already been recognized by authors such as Tamara Makarenko, Chris Dishman, and R.T. Naylor.²⁷ These writers have divulged that the interactions between these groups are direct, whether they be cooperative or exploitive. Furthermore, the authors have also categorized these interactions based on their perceptions. Dishman explains that terrorist groups can metamorphose into criminal entities that operate as “political by day and criminal by night” as a direct effect of radical change.²⁸ In a similar vein, regarding his study of criminal organization and terrorists, Naylor argues that criminal activity might serve as a bridge between terrorists and other criminals due to an evolutionary relationship between the two groups.²⁹

Both academics and those working in policy and practice have begun to focus on the connections between criminality and terrorist acts. Colin Clarke, a senior researcher of domestic and transnational terrorism, explains that while some may argue that the idea of a link between criminal activity and terrorism is exaggerated, others contend that it is more

²⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Organized Crime Module 1 Key Issues*.

²⁷ John T. Picarelli, “The Turbulent Nexus of Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism: A Theory of Malevolent International Relations,” *Global Crime* 7, no. 1 (January 2007): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17440570600650125>.

²⁸ Chris Dishman, “The Leaderless Nexus: When Crime and Terror Converge,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, no. 28 (September 2004): 247, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100590928124>; quoted in Picarelli, “The Turbulent Nexus of Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism: A Theory of Malevolent International Relations,” 3.

²⁹ R. T. Naylor, *Wages of Crime: Black Markets, Illegal Finance, and the Underworld Economy* (Ontario: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt130hb7k>; quoted in Picarelli, “The Turbulent Nexus of Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism: A Theory of Malevolent International Relations,” 3.

accurate to view criminal activity and terrorism as two ends of a continuum, where groups shift back and forth between ideological and profit-driven motivations over time.³⁰ The term nexus alludes to the junction of crime and terror and the belief that criminals and terrorists have a link, which might be transient, one-time, or permanent.³¹ Although the increasing interest in this nexus may give the impression that this problem has recently emerged, this is not the case.

The crime-terror continuum, which was first identified by Makarenko, illustrates the general concept of how organized crime and terrorist groups are closely connected. This model considers the following for group symbiosis: alliance, operational motivations, convergence, and the blackhole syndrome. A case study conducted by Michael Roth and Murat Sever explains that an alliance exists between the PKK (the Kurdish Workers Party terrorist group) and Kurdish criminal clans similar to alliances among the Sicilian mafia families. From manufacturing to retail distribution, the PKK controls the drug trade. Its vertical business operation starts with Pakistani-sourced morphine and finishes with PKK-hired dealers selling narcotics in Europe.³²

In terms of operational motivations, organized crime groups may use terror tactics to coerce governments into negotiations and compromise, especially when their illicit operations are threatened by the state.³³ Mark Galeotti's 2014 study demonstrates that the goals of these terrorist operations are limited to securing their operational environment rather than bringing about fundamental change.³⁴ He notes that in 2002, as more stringent limitations were put on gang leaders in Brazil due to the growing influence of indigenous

³⁰ Colin P. Clarke, "Crime and Terror in Europe: Where the Nexus Is Alive and Well," *The RAND Blog*, December 15, 2016, 1, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2016/12/crime-and-terror-in-europe-where-the-nexus-is-alive.html>.

³¹ Clarke, 1.

³² Michael P. Roth and Murat Sever, "Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) as Criminal Syndicate: Funding Terrorism Through Organized Crime. A Case Study," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 10 (August 2007): 913–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100701558620>.

³³ Tamara Makarenko, "The Crime-Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism," in *Global Crime Today: The Changing Face of Organised Crime*, ed. Mark Galeotti (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 134, ProQuest.

³⁴ Makarenko, 133.

drug trafficking, they countered by shooting at government buildings, launching attacks on police officers, and bombing buses. Likewise, with the passage of stricter anti-mafia laws in Italy in 1993, the Sicilian mafia resorted to similar tactics, such as bombing areas close to the mainland.³⁵

According to the convergence theory, terrorist organizations and organized crime groups merge into one entity that exhibits both groups' characteristics at first; their aims gradually become entangled.³⁶ Mexican criminal organizations, for example, have showed a level of convergence in the way they operate, as researched by Phillips in 2018. In Mexico, these organizations still function as organized crime groups; however, they adopt terrorist-like traits, that is, bombings, violence against politicians, and violent communications.³⁷ Conversely, Elisabeth Braw has reported that terrorist organizations like ISIS have leveraged widespread petty crime to finance relatively low-cost assaults in Europe as part of their recruitment strategy.³⁸

Lastly, there is the “black hole” syndrome which occurs when governments have been overthrown by organizations whose members engage in both criminal and political activities. Nations that have become governance-weakened, such as Afghanistan, provide safe havens for these extremist or radicalized operations.³⁹ Based on her findings, Makarenko posited that transnational organized crime groups, by facilitating opium distribution and terrorism within that country and causing political unrest, have made Afghanistan the perfect “black hole” country. Other writers' research supports the idea that

³⁵ Makarenko, 134.

³⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Linkages between Organized Crime and Terrorism*, Module 16 (Vienna: Education for Justice, 2019), 21, https://www.unodc.org/documents/e4j/FINAL_Module_16_Linkages_between_Organized_Crime_andTerrorism_14_Mar_2019.pdf.

³⁷ Brian J. Phillips, “Terrorist Tactics by Criminal Organizations: The Mexican Case in Context,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 1 (February 2018): 49, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26343745>.

³⁸ Elisabeth Braw, “Foreign Fighters Financing: The Very Non-Halal Ways Potential Jihadists Are Funding Their Work,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 25, 2015, www.foreignaffairs.com.

³⁹ Frank Madsen, *Transnational Organized Crime* (London: Routledge, 2009), 67, <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.libproxy.nps.edu/chapters/mono/10.4324/9780203875827-12/transnational-crime-terrorism-frank-madsen?context=ubx>.

Mexico displays many of the characteristics of a country on the brink of “black hole” status.⁴⁰

Many scholars believe that the relationship between organized crime and terrorist organizations may and does exist. Others, however, Phil Williams, for instance, argue that most statements concerning the connection between these groups are supported by weak anecdotal evidence, from which flawed conclusions are derived. He further states that the extent, intensity, form, and duration of criminal and terrorist collaborations are seldom investigated, which leads to strategic importance being placed on transactions that would otherwise be considered routine.⁴¹ Alex Schmid similarly argues that criminals and terrorists have a few individual and organizational likenesses. These organizations are risk averse and hesitant to take the increased risk of partnerships, making it difficult for outsiders to be integrated in any significant capacity, much less over the long run.⁴²

The 1990s saw the blurring of the lines between criminal and political violence due to the rise of international organized crime and the evolving characteristics of terrorism.⁴³ There have been several academic studies devoted to the phenomenon, particularly as it relates to this nexus; however, these writers only hint at the proximity of some forms of political violence to conventional criminality rather than describing specific parallels.⁴⁴ The emergence of a nexus, in whatever form it takes, is not the result of chance but is linked

⁴⁰ Frank S. Perri and Richard G. Brody, “The Dark Triad: Organized Crime, Terror and Fraud,” *Journal of Money Laundering Control* 14, no. 1 (2011): 52, <https://doi.org/10.1108/13685201111098879>.

⁴¹ Phil Williams, “Organized Crime and Terrorism” (working paper, LACC School of International and Public Affairs, 2014), 4, ProQuest.

⁴² Alex P. Schmid, “Links Between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorist Crimes,” *Transnational Organized Crime* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 40–82.

⁴³ Annette Hübschle, “From Theory to Practice: Exploring the Organized Crime–Terror Nexus in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no. 3–4 (September 2011): 85, https://www.academia.edu/4056647/From_theory_to_practice_Exploring_the_organized_crime_terror_nexus_in_sub_Saharan_Africa.

⁴⁴ Vincenzo Ruggiero, “Hybrids,” in *Organized Crime and Terrorist Networks*, ed. Vincenzo Ruggiero (London: Routledge, 2019), 26.

to a confluence of demographic, economic, and political forces.⁴⁵ It has long been known that criminal organizations often work in tandem with terrorist or extremist groups. However, the circumstances in which this confluence plays a role in defining the national security threat are dynamic.

Terrorist organizations and criminal gangs have much in common, and it is not just the fact that they both resort to extreme violence in order to perform illegal acts and question the authority of the state and the rule of law. Drug organizations, while primarily financially driven, operate within a larger political and social framework that they want to influence; this fact must be considered to have a complete understanding of organized crime. It is common knowledge, for instance, that criminal organizations share the need for anonymity while also working to establish safe havens from which to carry out their deeds.⁴⁶ In this sense, it makes no difference whether the gang or other TCOs involved is primarily a criminal or terrorist organization. The analytical connection that directly links gangs, TCOs, and terrorists is that their overarching goal is to neutralize, control, or topple governments in order to guarantee their own commercial or ideological aspirations.⁴⁷

More significantly, the question may arise: What are some possible enablers of this nexus? It is believed that corruption, insufficient or inconsistently applied legislation, lax enforcement of existing laws, ambiguous financial institutions, poor economic conditions, a lack of respect for the rule of law, and poorly guarded borders contribute most to a country's "hospitality" to international crime and terrorism.⁴⁸ For example, countries

⁴⁵ Mariya Omelicheva and Lawrence Markowitz, "Beneath the 'Crime-Terror Nexus': Local Power Struggles, Competition over Resources, and Corrupt State," Minerva Research Initiative, December 5, 2019, https://minerva.defense.gov/Owl-In-the-Olive-Tree/Owl_View/Article/2032967/beneath-the-crime-terror-nexus-local-power-struggles-competition-over-resources/.

⁴⁶ Edgar Moreno Gómez, "Staging the War on Drugs: Media and Organised Crime in Mexico" (working paper, Elcano Royal Institute, 2012), 6, <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/work-document/staging-the-war-on-drugs-media-and-organised-crime-in-mexico/>.

⁴⁷ Max G. Manwaring, *A Contemporary Challenge to State Sovereignty: Gangs and Other Illicit Transnational Criminal Organizations in Central America, El Salvador, Mexico, Jamaica, and Brazil*, Security Issues in the Western Hemisphere (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2007), iii, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/1932.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Glenn E. Curtis, John N. Gibbs, and Ramón Miró, "Nations Hospitable to Organized Crime and Terrorism," *Trends in Organized Crime* 8, no. 1 (September 2004): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-004-1001-9>.

such as Afghanistan, Somalia, and Venezuela where there is little to no rule of law, create the optimal conditions for the merging of criminal and terrorist activity, while vulnerabilities in Mexico's visa and border control systems are a target for organized crime.⁴⁹ Another example where this nexus is strengthened is through the ubiquitous availability of small calibre weapons, including automatic weapons, that can be sold for profit or utilized in operations. In a failed state, trafficking and other types of criminality are the apparent and easier alternatives to the charitable donations and "legitimate" front companies that terrorist groups may otherwise rely on for funding.⁵⁰ What needs to be addressed is the prevalence of this nexus and the reasons why it emerges in some locations and not others.

3. Terrorism and Organized Crime in Latin America and the Caribbean

A substantial number of studies have been conducted on Latin American and Caribbean terrorist organizations that are sponsored by the manufacture of drugs and significant trafficking operations. In particular, groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) have moved up the drug supply chain from just collecting "taxes" from coca harvesters and intermediate purchasers to controlling a greater proportion of the market.⁵¹ Similarly in Peru, the Shining Path terrorist group, which Abimael Guzman established in the 1960s, resumed its ties to terrorism and drug trafficking, mounting a series of small-scale attacks against the country's police and armed forces.⁵² Meanwhile, drug cartels in Mexico have used terrorism tactics to boost their operational motives. According to a 2007 article in Mexico's *Proceso Magazine*, then-candidate for mayor of Río Bravo, Juan Antonio Guajardo

⁴⁹ World Governance Indicators, "WGI 2022 Interactive > Interactive Data Access," World Bank Organization, accessed December 10, 2022, <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Reports>.

⁵⁰ Thomas M. Sanderson, "Transnational Terror and Organized Crime: Blurring the Lines," *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 24, no. 1 (Winter-Spring 2004): 51–52, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26999200>.

⁵¹ John Rollins and Liana Sun Wyler, *Terrorism and Transnational Crime: Foreign Policy Issues for Congress*, CRS Report No. R41004 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013), 19, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/terror/R41004.pdf>.

⁵² Kathryn Gregory, *Shining Path, Tupac Amaru (Peru, Leftists)* (Washington, DC: Council on Foreign Relations, 2009), <https://www.cfr.org/background/shining-path-tupac-amaru-peru-leftists>.

Anzaldúa, made claims that his opponents were being bought off by criminal organizations. Threats were made against him during the campaign, and he was ultimately executed following the elections.⁵³

4. Global Responses to Terrorism and Organized Crime

In response to the September 11 attacks, the United States showed a drastic shift in its efforts to deal with the threat of terrorism, reducing its focus on transnational organized crime. Additionally, this change caused a major loss of organized crime and narcotics agents assigned to deal with counterterrorism (CT). As a result, the United States is now faced with having to restore its counter crime units in an attempt to deal with both groups. The resolution made was that some of these criminal infrastructures enforce terrorist activities.⁵⁴ A study in Australia showed that a joint operation conducted between law enforcement and CT units throughout a lengthy period proved to be successful in capturing wanted Afghan-Australian Milad bin Ahmad-Shah al-Ahmadzai. Although the operation was successful, it is undeniable that anti-organized crime initiatives in Australia, and even Canada, have suffered as a result of the narrow focus on CT.⁵⁵ Although combating terrorism is a key priority, it may lead to lost opportunities for interdicting terrorists or the organized criminal networks that support them.⁵⁶

In response to the fluidity of criminal networks and the recognition of the organized crime-terror nexus, the Obama administration formulated a Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime.⁵⁷ This strategy, which took the “whole-of-government”

⁵³ Proceso, “Tamaulipas: Executed, Guajardo Anzaldúa, along with Five Other People,” *Proceso*, November 30, 2007, <https://www.proceso.com.mx/nacional/2007/11/30/tamaulipas-ejecutado-guajardo-anzaldúa-junto-con-otras-cinco-personas-38779.html>.

⁵⁴ Gregory F. Treverton et al., “Organized Crime and Terrorism,” in *Film Piracy, Organized Crime, and Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), 25.

⁵⁵ Sam Mullins and James K. Wither, “Terrorism and Organized Crime,” *Connections* 15, no. 3 (Summer 2016): 78, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26326452>.

⁵⁶ R. Evan Ellis, *Transnational Organized Crime in Latin America and the Caribbean: From Evolving Threats and Responses to Integrated, Adaptive Solutions* (London: Lexington Books, 2018), 6, ProQuest.

⁵⁷ White House, *Fact Sheet: Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime* (Washington, DC: White House, 2011), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/07/25/fact-sheet-strategy-combat-transnational-organized-crime>.

approach, emphasized the need to fight not only criminal groups' leadership and members, but also to address the spectrum of enabling conditions for their activities and the institutional flaws that hinder the battle against them. Notwithstanding these advances in policymaking and institutional reform, the response to organized crime is, at best, inconsistent. It appears that the "whole of government" approach is widely accepted, but the quality of the resulting solutions and their implementation often depends on the competence and focus of top-level management.

Despite significant research, the concepts of resistance, adaptability, and opportunism that underpin criminal structures, their niches, and opportunities of organized crime groups remain poorly understood.⁵⁸ Even though there is limited knowledge of the mechanisms of these groups, some Caribbean countries have managed to implement measures aimed at curtailing the violence they fuel, as a response to the progression of these criminal organizations. In TT, a study titled "Evaluating Cure Violence," presented by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and Arizona State University, described a local violence prevention program that was implemented to address homicides and other crime-related activities within high-risk communities.⁵⁹

Other initiatives to reduce crime, along the lines of those already stated, have been introduced in communities in Jamaica and Nicaragua throughout the years.⁶⁰ Some of these programs have brought positive results. Notably, the former Mayor of Bogota, Colombia, reported a decrease in homicide rates from 80 percent to 22 percent per 100,000 inhabitants over a ten-year span.⁶¹ These measures, unfortunately, were not sustainable because the issue at hand, which is organized crime, has not been directly addressed. To

⁵⁸ Lilian Bobsa, "Seeking Out the State: Organized Crime, Violence, and Statetropism in the Caribbean," in *Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime, and Violence in the Americas Today*, ed. Bruce M. Bagley and Jonathan D. Rosen (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2015), 293–322.

⁵⁹ "IDB Study Shows How Trinidad and Tobago Can Prevent Crimes with Innovative Approach," Inter-American Development Bank, January 24, 2019, <https://www.iadb.org/en/news/idb-study-shows-how-trinidad-and-tobago-can-prevent-crimes-innovative-approach>.

⁶⁰ "IDB Supports the Fight Against Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean," Inter-American Development Bank, June 13, 2011, <https://www.iadb.org/en/news/idb-supports-fight-against-violence-latin-america-and-caribbean>.

⁶¹ Inter-American Development Bank, "A Multilateral Response to Rising Crime," Inter-American Development Bank, June 21, 2004, <https://www.iadb.org/en/news/multilateral-response-rising-crime>.

put it another way, these nations used a roundabout method, focusing on the internal violence rather than the source of that violence—organized criminals. As a result, the movement of firearms, ammunition, narcotics, and other actions and motivations associated with organized crime and terrorism continue to exist.

Terrorism, at its core, is the use of extreme violence to effect political change. Terrorist groups are not defined by their use of violence; rather, they are defined by the unusual confluence of their purposes (which may have underlying religious or ideological roots but manifest as political goals) and methods (extra-normal violence). On the other hand, the core of organized crime lies in the fusion of money-making motives with the methodical application of illicit operations.⁶² It is defined by its central goal—the pursuit of financial gain—and its characteristic method—the systematic utilization of illegal acts. It is widely acknowledged that a uniform approach is not applicable in addressing the actions of these factions. However, an assessment of the potential nexus and necessary counter measures can be guided by comprehending the abilities of the entities within and the activities carried out by crime and terror groups.

F. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Many authors have discussed the link between organized crime and terrorist groups, and a linear model, developed by Tamara Makarenko, has been used to analyze the relationship between the two groups.⁶³ Nevertheless, researcher Phil Williams recognized in his framework that “difficulties remain” in Makarenko’s analysis.⁶⁴ According to Williams, the term “nexus” has been misused to the point that it no longer describes anything meaningful, and some of the categories need to be broken down further.⁶⁵ The issue with the nexus approach, at least according to some of its critics, is that it treats

⁶² Phil Williams, “Terrorist Financing and Organized Crime: Nexus, Appropriation, or Transformation?,” in *Countering the Financing of Terrorism*, ed. Thomas J. Biersteker and Sue E. Eckert (London: Routledge, 2007), 129.

⁶³ Tamara Makarenko, “The Crime-Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism,” *Global Crime* 6, no. 1 (September 2010): 131, <https://doi-org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1080/1744057042000297025>.

⁶⁴ Williams, “Terrorist Financing and Organized Crime,” 128.

⁶⁵ Williams, 128.

different degrees of collaboration in the same manner.⁶⁶ To solidify this point, a further examination reveals that another term, “alliance,” in Makarenko’s analysis appears to encompass any sort of coordination between criminal and terrorist groups. There is no dispute regarding the existence of this collaboration; nevertheless, Williams argues that extending its definition to include “supplier relationships, which are only a byproduct of the market,” gives them an air of formality or intimacy that they do not merit.⁶⁷

The research on the crime-terror nexus generally agrees that these interconnections strengthen terrorist organizations by centralizing their funding, making them more potent and resilient, and thereby increasing the threat of terrorism.⁶⁸ Williams extends the scope of the discussion by elaborating on the previous differentiation between “objectives and activities,” and presents an analytical structure that differentiates between “entities and activities.”⁶⁹ In a nutshell, the method draws a line between what is truly important to an organization and what is merely used as a means to an end. While some pursuits can be adopted by a wide range of organizations, they more typically become an integral element of the identity and goals of a single type of organization.⁷⁰

Considering this method, this thesis employs the framework developed by Williams to analyze how the links between these organizations can be forged. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework that strongly suggests three main trends regarding the link between terrorist networks and organized crime: “growing but still limited cooperation between the two types of entities, the use of criminal methods by terrorist groups, and the radicalization

⁶⁶ Williams, 128.

⁶⁷ Phil Williams, “Terrorist Financing and Organized Crime: Nexus, Appropriation, or Transformation?,” in *Countering the Financing of Terrorism*, 1st ed., 2007, 128, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9780203944639/countering-financing-terrorism-thomas-biersteker-sue-eckert>.

⁶⁸ Mariya Omelicheva and Lawrence Markowitz, “Rethinking Intersections of Crime and Terrorism: Insights from Political Economies of Violence,” *International Studies Review*, 2021, 1556, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viab025>.

⁶⁹ Williams, “Terrorist Financing and Organized Crime,” 129.

⁷⁰ Williams, 128–29.

of criminal enterprises resulting in their transformation into terrorists (with some transformation in the opposite direction).”⁷¹

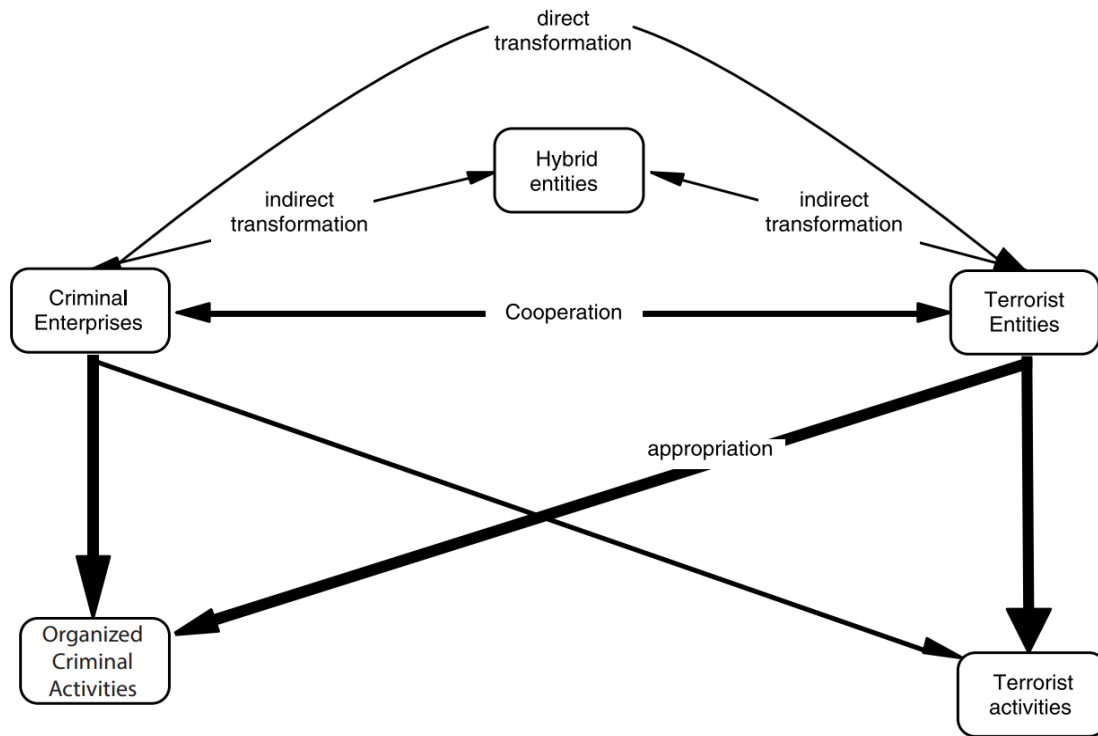


Figure 1. Possible relationships and transformations between terrorist organizations and criminal enterprises.⁷²

1. Relationships between Terrorists and Criminals—Cooperation and Conflict

Williams has observed that the relationship between the two groups encompasses a wide range of behaviors, ranging from conflict to cooperation. An exclusive emphasis on collaboration would obscure the whole range of possible interactions. These behaviors can either be predatory, as in the case with the PKK and the Kurdish drug network,⁷³ or

⁷¹ Williams, 145.

⁷² Source: Williams, 134.

⁷³ Williams, “Organized Crime and Terrorism,” 5.

supportive, where one type of organization is eager to pay for something that the other type possesses.⁷⁴ In these supportive roles, terrorist groups may contact these “criminal service providers” for the necessary assistance so that they can continue functioning.⁷⁵ Furthermore, increased cooperation between criminal and terrorist organizations has been observed in recent years, and this trend is expected to continue so long as these groups operate in the same geographic and economic environments.⁷⁶

2. Hybrid Organizations

Since some entities have both criminal and terrorist traits, it might be difficult to determine their primary nature. This fact allows for the detection of new types of organizations that combine elements from criminal and terrorist networks.⁷⁷ Several regions have seen the rise of hybrid organizations as a result of mergers; these groups combine political ambitions and power-seeking with illicit operations and violence (both targeted and not) for profit.⁷⁸ Hybrid groups start as either organized criminal groups that employ terror techniques to achieve political goals or as terrorist groups that utilize political discourse to engage in organized crime.⁷⁹

According to a study conducted by the Directorate General for Internal Policies, it is only in Italy and several other states on the European Union’s periphery where organized crime has been actively involved in politics.⁸⁰ On the other hand, terrorist-criminal hybrids maintain an ideological viewpoint while pursuing criminal activity. If these organizations have nothing to gain politically, they will continue to perpetrate acts of terrorism to make

⁷⁴ Williams, “Terrorist Financing and Organized Crime,” 135.

⁷⁵ John Rollins and Liana Sun Wyler, *Terrorism and Transnational Crime: Foreign Policy Issues for Congress*, CRS Report No. R41004 (Washington, DC: 2013), 2, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/terror/R41004.pdf>.

⁷⁶ Phil Williams, “Organized Crime and Terrorism” (working paper, LACC School of International and Public Affairs, 2014), 5, ProQuest.

⁷⁷ Williams, 7.

⁷⁸ Williams, “Terrorist Financing and Organized Crime,” 132.

⁷⁹ West Sands Advisory, *Europe’s Crime-Terror Nexus: Links between Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the European Union*, ed. Tamara Makarenko (Belgium: European Parliament, 2012), 36, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201211/20121127ATT56707/20121127ATT56707EN.pdf>.

⁸⁰ West Sands Advisory, 37.

themselves heard among competing criminal gangs and keep the attention of government and law officials on political matters. Maintaining the public image of a political component is crucial for these groups to keep their support base intact.⁸¹ The FARC is an organization that displays numerous traits of a hybrid, although it is debatable whether the group has abandoned its original ideological goals. Some argue that it has transitioned from a terrorist organization to a criminal syndicate.⁸²

3. Appropriation

Criminals who do not have the same political ideals as some terrorists are seen as potential betrayers or exploiters by terrorist organizations. It is therefore probably not so shocking that terrorists have turned to illegal acts for financial support. As an example, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) generated funds through a plethora of avenues. The PIRA relied on seven main financial streams to finance its violent campaign, including fraud, smuggling, “donations” from paramilitary operated pubs, threats to businesses until they paid, and armed robberies.⁸³ These examples of do-it-yourself organized criminal activities conducted by the PIRA were carried out in a professional manner. On the other hand, there are some terrorist organizations whose use of organized crime tactics is not only inept but also puts them at greater risk of being discovered.

4. Transformation

The concept of transformation holds that criminal groups can become politicized, and terrorist groups can become commercialized.⁸⁴ This variation accounts for instances in which terrorists scale back their terrorist actions in favor of criminal ones, or those in which criminal organizations become highly politicized and shift their focus to include more overtly political goals. Typically, it is a terrorist organization that morphs into a

⁸¹ West Sands Advisory, 37.

⁸² Williams, “Organized Crime and Terrorism,” 2014, 8.

⁸³ Isabel Woodford and M. L. R. Smith, “The Political Economy of the Provos: Inside the Finances of the Provisional IRA—A Revision,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 41, no. 3 (March 2017): 219–21, Taylor and Francis+NEJM.

⁸⁴ Williams, “Organized Crime and Terrorism,” 2014, 8.

criminal gang rather than the other way around. This is because, in the pursuit of financial gain, the original goals of the organization may take a back seat to the monetary windfall. Additional factors contributing to this transformation include disillusionment and peace agreements.⁸⁵

Alternatively, a criminal organization's aim could shift from making money through illegal means to enacting political change at the expense of innocent bystanders if its members were to become highly politicized. When it comes to protecting their financial interests, organized criminal networks frequently resort to intimidation and violence.⁸⁶ However, they will not hesitate to embrace a more political or ideological stance if doing so serves their operational aims better. An example of this is the Madrid train bombings in 2004, where one of the key perpetrators was radicalized while incarcerated.⁸⁷ More research revealed that several drug traffickers had also become radicalized and assimilated into the cell.

Considering Williams's framework, the working hypothesis in this study is as follows: given that criminal organizations in Trinidad and Tobago continuously use the country as an administrative hub for the facilitation of transnational illegal activities, there is a significant possibility that the relationships between these organizations can lead to the transformation and eventual radicalization of the criminal organizations in question. Organized crime is a pervasive and rapidly evolving issue, and these new criminality dynamics must be tackled, given the proximity of TT to major drug-producing countries and to nations with high crime rates and poor resilience. As such, based on the different approaches where crime and terror organizations have intersected, the case studies highlighted in Chapters II and III detail how these groups have strategically blurred the lines of their objectives. Given this situation, government and law enforcement authorities have a harder time addressing the threat posed by these groups.

⁸⁵ West Sands Advisory, *Europe's Crime-Terror Nexus*, 39.

⁸⁶ West Sands Advisory, 32.

⁸⁷ Williams, "Terrorist Financing and Organized Crime," 143.

G. RESEARCH GAP

Since the September 11 attacks, most governments have prioritized the issue of terrorism, resulting in a diversion of resources from the fight against organized crime. The rise of killing within nations rather than between them is indicative of a profound change in the nature of violent warfare. Statistics show that crime rates have overtaken terrorist attacks, with 37 percent of all such crimes occurring in the Americas.⁸⁸ Caribbean nations, inclusive of TT, are continually experiencing the impact of organized crime and are approaching a level of “criminalized radicalization” as expressed by TT’s CoP, McDonald Jacob.⁸⁹ These organizations are using violence to destabilize governmental authority and impose control over areas by undermining the state’s reputation as a politically and economically viable supplier.

Countries have made attempts to curb the crime situations; however, the catalyst of the organized crime still suppresses these attempts. While Wendell C. Wallace has assessed the challenges to democratic governance and national security presented by organized crime organizations in TT,⁹⁰ no study has been done in which researchers approached the problem as an integrated whole, given the apparent interactions between terrorism and organized crime. Therefore, this study aims to determine whether a uniform set of countermeasures against terrorism and organized crime would improve Trinidad and Tobago’s ability to prevent crime.

H. METHODOLOGY

This thesis takes an analytical approach to answering the question of whether there is a relationship between crime and terrorism in TT by looking at similar associations in Mexico and Colombia. These countries possess extensive histories of grappling with

⁸⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide* (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019), 13, <https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet1.pdf>.

⁸⁹ Paul, “CoP: Gangs Now Specialising in Home Invasions.”

⁹⁰ Wendell Wallace, “Organized Crime as Threats to Democratic Governance Structures and National Security in Trinidad Tobago” (working paper, International Police Executive Symposium, 2015), https://www.academia.edu/35110422/ORGANIZED_CRIME_AS_THREATS_TO_DEMOCRATIC_GOVERNANCE_STRUCTURES_AND_NATIONAL_SECURITY_IN_TRINIDAD_TOBAGO.

organized crime, drug cartels, and diverse manifestations of terrorism. Examining their experiences can yield significant insights and lessons. Due to the volume of published data from the aforementioned countries, an in-depth analysis can be developed utilizing Williams's theoretical framework. This study investigates how groups within these countries most likely would have functioned, cooperated, and in some cases transformed to suit their strategic interests. To sum up, this research draws from a wide range of sources, including academic articles, government documents, and databases like the Global Terrorism Database and the Global Organized Crime Index, among others.

I. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis has five chapters. The first has presented the topic, highlighting the importance of the research issue. The literature review provided an overview of the academic concepts and definitions of organized crime and terrorism as well as an explanation of the initial understanding of the nexus of the two threats based on Makarenko's model. The identification of probable gaps and the theoretical framework to guide the analysis of the cases were also described within this chapter.

The case studies for Mexico and Colombia are presented in Chapters II and III, respectively. Both chapters discuss violence and the application of violence for political objectives, transnational criminal organizations, as well as the effect of violence on the domestic radicalization / transnational terror nexus and resilience in the respective countries. Chapter IV analyzes the nexus in these nations and deduces restrictions, directions, and imperatives for potential counterstrategies. A summary of the study's findings and recommendations are presented in the fifth and final chapter.

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II. CASE STUDY: MEXICO

Mexico is the focus of this chapter. The study considers the increasingly porous boundaries that have developed across various criminal and terrorist organizations in that country, as well as within domestic terrorist groups and Mexican drug cartels.

A. ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND

Cartels did not always exist in Mexico. Due to the decline of the main Colombian cartels in the 1990s and the consequent shift in the favored narcotics route into the United States from southern Florida to the U.S. border via Mexico, these organizations have seen significant changes since their inception in the late 1980s.⁹¹ Many factors, such as deliberate and inadvertent governmental regulations and second order-effects; shifts in preferences and flows within the illicit market; mergers, infighting, and innovations within cartels; and so on, have all contributed to the formation of cartels.⁹² The drug trafficking organizations in Mexico have similarly been in a state of continual change. It is notable that in less than 30 years, Mexican drug cartels have grown from small networks of families operating in communities used as transshipment hubs to powerful regional organizations with a national and international reach.⁹³

There are several defining characteristics of “transnational criminal organizations,” including the presence of a hierarchical structure, the use of force and threats, the prevalence of corruption, the maintenance of a veil of secrecy, and public demand for the organization’s services.⁹⁴ Commonly known as drug trafficking organizations (DTO) or drug cartels, these TCOs are the quintessential example of multinational organized crime groups since they satisfy all three criteria.

⁹¹ Robert J. Bunker, “Introduction: The Mexican Cartels—Organized Crime vs. Criminal Insurgency,” *Trends in Organized Crime* 16, no. 2 (March 2013): 129, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-013-9194-4>.

⁹² Bunker, 129.

⁹³ Bunker, 130.

⁹⁴ Jay S. Albanese, “North American Organised Crime,” *Global Crime* 6, no. 1 (September 2010): 9, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1744057042000297945>.

B. VIOLENCE IN MEXICO

The drug trade is inherently violent. The use of violence is a common method of “conflict resolution” among traffickers, and it also helps to keep employees in line and keep the businesses’ relationships with their creditors, purchasers, and suppliers somewhat stable.⁹⁵ Drug-related homicide rates in Mexico are shockingly high, even if the country’s overall homicide rate is lower than that of countries like Venezuela and El Salvador.⁹⁶ Immediately after Mexican President Calderon declared a “war on drugs” against the drug cartels in 2006, the crime rate began to skyrocket. As a result, a wave of violence swept the country, and since then, drug cartels have been at war over which areas to dominate, causing economic hardship in some areas.⁹⁷

The Justice in Mexico project at the University of San Diego utilized homicide statistics as a metric to assess the escalation of violence, as indicated by the number of deliberate killings.⁹⁸ The project’s findings revealed a 7 percent rise in total homicides from 2014 to 2015.⁹⁹ By 2016 and 2017 homicide rates had risen by 21.9 percent and 23 percent, respectively.¹⁰⁰ In a horrifying attack in early November 2019, nine people with dual citizenship from the United States and Mexico were slain in Mexico.¹⁰¹ The perpetrators from that attack were believed to be members of a drug-trafficking organization. The ambush exemplified the growing violence in Mexico linked to drug cartels. At the same time, the criminal operations of several formerly unified organized

⁹⁵ June S. Beittel, “Mexico: Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking Organizations,” *Current Politics and Economics of the United States, Canada and Mexico* 21, no. 2 (July 2018): 183, ProQuest.

⁹⁶ Phil Williams, “The Terrorism Debate Over Mexican Drug Trafficking Violence,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 2 (March 2012): 259, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2011.653019>.

⁹⁷ Roberto Coronado and Eduardo Saucedo, “Drug-Related Violence in Mexico and Its Effects on Employment,” *Empirical Economics* 57, no. 2 (June 2018): 654, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00181-018-1458-z>.

⁹⁸ Beittel, “Mexico: Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking Organizations,” 183.

⁹⁹ Laura Calderón, Octavio Rodríguez Ferreira, and David A. Shirk, *Drug Violence in Mexico: Data Analysis Through 2017* (San Diego, CA: Department of Political Science & International Relations, 2018), 13, https://justiceinmexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/180411_DrugViolenceinMexico-12mb.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ Calderón, Rodríguez Ferreira, and Shirk, 13.

¹⁰¹ Scott Englund, “Mexican Drug Cartels Are Violent — But They’re Not Terrorists,” *War on the Rocks*, February 24, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/02/mexican-drug-cartels-are-violent-but-theyre-not-terrorists/>.

crime gangs have become increasingly fragmented and diverse. For Mexicans living there, these crimes have typically been described as “parasitic.”¹⁰² This label is warranted because not only are resources and infrastructure being exploited, but the well-being of the populace as a whole is negatively impacted, as a result of these illegal acts.

C. TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

Most organized criminal groups (OCG) engage in trafficking for financial gain. One of their goals is to distribute illegal goods to the general public. The OCGs in Mexico are often well-established, financially stable, and active beyond international borders. To get their goods through a certain port of entry or through a specific land or sea route, however, they sometimes “subcontract” with local criminal organizations or adolescent gangs, as opposed to being a vertically integrated operation.¹⁰³

The 1960s saw a dramatic increase in the quantity of items being trafficked into the United States from Mexico, and this marked the beginning of the modern Mexican TCOs.¹⁰⁴ Poverty, insecurity, and corruption have all been used by TCOs in Mexico to advance their own criminal and political agendas. Crimes committed by these groups include homicide, bribery, money laundering, kidnapping, extortion, and the smuggling or trafficking of illegal goods like drugs, weapons, and people.¹⁰⁵ These organizations have undergone significant change over the course of time as a result of their greater control over society, the development of innovative manufacturing and trafficking tactics, and the exploitation of security weaknesses.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Beittel, “Mexico: Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking Organizations,” 183.

¹⁰³ Miguel R. Salazar and Eric L. Olsen, *A Profile of Mexico’s Major Organized Crime Groups* (Washington, DC: Wilson Center International Centre for Scholars, 2011), 2, <https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2018/strategic-monitor-2018-2019/the-crime-terrorism-nexus/>.

¹⁰⁴ Steven Dudley, *Transnational Crime in Mexico and Central America: Its Evolution and Role in International Migration* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2012), 1, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/transnational_crime_mexico_centralamerica.pdf.

¹⁰⁵ Claire Brenner, “Mexico’s Transnational Criminal Organizations Are Benefitting from the Pandemic,” American Security Project, March 24, 2021, <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/mexicos-transnational-criminal-organizations-are-benefitting-from-the-pandemic/>.

¹⁰⁶ Brenner.

Since the middle of the 20th century, TCOs have been in a state of continual flux. According to data compiled for the yearly National Drug Threat Assessment by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Mexican TCOs have a disproportionate amount of influence on U.S. drug trafficking and pose the biggest drug trafficking threat.¹⁰⁷ Numerous TCOs operate in Mexico, but the Sinaloa Cartel, led by Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzmán Loera and Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada, is the most prominent, operating in and dominating 17 Mexican states and nearly 50 countries.¹⁰⁸ Due to its reputed status as the greatest and most powerful in the country and among the most powerful worldwide, this group has amassed an immense financial foundation.¹⁰⁹

The majority of Mexican TCOs are polydrug in nature, specializing in the packaging, sale, and distribution of more than one drug at a time. These groups move large quantities of drugs using underground tunnel networks and commercial and passenger vehicles.¹¹⁰ Cocaine destined for the North American market often travels by sea from Colombia to Mexico or Central America before being smuggled northward by land.¹¹¹ There is now widespread acknowledgement that Mexican gangs have expanded internationally thanks to a 735 percent increase in the number of TCOs included on blacklists of patrimonial assets maintained by the United States, Canada, the European Union, and Asia.¹¹² As a result of strong distribution networks and mutually beneficial ties with U.S.-based gangs, Mexican TCOs keep growing their transnational operations.

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Department of Justice – DEA, *2020 Drug Enforcement Administration: National Drug Threat Assessment*, DEA-DCT-DIR-008-21 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice – DEA, 2021), 4, https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2021-02/DIR-008-21%202020%20National%20Drug%20Threat%20Assessment_WEB.pdf.

¹⁰⁸ Juan Fernando Gutiérrez, *Sinaloa Cartel* (Colombia: Insight Crime, 2021), <https://insightcrime.org/mexico-organized-crime-news/sinaloa-cartel-profile/>.

¹⁰⁹ Doris Gomora, “Only Chinese and Russian Mafias Surpass Drug Traffickers in Mexico,” *El Siglo de Torreon*, July 28, 2010, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/2010/solo-mafias-china-y-rusa-superan-al-narco-en-mexico.html>.

¹¹⁰ U.S. Department of Justice – DEA, *2020 Drug Enforcement Administration: National Drug Threat Assessment*, 39, 62.

¹¹¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed December 10, 2022, [//www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/mexico-central-america-and-the-caribbean.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/mexico-central-america-and-the-caribbean.html).

¹¹² Gomora, “Only Chinese and Russian Mafias.”

D. APPLICATION OF VIOLENCE FOR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

Organized crime has often been linked to politics. Although criminal organizations are not usually motivated by politics, they do want to keep control of the areas they have established as their own. As a result, they frequently try to sway local institutions including bureaucrats and the security apparatus, as well as judicial, prosecutorial personnel, and political figures to their cause.¹¹³ As one author puts it, “the result of the relationship between organized crime and politics is to distort economic planning through transfers and laundering of illicit wealth and ... undermine safety and societal fabric through the use of threat and corruption.”¹¹⁴ However, it is important to note that the use of violence by criminal organizations in Mexico for political ends differs, as the violence they impose is not necessarily for ideological reasons but for the purpose of the continuing their illegal operations. So, at times, their methods would resemble those of a terrorist group.

For several Mexican criminal groups, “silver or lead” has become a mantra, which means either accept the bribe or be killed. Waves of murders, mostly of candidates and state officials, have marred Mexican elections for multiple cycles. As many as 27 mayors were slain by drug cartels between 2004 and 2010, while another 13 gubernatorial candidates were killed in 2010.¹¹⁵ These deaths likely occurred because these public leaders refused to allow cartels to operate freely. In the three years before the last major elections, 371 officials and 152 politicians, including 48 candidates, were killed.¹¹⁶ A significant number of these victims had become entangled with criminal organizations. Such organizations often resort to brutal means in pursuing dubious transactions designed

¹¹³ ACE, “Preventing Election-Related Violence: External Factors, The Presence of Organized Crime.,” ACE, accessed December 11, 2022, <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ev/factors-that-may-trigger-electoral-violence/external-factors/the-presence-of-organized-crime>.

¹¹⁴ Catalina Perdomo and Catalina Uribe Burcher, *Protecting Politics: Deterring the Influence of Organized Crime on Local Democracy* (Switzerland: The Global Initiative & the International IDEA, 2016), 21, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/publication-protecting-politics-deterring-the-influence-of-organized-crime/>.

¹¹⁵ Shawn Teresa Flanigan, “Terrorists Next Door? A Comparison of Mexican Drug Cartels and Middle Eastern Terrorist Organizations,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 2 (March 2012): 288, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2011.648351>.

¹¹⁶ International Crisis Group, *Electoral Violence and Illicit Influence in Mexico’s Hot Land*, No. 89 (Belgium: International Crisis Group, 2021), i, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/mexico/089-electoral-violence-and-illicit-influence-mexicos-hot-land>.

to guarantee themselves safety and access to public institutions and funding. In March of 2021, 13 police officers were killed when their convoy was ambushed by militants in central Mexico.¹¹⁷ This attack was considered the worst of its sort in Mexico since November 2019's slaying of nine people with dual U.S.-Mexico citizenship, and it posed a challenge to Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's strategy for combatting drug cartels and gangs. Many journalists, singers, priests, and municipal authorities and politicians have been murdered, but there is no evidence that any of these assassinations were related to any larger political, ideological, or religious movement.¹¹⁸ Even so, most killings in Mexico are targeted, albeit the perpetrators are becoming increasingly sloppy, and their actions are not motivated by a desire to cause maximum casualties.

E. DOMESTIC RADICALIZATION AND THE TRANSNATIONAL TERROR NEXUS

As previously mentioned, the violence perpetrated by the Mexican TCOs is not terrorism as traditionally defined; there is no political motivation, just criminal. Their primary attitude toward the government is one of wanting to be left alone. As a direct result of the absence of any political goal, violent groups in Mexico almost never resort to the communicative form of violence that is typical of terrorist attacks against the general population. Though some authors may argue that terrorism does not require a political purpose, the presence of violence intended to intimidate others outside the direct targets is sufficient to warrant the label.¹¹⁹ In the past, TCOs have employed terrorist methods such as vehicle bombs and violent messages, and these organizations would have been classified as such due to the fact that their activities appeared to be consistent with the behavior typically employed by traditionally defined terrorist organizations.

Mexican organized crime regularly uses car explosives. For more than three decades, from the 1990s to the present, these organizations have repeatedly employed vehicle bombs to further their criminal ends. Reports of vehicle bombings were common

¹¹⁷ Deutsche Welle, "Mexico: 13 Police Killed in Drug Gang Ambush," Deutsche Welle, March 19, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/mexico-13-state-police-killed-in-drug-gang-ambush/a-56923179>.

¹¹⁸ Williams, "The Terrorism Debate Over Mexican Drug Trafficking Violence," 261.

¹¹⁹ Phillips, "Terrorist Tactics by Criminal Organizations: The Mexican Case in Context," 48.

in the 1990s, and at least two of them resulted in deaths and injuries: one in 1992 intended to murder “El Chapo” Guzman, and another that killed five and injured 15 in 1994.¹²⁰ Between 2010 and 2012, authorities were tasked to detonate or neutralize approximately 20 vehicular explosives. In 2010, Ciudad Juárez’s most notorious IED explosion murdered first responders responding to a bogus report of the death of a police officer.¹²¹

Criminal gangs in Mexico also frequently resort to the use of hand grenades in their battles against the police and the military. In 2008, members of a drug cartel carried out an attack on a public place that was eerily similar to a terrorist strike by hurling hand grenades into the area. The two competing criminal organizations suspected of the attack blamed each other, but neither provided a convincing explanation for the accused’s motive. Terrorist groups generally own their attacks; therefore, the lack of a declaration for the attack is intriguing. According to certain experts, the occurrence was among a series of events to “heat up the turf,” whereby a group initiates an attack on a rival to attract the attention of law enforcement.¹²²

The violent messages employed by TCOs have often been delivered in a subtle manner (through signage or vehicular roadblocks); however, there have also been gruesome messages that were mostly exhibited to the public in the form of severed heads and other human body parts. According to official sources, the government of Mexico documented a total of 1,303 mutilated corpses from 2007 to 2011.¹²³ Interestingly, this technique became more frequent at about the same time as Iraqi militants were employing similar methods to attract attention using Internet videos. One commentator opined that the dissemination of decapitation murders by ISIS may have been influenced by Mexican gangs.¹²⁴ Two years after the 2004 decapitation of American Nick Berg by al Qaeda in an

¹²⁰ Robert J. Bunker and John P. Sullivan, *Cartel Car Bombings in Mexico*, Letort Papers (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2013), 11.

¹²¹ Bunker and Sullivan, 11, 16.

¹²² Phillips, “Terrorist Tactics by Criminal Organizations: The Mexican Case in Context,” 50.

¹²³ Phillips, 51.

¹²⁴ Don Winslow, “What ISIS Learned from the Cartels,” *The Daily Beast*, July 8, 2015, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/what-isis-learned-from-the-cartels>.

extensively propagated video, Mexican authorities saw the first public display of severed heads in their country in the 21st century.¹²⁵ Over time, both al Qaeda and the Mexican cartels may have learned from each other's online savagery.

To further finance their organizations, Mexican TCOs have been working alongside countries such as Iran, to carry out assassinations on high profile targets. Murderous drug traffickers are widely believed to flourish in Mexico, with many of them eager to accept payment in exchange for violent deeds. Evidence of this came in 2011, when a Mexican from the Gulf Cartel TCO was allegedly offered \$1.5 million from Iranian-American nationals to assassinate the Saudi Arabian ambassador to the United States and to engage in other probable terrorist actions.¹²⁶ However, this incident is not the first time that the Iranian regime has attempted to acquaint themselves with Mexican TCOs.

With the globalization and diversification of their networks, operations have been centered in nations that provide a favorable environment for them to thrive and grow. The terrorist group Hezbollah established a presence in Mexico after Mahmoud Yousef Kourani was imprisoned in 2001 for unlawfully smuggling more than 300 Lebanese immigrants into the United States.¹²⁷ Kourani, a Lebanese carpenter, acknowledged spending some of his time in the United States seeking money to fund Hezbollah after being transported there via the Lebanese Mexican smuggling network.¹²⁸ Over the past nine years, Hezbollah and Iran have made great strides in establishing a foothold in Latin America. According to scholar Daniel Valencia, the primary goal was to connect with drug cartels in Mexico and use their help in establishing a base of operations. By showing support for Hezbollah, Mexico's drug gangs have found a dangerous ally.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Phillips, "Terrorist Tactics by Criminal Organizations: The Mexican Case in Context," 51.

¹²⁶ José R. Cárdenas, "Why Is Iran Conspiring with Mexican Drug Dealers?," *Foreign Policy*, October 12, 2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/12/why-is-iran-conspiring-with-mexican-drug-dealers/>.

¹²⁷ Florencia Montaruli, "Ex-Mayor's Meth Bust Reveals Hezbollah's Power in Mexico," *Iranwire*, October 18, 2021, <https://iranwire.com/en/features/70580/>.

¹²⁸ Frank S. Perri, Terrance G. Lichtenwald, and Paula MacKenzie, "Evil Twins: The Crime-Terror Nexus," *Forensic Examiner* 18, no. 4 (December 2009): 21, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/evil-twins-crime-terror-nexus>.

¹²⁹ Montaruli, "Ex-Mayor's Meth Bust."

The trafficking of illegal drugs is directly related to acts of terrorism. Terrorist organizations can generate billions of dollars in annual funding via drug sales and smuggling methods. There is substantial evidence that terrorist organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah rely on profits from drug sales to support their activities, and the DEA reports that this is the case for 19 out of 43 foreign terrorist organizations operating worldwide.¹³⁰

According to the findings of the Global Organized Crime Index (GOCI), Mexico is one of the top four nations globally most susceptible to organized crime.¹³¹ The purpose of this index is to give policymakers and continental and regional agencies the ability to prioritize initiatives based on an evaluation of where vulnerabilities are and measure the success of their interventions to lessen the impact of organized crime.¹³² On a scale of 1 to 10, Mexico received a criminality score of 7.56 (Figure 2) and a resiliency score of 4.46 (Figure 3).¹³³ A breakdown of the criminality score for Mexico, as illustrated in Figure 2, shows that cocaine, the synthetic drug trade, and human smuggling were the high scorers followed by arms trafficking, cannabis, and the heroin trade. Regarding the second element under criminality, that is, criminal actors, mafia-style groups within the country and criminal networks (the conduits for transnational illicit flow) are most dominant.

¹³⁰ Michael Jacobson and Matthew Levitt, "Tracking Narco-Terrorist Networks: The Money Trail," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 118, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45289494>.

¹³¹ Norma Sanchez, "Mexico's Organized Corruption Scourge," Global Initiative, November 9, 2022, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/mexico-organized-corruption/>.

¹³² Global Initiative, "Global Organized Crime Index Archives," Global Initiative, accessed May 16, 2023, <https://globalinitiative.net/initiatives/ocindex/>.

¹³³ Sanchez, "Mexico's Organized Corruption Scourge."



Figure 2. The Global Organized Crime Index Report for Mexico—Criminality scores.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Source: “Criminality in Mexico,” Global Organized Crime Index, accessed April 18, 2023, <https://ocindex.net/country/mexico>.



Figure 3. The Global Organized Crime Index Report for Mexico—Resilience scores.¹³⁵

Based on the scoring thresholds,¹³⁶ the resiliency scores depicted in Figure 3 suggest that the adverse impact on the country is attributable to the low scores in political leadership and governance, government transparency and accountability, and territorial integrity. Subsequently, one of the findings of this index was that a negative correlation exists between resilience and criminality: the lower a country’s resilience, the higher the rate of criminality.

Figure 4 shows attacks that were recorded in Mexico between 1970 and 2020. This database, which compiles information on both local and international terrorist incidents,

¹³⁵ Source: Global Organized Crime Index, “Resilience in Mexico – The Organized Crime Index,” Global Organized Crime Index, accessed April 18, 2023, <https://ocindex.net/country/mexico>.

¹³⁶ Global Initiative, *Global Organized Crime Index 2021* (Switzerland: Global Initiative, 2021), 29, <https://ocindex.net/assets/downloads/global-ocindex-report.pdf>.

gives an idea of the various TCOs' attack types, their distinguishing features, and the ways in which they are related to traditional terrorist methods. Bombings and explosions have followed a steady wave over the years, while armed attacks peaked between 1992 and 1998. The period between 2014 and 2019—the country's pre- and post-election phase—showed an upsurge in assassinations.

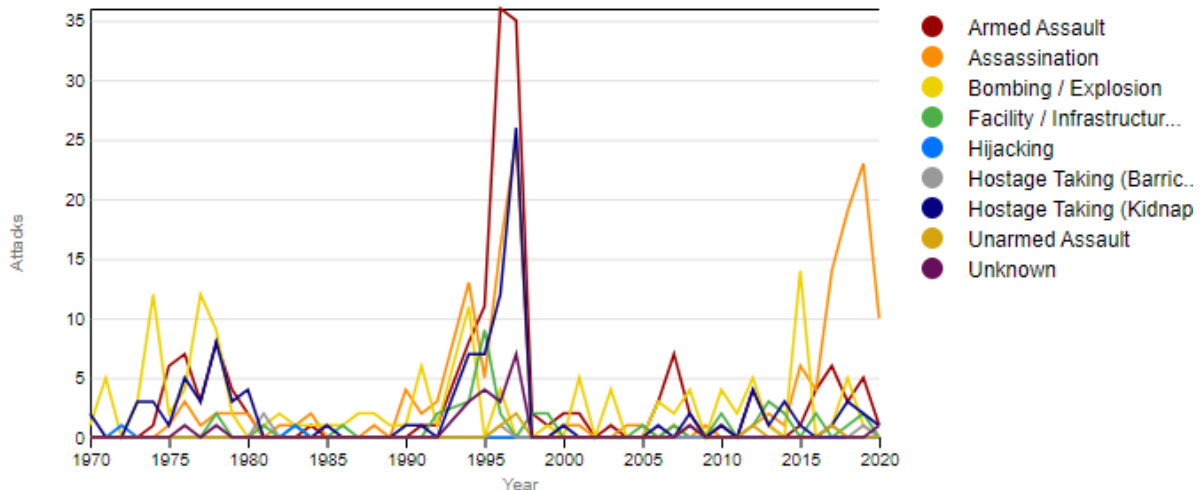


Figure 4. The Global Terrorism Database—Types of attacks conducted by TCOs in Mexico.¹³⁷

F. RESILIENCE IN MEXICO

Corruption is inextricably related to organized criminal groups since it is impossible for such groups to function without it. Despite reports of widespread corruption and collaboration at all levels of the Mexican government, the municipality serves as the social foundation for organized crime in the country. Corruption is an integral part of the problems plaguing Mexico's judicial system. Unable to effectively enforce the law, collect and use intelligence, conduct investigations and forensics, apprehend criminals, and bring them to justice, the state cannot use the justice system to ensure public safety or hold corrupt officials accountable. Corruption is employed by criminal groups not just to

¹³⁷ Source: "Global Terrorism Database," Global Terrorism Database, accessed December 13, 2022, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?chart=attack&search=Mexico>.

neutralize law enforcement, but also to recruit state officials as partners in their war against the state and other criminal organizations. Government personnel who engage in this kind of corruption go beyond mere disobedience and into the realm of selective compliance.¹³⁸

A lack of implementation of measures agreed on to prevent corruption and to enhance transparency has contributed to a record high in violence related to organized crime and criminal impunity, as well as limited access to legal proceedings. Much anti-organized-crime legislation is in place, and the government has ratified several international treaties, but these laws are not effectively enforced due to widespread corruption.

G. CONCLUSION

According to the characteristics of organized crime and terrorism, TCOs in Mexico have demonstrated that they are, in fact, criminal groups; but, in order to support their cause, they frequently engage in behaviors that are similar to those of terrorists. Their ideology is predicated entirely on the profitability of their illegal market and the supply and demand for the destructive commodities they distribute. In addition, the devastatingly high level of criminal violence contributes to this dynamic. Moreover, these organizations will never stop posing a danger to the stability and legitimacy of the Mexican government. Based on the analysis provided by various databases and other research, authors would likely be more accurate to deem TCOs as terrorists, especially as the groups are also assisting other internationally known terrorist organizations.

¹³⁸ Stephen D. Morris, "Corruption, Drug Trafficking, and Violence in Mexico," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 18, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 2012): 30–31, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24590861>.

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III. CASE STUDY: COLOMBIA

In addition to being the only nation in South America with coastlines on both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, Colombia is also recognized for its protracted history of armed warfare. Groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), and the 19th of April Movement (M-19)¹³⁹ have wreaked havoc in Colombia for over half a century. The United States Department of State has classified FARC and ELN as international terrorist organizations,¹⁴⁰ with FARC, the largest and longest-running guerrilla group in the western hemisphere, deemed the most powerful and extreme of them all.¹⁴¹

This chapter provides a brief overview of the FARC's history and how it has used organized crime as the backbone of its terrorist actions. The chapter also discusses the link between the group's violent actions and its political goals, as well as the damage done to the country as a result of the violence.

A. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Colombia has long been plagued by issues of economic and political injustice. The landholding elites were confronted by peasants and their reformist supporters in a struggle aimed at improving their livelihood, enhancing property rights, and securing additional land for small-scale farmers.¹⁴² This class strife mirrored the political difference between the Liberal Party, which represented reform-minded peasants and their sympathizers, and the Conservative Party, which represented landowners, their peasants, and the Catholic Church.

¹³⁹ Johanna Söderström, "The Resilient, the Remobilized and the Removed: Party Mobilization among Former M19 Combatants," *Civil Wars* 18, no. 2 (July 2016): 216–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2016.1205565>.

¹⁴⁰ "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, accessed February 16, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>.

¹⁴¹ "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People's Army (FARC-EP)," Counter Terrorism Guide, accessed May 10, 2023, https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/farc_fto.html.

¹⁴² Keith Stanski, "Terrorism, Gender, and Ideology: A Case Study of Women Who Join the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)," in *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes*, ed. James Forest J.F. (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2005), 137.

Eventually, fighting took place between supporters of the two parties during a period of unrest known simply as *La Violencia* (1948–1958). Afterward, rising Cold War tensions and the wider environment of the Cold War were responsible for the escalation of violence in Colombia since the leftists were backed by Cuba and the Soviet Bloc and the right by the United States.¹⁴³

The National Front Agreement, an agrarian reform and community action program, was created in 1958 because both parties acknowledged rural discontent as a root cause of *violencia*.¹⁴⁴ However, the National Front Agreement alienated large segments of the population who felt the competing political parties did not adequately represent their interests. Furthermore, the agreement failed to effectively address growing socioeconomic divides, most notably over land ownership.¹⁴⁵ These divides led to the formation of the FARC.

At the outset, due to the ongoing class conflict, violence was centered on rural residents banding together in self-defense groups against the state and elites who threatened their property. Further, because of decades of political violence and controversy, more than 300,000 individuals lost their lives during *La Violencia*, making it the bloodiest period in the country's history.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, political violence and class conflict remained a feature of Colombian life, with terrorism rising to prominence in the 1990s. During the period of 1995 to 2002, 9,435 persons were killed in terrorist-related incidents. Among those, 5,864 persons were killed by terrorist actions that were subversive, and the remaining 3,571 were killed by terrorist activities that were paramilitary.¹⁴⁷ As such, terrorism, largely carried out by groups

¹⁴³ Thomas R. Cook, "The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective," *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 20, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.1.2>.

¹⁴⁴ Norman Offstein and Carolina Aristizábal, "An Historical Review and Analysis of Colombian Guerrilla Movements: FARC, ELN and EPL," *Revista Desarrollo y Sociedad*, no. 52 (September 2003): 102, <https://doi.org/10.13043/dys.52.4>.

¹⁴⁵ Andreas E. Feldmann and Victor J. Hinojosa, "Terrorism in Colombia: Logic and Sources of a Multidimensional and Ubiquitous Phenomenon," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, no. 1 (January 2009): 49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550802544656>.

¹⁴⁶ Stanski, "Terrorism, Gender, and Ideology: A Case Study of Women Who Join the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)," 137.

¹⁴⁷ Gabriel Darío Paredes Zapata, "Terrorism in Colombia," *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 18, no. 2 (June 2018): 80–87, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X00000807>.

including FARC, played a major part in the destabilization of Colombia and the armed conflict that lasted over five decades.

B. FARC: ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND

FARC was a coalition of the communist militants and rural militias drawing inspiration from earlier armed Marxist peasant groups that were heavily influenced by Communist doctrine.¹⁴⁸ The leaders framed their objective as a transformative endeavor aimed at advocating for the welfare of all Colombian individuals who were situated at the periphery of society. They advocated for communal ownership of the means of production and the abolition of private property. They also emphasized the role of the working class as the driving force behind social change. During its formative years, the movement advocated for socialist ideals, increased access to healthcare, separate peasant republics, and measures like land redistribution, guaranteed farm incomes, and education for rural residents.¹⁴⁹

As the autonomous peasant republics transitioned from a defensive organization to a mobile combat group, their original goals of land reform and self-preservation morphed into a broader political plan for seizing state power.¹⁵⁰ FARC underwent a shift in ideology, transforming into a Marxist-Leninist insurgency group that advocated for the support of Colombian citizens in their pursuit of justice. This was the case after Moscow issued a declaration, during the middle of 1966, accusing the imperialist United States of establishing military bases in Colombia.¹⁵¹ According to FARC's Marxist-Leninist philosophy, only through violent conflict could revolutionary goals be achieved. The group maintained that the Colombian state was a puppet of the country's bourgeoisie and acted in its interests rather than those of the working class. For this reason, violence was essential to undermine current power structures and bring about a more egalitarian society.

¹⁴⁸ Cook, "The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective," 20.

¹⁴⁹ John Collins and Karen Torres Alarcón, "Colombia, the Drug Wars and the Politics of Drug Policy Displacement – from La Violencia to UNGASS 2016," *Journal of Illicit Economies and Development* 3, no. 2 (November 2021): 192, <https://doi.org/10.31389/jied.93>.

¹⁵⁰ Stanski, "Terrorism, Gender, and Ideology: A Case Study of Women Who Join the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)," 138.

¹⁵¹ Offstein and Aristizábal, "An Historical Review and Analysis of Colombian Guerrilla Movements: FARC, ELN and EPL," 103.

The FARC took a page from the Cuban Revolution's playbook and made armed conflict a central tenet of their strategy. Officially founded in 1966, FARC's beliefs, which were declared by Che Guevara, was that the people could triumph against the government's military forces, that a revolution might begin before all conditions were favorable, and that the uprising needed to be rooted primarily in rural areas.¹⁵² Despite beginning its fight in rural areas, the FARC has always disregarded the counsel of ideologues stationed in Cuba, concentrating instead almost entirely on military rather than political or intellectual influence.¹⁵³ As a result, the framework of their insurgency was based on ideas from Maoist guerrilla doctrine. Their philosophy was modified to include the basic tenants of Maoism, with emphasis on guerrilla warfare tactics and the mobilization of rural peasants to effect revolutionary change. Between 1964 and 1998, the FARC used this strategy to grow from a group of 48 peasant warriors to an insurgency that controlled 40 percent of the country's territory and had 18,000 fighters.¹⁵⁴

In the initial stages of its existence, FARC focused mainly on engaging in armed confrontations with the Colombian military and police, bases, or equipment.¹⁵⁵ It also presented itself as a supporter and protector of peasants, an approach which enabled it to grow in popularity over time and strengthen the support it received. Yet, as it consolidated power in places where it operated, this approach faded in favor of seizing control of territory and resources. FARC began using violence and intimidation to silence the opposition and establish its authority.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Chris Lee, "The FARC and the Colombian Left: Time for a Political Solution?," *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 1 (January 2012): 30, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23238966>.

¹⁵³ James Rochlin, in *Vanguard Revolutionaries in Latin America: Peru, Colombia, Mexico* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 98, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781685850401>.

¹⁵⁴ Bryan Baker, "The Persistence of the FARC in Colombia," *E-International Relations* (blog), August 7, 2018, 3, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/08/07/the-persistence-of-the-farc-in-colombia/>.

¹⁵⁵ Carlos Ospina, "Colombia and the FARC: From Military Victory to Ambivalent Political Reintegration?," in *Impunity: Countering Illicit Power in War and Transition*, ed. Michelle Hughes and Michael Miklaucic (Washington, DC: PRISM, 2016), 161–62, <https://cco.ndu.edu/News/Article/780177/chapter-6-colombia-and-the-farc-from-military-victory-to-ambivalent-political-r/http%3A%2F%2Fcco.ndu.edu%2FNews%2FArticle%2F780177%2Fchapter-6-colombia-and-the-farc-from-military-victory-to-ambivalent-political-r-%2F>.

¹⁵⁶ Claire Metelits, "From Jekyll to Hyde: The Transformation of the FARC," in *Inside Insurgency: Violence, Civilians, and Revolutionary Group Behavior* (New York: NYU Press, 2010), 107–9.

Towards the end of the 1990s, FARC's use of violence and intimidation extended at times to the civilians it had claimed to protect.¹⁵⁷ It began to engage in violent land conflicts with peasant farmers, and eventually it carried out several massacres and acts of violence against civilians. To finance the acquisition of ammunition, food, and weaponry, FARC levied so-called revolutionary taxes on landowners and peasants throughout the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁵⁸ It also kidnapped or forced young boys to expand its military ranks, and mistreated civilians who resisted its intimidation tactics.¹⁵⁹ Its evolving tactics were widely condemned both within Colombia and internationally and contributed to its loss of popular support.¹⁶⁰

After growing tired of being harassed by guerrillas and frustrated by the slow pace of peace talks, some locals began forming armed militias to fight back against the revolutionary groups, including groups such as the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC).¹⁶¹ Due to this resistance, along with increasing military pressure from the Colombian government, FARC abandoned its Maoist strategy and gave up on its attempts to switch to maneuver warfare in favor of terrorist and defensive strategies to achieve its political objectives.¹⁶² Terror tactics and, by extension, terrorism became its main effort.

¹⁵⁷ Tobias Bruce-Jones and M.L.R. Smith, "Coca, Clausewitz, and Colombia: The Inadequacy of Micro-Level Studies in Explaining FARC Violence Against Civilians During the Colombian Civil War," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 44, no. 12 (December 2021): 1004, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1616927>.

¹⁵⁸ Bruce Michael Bagley, "Drug Trafficking, Political Violence, and U.S. Policy in Colombia under the Clinton Administration," in *Elusive Peace: International, National and Local Dimensions of Conflict in Colombia*, ed. Cristina Rojas and Meltzer (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 30.

¹⁵⁹ Cook, "The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective," 24.

¹⁶⁰ Metelits, "From Jekyll to Hyde: The Transformation of the FARC," 108–9.

¹⁶¹ Feldmann and Hinojosa, "Terrorism in Colombia: Logic and Sources of a Multidimensional and Ubiquitous Phenomenon," 48.

¹⁶² Lee Taylor E., "Case Analysis: The FARC in Colombia," *Small Wars Journal*, March 5, 2020, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/case-analysis-farc-colombia>.

In the mid-1970s, as a means of funding its activities, FARC entered the drug trade.¹⁶³ The group's reliance on drug trafficking to finance its operations put it in competition with other drug cartels and sowed the seeds of its eventual shift in tactics.¹⁶⁴

C. TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME ORGANIZATIONS

Drug cartels in Latin America have controlled a substantial percentage of the region's output of cocaine and pose a direct threat to the legitimacy of the region's governments. Cartel operators have played a crucial role in disrupting security in Colombia and neighboring nations; therefore, the cartels have constituted a significant threat to hemispheric security. Although organized crime has always been present, it was mostly a regional phenomenon until the emergence of the illegal drug trade in the 1970s.¹⁶⁵ While serving as a major hub for coca leaf cultivation, this region also boasts the highest global cocaine output. As a result, the potential for Colombia to become a hub for transnational organized crime has increased due to the country's geographic position, historical background, and the composition of its institutions.¹⁶⁶ The geographical terrain of Colombia is conducive to illegal activity, which benefits drug traffickers. Thus, this country is a prime illustration of how the drug trade has contributed to the violence of revolutionary movements.

The main non-state actors in Colombia have participated in various forms of criminal activities to fund their organizations. Their rebel operations have been funded through their involvement in illegal drug trafficking, intimidation of local authorities and other traffickers,

¹⁶³ Offstein and Aristizábal, "An Historical Review and Analysis of Colombian Guerrilla Movements: FARC, ELN and EPL," 107–8.

¹⁶⁴ Collins and Alarcón, "Colombia, the Drug Wars and the Politics of Drug Policy Displacement – from La Violencia to UNGASS 2016," 193.

¹⁶⁵ Albert Berry and Jackeline Barragán, "Winners and Losers from the Illicit Drug Industry in Colombia," in *Elusive Peace: International, National, and Local Dimensions of Conflict in Colombia*, ed. Cristina Rojas and Judy Meltzer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan U.S., 2005), 122, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-09105-5_6.

¹⁶⁶ Francisco E. Thoumi, "Colombian Organized Crime: From Drug Trafficking to Parastatal Bands and Widespread Corruption," in *Traditional Organized Crime in the Modern World: Responses to Socioeconomic Change*, ed. Dina Siegel and Henk van de Bunt (Boston, MA: Springer U.S., 2012), 131–48.

investments in seemingly legitimate businesses as a facade, and money laundering.¹⁶⁷ Multinational oil companies and gold and other mining companies were also targeted. Even the insurgent group that emerged to combat the country's leftist organizations was deeply involved in the drug trade at every level, from levying taxes on the industry to operating cocaine labs to guarding trafficking corridors to smuggling the drugs themselves.¹⁶⁸

Although FARC and other Colombian armed groups are vastly dissimilar to drug cartels, they have followed comparable strategies. During the 1990s, FARC relied on the export of cocaine to the United States and European markets to fund the upkeep of its armed forces.¹⁶⁹ This exportation was made possible with the help of established drug trafficking groups, such as the Medellín and Cali cartels, who were able to transport its product from Central America to the United States. Over time, FARC shifted its approach to the narcotics trade, from merely taxing it to taking full control of production and distribution. With the money it made through trafficking, it bought high-tech weapons and communications systems, which gave it an advantage in its war against Bogotá and allowed it to take control of 40 percent of Colombia.¹⁷⁰ The Colombian government estimated that FARC has made as much as US\$400 million annually from the narcotics trade. Its overall yearly income in 1999 could have been as high as US\$900 million, which included the roughly US\$500 million that FARC was believed to generate from its more "conventional" guerrilla efforts.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Chad C. Serena, "Colombia (1994–2010)," in *Mexico Is Not Colombia: Alternative Historical Analogies for Responding to the Challenge of Violent Drug Trafficking Organizations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014), 4.

¹⁶⁸ Paul, Clarke, and Serena, 4,5.

¹⁶⁹ Douglas Farah, *Transnational Organized Crime, Terrorism, and Criminalized States in Latin America: An Emerging Tier-One National Security Priority* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2012), 17, <https://permanent.fdlp.gov/websites/ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/display.cfm-pubID=1117.htm>.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas M. Sanderson, "Transnational Terror and Organized Crime: Blurring the Lines," *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 24, no. 1 (Winter-Spring 2004): 51, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26999200>.

¹⁷¹ Bagley, "Drug Trafficking, Political Violence, and U.S. Policy in Colombia under the Clinton Administration," 30.

Colombians almost always act as the sole transporters of cocaine between Colombia and Mexico and between Colombia and Central America.¹⁷² As such, several transnational criminal groups and organizations have operated in the country in cooperation with local criminal groups. The Italian crime syndicate known as ‘Ndrangheta, for instance, dispatched a group of representatives to establish its presence in different cities around Colombia. ‘Ndrangheta established itself as a monopoly in the cocaine trade because of its adaptability and ability to respond to shifting market conditions.¹⁷³ These and similar criminal organizations have contributed significantly to the level of violence that has plagued the country for decades. To maintain their dominance, these organizations resort to violence and threats of violence against anyone who stands in their way of making, selling, or distributing illegal drugs. According to the GOCI, Colombia ranks second in terms of criminality out of 193 United Nations member states. Even though the existence of paramilitary groups has declined since the 1990s and 2000s, the country’s illicit markets remain large and highly active.¹⁷⁴

D. APPLICATION OF VIOLENCE FOR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

Many authors have contended that FARC’s engagement in the drug trade was a political move. However, because of the heightened system of violence implemented by the group, some academics have placed more emphasis on FARC’s “criminal” activities than on comprehending the group’s political goals. That impression was fostered by the widespread belief that the motivation behind these movements has been money rather than political ideals.¹⁷⁵ All of FARC’s political and criminal tactics are ultimately motivated by the same ideological and political goal: obtaining state power. Additionally, its eventual loss of legitimacy described earlier was also a contributing factor to the increased use of violence

¹⁷² Francesca Calandra, “Between Local and Global: The ‘Ndrangheta’s Drug Trafficking Route,” *International Annals of Criminology* 55, no. 1 (May 2017): 81, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cri.2017.1>.

¹⁷³ Calandra, 83.

¹⁷⁴ Global Organized Crime Index, “Criminality in Colombia,” Global Organized Crime Index, accessed March 2, 2023, <https://ocindex.net/country/colombia>.

¹⁷⁵ Offstein and Aristizábal, “An Historical Review and Analysis of Colombian Guerrilla Movements: FARC, ELN and EPL,” 113.

FARC employed to achieve its political goals.¹⁷⁶ The primary issue with FARC is not the goals themselves, but the means by which they are attained—specifically, the fact that these acts harm people who are not directly involved in the conflict.¹⁷⁷

FARC's political strategy has consisted of raising public criticism of the Colombian government and its failure to deal with the country's most pressing problems, rather than constantly questioning the legitimacy of the government itself.¹⁷⁸ FARC has primarily attacked state institutions including military bases and police stations, as well as corporate targets like rich landowners and international firms that it saw as abusing the Colombian people. Half of those kidnapped by FARC were public administrators or defense personnel who earned high salaries and could afford to satisfy the group's demands financially.¹⁷⁹ Thus, changes in strategy were made during a time when the Colombian government was particularly ineffective.

In Colombia's rural areas, where government services are not available, the movement's portrayal of itself as an alternative public administrator has helped soften the message of political change.¹⁸⁰ FARC was able to spread across rural Colombia as a result of its involvement in the drug trade and its decision to acknowledge and protect coca producers. It was also able to utilize its newfound financial security from the drug trade to further its political aims. As it expanded into new areas, FARC found it necessary to gain support from the locals. As soon as FARC established control over a new area, it began acting like a state and providing public services to the locals who had never had access to such things before, while resorting to violence as a standard method of enforcing the law. Gaining the

¹⁷⁶ Ospina, "Colombia and the FARC," 164.

¹⁷⁷ Jaime Alfonso Cubides Cárdenas et al., "Terrorism by the FARC-EP and Public Policies Oriented towards National Security in Colombia during 1990–2000," *Revista Científica General José María Córdova* 17, no. 26 (April 2019): 312, <https://revistacientificaesmic.com/index.php/esmic/article/view/404>.

¹⁷⁸ Stanski, "Terrorism, Gender, and Ideology: A Case Study of Women Who Join the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)," 139.

¹⁷⁹ Bruce-Jones and Smith, "Coca, Clausewitz, and Colombia: The Inadequacy of Micro-Level Studies in Explaining FARC Violence Against Civilians During the Colombian Civil War," 1005.

¹⁸⁰ Stanski, "Terrorism, Gender, and Ideology: A Case Study of Women Who Join the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)," 139.

trust of the locals allowed FARC to expand its territory, which fueled economic development and ultimately gave it a military advantage.¹⁸¹

FARC and other Colombian insurgencies were not the only factions that utilized violence and intimidation to force the government to meet its political objectives. Since at least the late 1970s, drug traffickers have funded political campaigns and influenced legislators, corrupting an already fragile democratic system.¹⁸² When it came to politics, narcotrafficking organizations like the Medellín Cartel sought out amiable and corruptible government officials.¹⁸³ At the same time, these government officials, while turning a blind eye to drug trafficking activities, received funding for their political campaigns and other endeavors. As a result of these activities, military aid to Colombia was cut off after the U.S. State Department “decertified” the country in 1996 and 1997 for its lack of cooperation with the U.S. international drug control strategy.¹⁸⁴ Unfortunately, this decertification had a detrimental influence on Colombia’s lawful exports and counter-narcotics financing.¹⁸⁵

E. DOMESTIC RADICALIZATION AND THE TRANSNATIONAL TERROR NEXUS

In 1985, the establishment of the Patriotic Union (UP) by FARC and the Colombian Communist Party (PCC) marked a noteworthy transformation in Colombia’s political terrain.¹⁸⁶ The UP was created as a nonviolent channel to engage in negotiations with the government and secure a ceasefire. The political group participated in elections beginning in 1986 and won a large portion of the votes. The UP first adopted a nonviolent political strategy

¹⁸¹ Cook, “The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective,” 23–25.

¹⁸² Francisco E. Thoumi, “Why a Country Produces Drugs and How This Determines Policy Effectiveness: A General Model and Some Applications to Colombia,” in *Elusive Peace: International, National and Local Dimensions of Conflict in Colombia*, ed. Cristina Rojas and Judy Meltzer (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 156.

¹⁸³ Cook, “The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective,” 23.

¹⁸⁴ Michael Evans, ed., *War in Colombia – Guerrillas, Drugs and Human Rights in U.S. Colombia Policy, 1988–2002* (Washington, DC: The National Security Archive, 2002), <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB69/part3.html>.

¹⁸⁵ Paul, Clarke, and Serena, “Colombia (1994–2010),” 6.

¹⁸⁶ Metelits, “From Jekyll to Hyde: The Transformation of the FARC,” 97.

when it joined Colombia's political arena, but it ultimately abandoned that approach.¹⁸⁷ Despite its best efforts, it was unable to survive the onslaught of violence that forced it from politics. Prominent individuals involved in drug trafficking, many of whom had hired defense groups in response to FARC taxes and kidnappings, were blamed by the government for the killings and the destruction of the UP.¹⁸⁸

Notwithstanding the seeming avarice of a few FARC commanders, the insurgents' post-UP behavior was influenced by the presence of other local factors.¹⁸⁹ The presence of paramilitary groups contributed to the conflict's increased complexity and resulted in the threat towards FARC's ability to maintain itself.¹⁹⁰ In essence, the paramilitary groups' mission was to dispel fears that the Colombian government faced any kind of opposition. This led to FARC shifting from a contractual to a more forceful approach toward the local populace beginning in the late 1990s.¹⁹¹ When it came to acts of brutality, FARC outdid the paramilitary groups, committing multiple violations of international humanitarian law, such as kidnapping and murder. When accused of murdering 34 coca gatherers in the northern Colombian province of Santander in June 2004, FARC claimed that "the international humanitarian law was a bourgeois concept," and the group was exempt from following such a law.¹⁹²

FARC was drawn into the vortex of war as it rose to power from 1979 to the early 2000s.¹⁹³ The level of intimidation it used against the locals increased and was both disproportionate and arbitrary. The group shifted from its previous policy of selectively killing high-ranking Colombian politicians, diplomats, and industry specialists to a policy of killing anyone in its path. The population was subjected to assault rather than being represented, as the concept of "the adversary" was extended to encompass all individuals unaffiliated with

¹⁸⁷ Metelits, 99.

¹⁸⁸ Metelits, 99.

¹⁸⁹ Metelits, 102.

¹⁹⁰ Metelits, 105.

¹⁹¹ Metelits, 107.

¹⁹² Metelits, 108.

¹⁹³ Baker, "The Persistence of the FARC in Colombia," 3.

FARC.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, it may be argued that FARC became a terrorist group as a result of the convergence of ends-ways-means. In other words, all the tools necessary to carry out the strategic plan and accomplish the goals had coalesced into the violence itself, which was then carried out because that was its intended function.¹⁹⁵

According to the GOCI (Figure 5), Colombia is the second most vulnerable country to organized crime worldwide, scoring 7.67 in terms of criminality. This score is due to the presence of skilled criminal actors operating in well-structured crime networks. Violent crime skyrocketed by a factor of 10 between the 1970s and the 1990s, with the homicide rate nearly doubling between the period spanning from 1985 to 1993. Estimates put the homicide rate in Antioquia, Medellín, at 400 per 100,000 in the early 1990s.¹⁹⁶ Despite its high criminality score, Colombia has a resiliency score of 5.83 (Figure 6), which is mostly attributable to its cooperative international ties with the United States and the European Union on matters of criminal justice.

¹⁹⁴ Carlos Alberto Ospina Ovalle, “Was FARC Militarily Defeated?,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 28, no. 3 (June 2017): 533, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2017.1307613>.

¹⁹⁵ Ospina Ovalle, 533.

¹⁹⁶ Collins and Alarcón, “Colombia, the Drug Wars and the Politics of Drug Policy Displacement – from La Violencia to UNGASS 2016,” 193.



Figure 5. The Global Organized Crime Index Report for Colombia—Criminality scores.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Source: The Global Organized Crime Index, “Criminality in Colombia.”



5.83 Resilience score

40th of 193 countries

6th of 35 countries in Americas

4th of 12 countries in South America

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	7.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	5.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	9.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	7.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	5.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	6.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	4.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	6.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	3.50
PREVENTION	4.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	6.50

Figure 6. The Global Organized Crime Index Report for Colombia—
Resilience scores.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Source: “Resilience in Colombia,” Global Organized Crime Index, accessed March 2, 2023, <https://ocindex.net/country/colombia>.

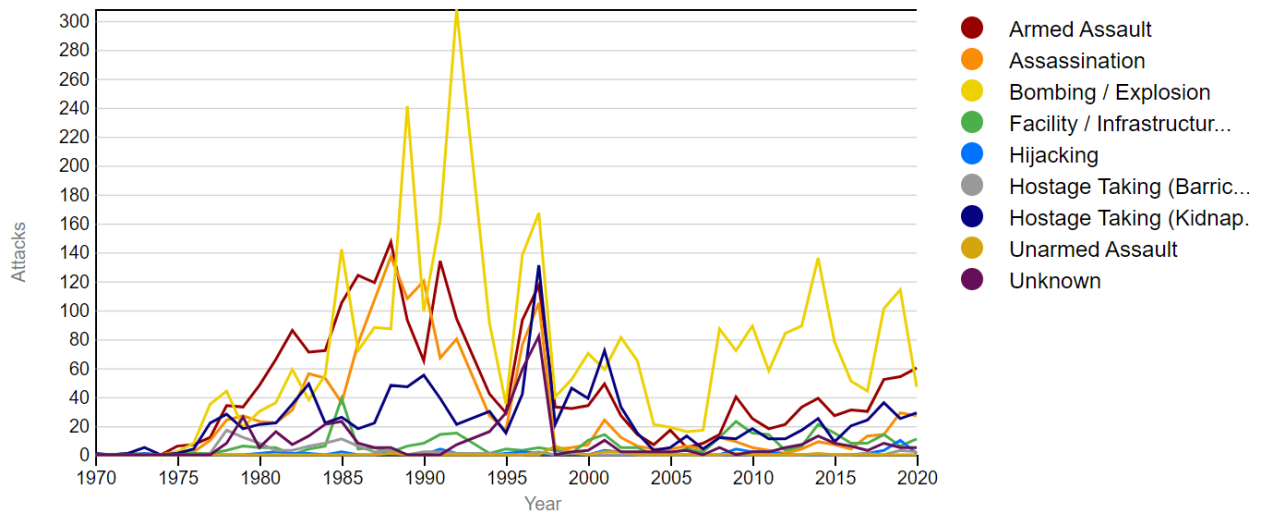


Figure 7. The Global Terrorism Database—Types of attacks conducted by TCOs in Colombia.¹⁹⁹

Figure 7 depicts the wide spectrum of violent TCO attacks in Colombia from 1975 to 2020. Based on the figure, it is evident that bombings and explosives were the most common type of attack, and that the peak incidence of these attacks occurred between 1990 and 1995. These assaults have persisted, albeit with a generally decreasing but fluctuating frequency over the years.

F. RESILIENCE IN COLOMBIA

InSight Crime has estimated there are still over 8,000 insurgents in the ranks of FARC despite the best efforts of the Colombian government, which has been aided by the United States to the amount of almost \$10 billion over the previous 15 years.²⁰⁰ These resources have helped Colombia in several ways, including in its implementation of counter-narcotics operations, strengthening of the rule of law, promoting economic development, and bolstering security through initiatives like Plan Colombia and the succeeding Colombia Strategic

¹⁹⁹ Source: “Global Terrorism Database,” Global Terrorism Database, accessed April 18, 2023, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?chart=attack&search=colombia>.

²⁰⁰ *Colombia FARC* (Washington, DC: InSight Crime, 2022), <https://insightcrime.org/colombia-organized-crime-news/farc-profile/>.

Development Initiative (CSDI).²⁰¹ Nevertheless, the GOCI's crime and resilience rankings show that there other factors inside the country's governing structure have worked against these efforts. Crime networks' ability to remain covert while managing their activities, utilizing political resources, and profiting from knowledge and experience may explain Colombia's long-standing trade and the limited ability of successive governments to destroy it.²⁰²

G. CONCLUSION

Despite its reputation as a leader among Latin American countries in terms of open government, Colombia struggles to restore the public's faith in its institutions because of persistent corruption. As such, the influence of narcotics and drug cartels on the economy and the political system must be considered. Furthermore, several analyses have shown that drug trafficking is now the primary driver of endemic corruption in governmental institutions.²⁰³ The drug trade provides criminal organizations with the means to buy off and influence public servants, law enforcement, and politicians. Although it is vital to acknowledge the improvements, Colombia's progress has lagged well behind projections. Due to the pervasiveness of organized crime and the violence it fosters, civil society actors continue to have difficulty achieving their goals.

²⁰¹ June S. Beittel, *Colombia: Background and U.S. Relations*, CRS Report No. R43813 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2020), 26, 29, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1170133.pdf>.

²⁰² Michael Kenney and Miles Kahler, eds., *Networked Politics: Agency, Power, and Governance* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009), 100.

²⁰³ Maria Victoria Whittingham, "Colombia: Public Administration in the Midst of Uncertainty," in *The Emerald Handbook of Public Administration in Latin America*, ed. B. Guy Peters, Carlos Alba Tercedor, and Conrado Ramos (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2021), 116.

IV. ANALYSIS

In the complex world of global security, organized crime and terrorism persist as major threats, as highlighted by the situations in Mexico and Colombia. Given their extensive experience where crime and terror are concerned, these two nations present an interesting vantage point from which to analyze the correlation between organized crime and terrorism using Phil Williams' framework. As such, this chapter takes into account the objectives, activities, and entities involved among crime and terror organizations while utilizing Williams's model.

A. OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, AND ENTITIES

The distinction Williams makes among objectives, activities, and entities emphasizes the intricate nature of crime-terror activities and the need for a nuanced comprehension of their interrelationships. To begin, he interprets objectives as the overarching purposes of the players involved in crime and terrorism, and activities as the concrete steps those actors take toward achieving their objectives. He also categorizes the actors within the crime-terror nexus as entities.²⁰⁴ To summarize, activities are the means by which objectives are accomplished, but they might vary greatly amongst the entities engaged. As such, this interpretation highlights the significance of knowing the interdependencies among various actors and activities according to their individual goals. Furthermore, this analysis can provide significant understanding of the relationship between crime and terrorism and reduce the ambiguity associated with the characteristics of the danger, which often obstructs the progression of more efficient preventive measures.

The following section expounds on these relationships and approaches that groups in Colombia and Mexico have adopted to achieve their goals, as outlined in the following propositions.

²⁰⁴ Williams, "Terrorist Financing and Organized Crime," chap. 6.

1. Proposition 1

Proposition 1 deals with the phenomenon of integration and can be expressed as follows: Criminal and terrorist groups in Colombia and Mexico may work together without integrating.

The phenomenon of integration is primarily rooted in the analytical tradition of organizational studies and involves examining the internal dynamics of groups to understand the factors that facilitate cooperation. The observed similarities are noteworthy and imply a tendency towards cooperation between the two entities.²⁰⁵ Within Colombia and Mexico, various groups have engaged in cooperative endeavors such as the transportation and distribution of illicit substances, the illicit trade of weaponry, or furnishing assistance to operational logistics. The objective of this collaboration is not predicated on ideology, but rather on a nearly symbiotic relationship in which both entities derive mutual advantages.

Terrorist organizations that engage in collaborative efforts with criminal groups possess the capacity to obtain specialized expertise, resources, operational assistance, and monetary support. Such collaborations in the past were temporary in nature and ended once the transaction was complete. For instance, in 1993, Pablo Escobar paid members of the ELN to plant vehicle bombs since his own group lacked the resources to do so.²⁰⁶ The aforementioned phenomenon has the potential to cause political instability, weaken the efficacy of law enforcement, and redirect law enforcement efforts away from combating organized criminal activity, thereby affording criminals a more relaxed operating environment.²⁰⁷

The collaboration between groups is frequently grounded in practical considerations, wherein each group upholds its unique identity and goals. Certain groups exhibit a preference

²⁰⁵ John T. Picarelli, "Osama Bin Corleone? Vito the Jackal? Framing Threat Convergence Through an Examination of Transnational Organized Crime and International Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 2 (March 2012): 186, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2011.648349180>.

²⁰⁶ Chris Dishman, "The Leaderless Nexus: When Crime and Terror Converge," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 3 (May 2005): 246, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100590928124>.

²⁰⁷ Brian J. Phillips and Alexander Schiele, "Dogs and Cats Living Together? Explaining the Crime-Terror Nexus," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 35 (March 2023): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2023.2189968>.

for preserving their existing status quo, particularly in the context of criminal organizations, as the perpetuation of a violent milieu is deemed advantageous to their illicit and lucrative pursuits.²⁰⁸ Besides, they have been able to successfully improve their capacities and assets while mitigating potential hazards. Furthermore, the consolidation of their resources and knowledge enables them to surmount challenges and optimize their financial gains. As a result of shifting alliances, resource competition, and political influence, these ties can also be brittle and susceptible to change.

2. Proposition 2

Proposition 2 pertains to the cross-learning of strategies and is stated as follows: Mexico's and Colombia's criminal and terrorist groups may learn from each other's strategies to attain their goals.

Inter-organizational learning can entail the adoption of methods, strategies, and techniques from other entities to attain a competitive edge, enhance efficiency, or address external demands. Criminal groups may adopt a political agenda and start engaging in acts of terrorism, or a terrorist organization may become more focused on criminal activities for financial gain. Entities in Colombia have employed strategies utilized by organized crime syndicates to optimize their economic profits and sustain their operational capacities. An example of this level of appropriation would be the most notorious incident of narcoterrorism, which was committed in 1985.²⁰⁹ The Medellín Cartel, in collaboration with M-19, carried out an assault on the Supreme Court located in Bogota, Colombia, resulting in the loss of lives of 11 justices. This event significantly impacted Colombia's political landscape, as it led to the alignment of political parties with the cartel's drug trafficking operations.²¹⁰

Similarly, Mexico's criminal entities have a history of intimidating rivals, public figures, and the populace via terroristic techniques. These tactics can be used to establish

²⁰⁸ Chris Dishman, "Terrorism, Crime, and Transformation," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 24, no. 1 (January 2001): 44–45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100118878>.

²⁰⁹ Francis Gaffney, "Narcoterrorism in Colombia," in *Historical Perspectives on Organized Crime and Terrorism*, ed. James Windle et al. (London: Routledge, 2018), 158, <https://doi-org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.4324/9781315624099>.

²¹⁰ Gaffney, 158.

dominance over geographical regions, safeguard transit routes, and discourage the intervention of legal and military entities. Furthermore, the utilization of similar strategies by both crime and terrorist groups can result in a conflation of the two, thereby posing a formidable obstacle for law enforcement agencies and governments in their efforts to combat these with efficacy.

3. Proposition 3

Preposition 3 relates to how crime groups can wield financial power and may be stated thus: Colombian and Mexican organized crime factions have the capacity to furnish economic backing to terrorist groups, whether through direct or indirect means.

It is possible for organized crime syndicates to allocate a portion of their earnings to supporting the operations and activities of terrorist organizations. Terrorist groups could potentially leverage these networks to obtain logistical assistance, including but not limited to the transportation of individuals, armaments, or other assets across international boundaries, material resources, or for entry to illicit trafficking channels. Based on this influence, it is widely believed that the FARC formed a clandestine alliance with the Arellano-Felix drug trafficking organization in Mexico in the late 1990s, specifically for the purpose of drug trafficking.²¹¹

Indirect means, facilitated through the provision of safe havens, serves as a way of sustaining operations, bolstering resilience, and avoiding detection by law enforcement agencies. In this case, the Basque terrorist organization, Fatherland and Liberty, surreptitiously relocated to Mexico with the intention of establishing lawful commercial ventures that were subsequently utilized to finance their terrorist operations in Spain.²¹² To that end, the extent to which organized criminal groups have collaborated with and provided substantial financial assistance to terrorist organizations depends on various aspects including contextual considerations, affiliations, and objections.

²¹¹ Ramon J. Miro, *Organized Crime and Terrorist Activity in Mexico, 1999–2002*, ADA439845 (Washington, DC: The Library of Congress, 2003), 41, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA439845>.

²¹² Miro, 41.

4. Proposition 4

Proposition 4 deals with evolving objectives that can drive both organizations' transformation. It can be expressed as follows: *The objectives, exogenous influences, and socio-political context of criminal and terrorist groups in Colombia and Mexico are subject to change, which can result in the metamorphosis of those groups.*

The shift of criminal organizations towards embracing a political orientation can be instigated by a variety of factors. These include governmental measures to suppress criminal behavior, collaborations with other radical factions, or a growing ideological fervor among the group's leadership. In comparison, terrorist organizations may be motivated to adopt the activities of criminal organization by the need for economic capital, alterations in the group's hierarchy, or adjustments to law enforcement and anti-terrorism endeavors. It is important to note, however, that in order to reach this stage, one or more of the goals indicated in the previously mentioned propositions must have been formulated or accomplished. Nonetheless, the "dual nature"²¹³ feature exhibited by these groups introduces ambiguity in their classification.

Mexican organized crime syndicates have been known to employ terrorist strategies, including targeting political figures, and utilizing explosive devices, in pursuit of their goals.²¹⁴ Based on their actions, however, it cannot be conclusively inferred that they have undergone a metamorphosis despite the exhibited characteristics that align with, if not satisfy, the criteria for terrorism. Rather, this "strategic transformation" or "hybridization" dynamic, as author Reggie Kramer characterizes it, enables entities to take advantage of the interaction between criminal and terrorist activities, to maximize their resources, expand their reach, and achieve their objectives.²¹⁵ In light of this, it is evident that the transformation of criminal or

²¹³ David Teiner, "Cartel-Related Violence in Mexico as Narco-Terrorism or Criminal Insurgency: A Literature Review," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 14, no. 4 (August 2020): 87, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26927665>.

²¹⁴ Teiner, 87.

²¹⁵ Reggie Kramer, "An Examination of Hybrid Organized Criminal Groups' Alliances with Terrorist Groups," *Trends in Organized Crime* 25, no. 3 (September 2022): 341, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-021-09438-7>.

terrorist organizations is a complex and non-linear process that can be shaped by internal dynamics, external forces, and broader political and societal variables.

B. RESILIENCE, GOVERNANCE, AND CORRUPTION

This section provides insight and evaluates the degree and efficacy of the resilience of Mexico and Colombia in addressing crime and terrorism. The GOCI findings reveal that Mexico's below average resilience score (4.46) suggests that the country's policy measures have had only a moderate impact on criminal activity. In comparison, Colombia's average resilience score of 6 indicates that despite having strong legal, political, and strategic frameworks, this country's policies have had a mediocre effect in its fight against organized crime.²¹⁶ As such, Mexico is classified as a country with high levels of criminal activity and low levels of resilience—similar to two other nations within the Latin American and Caribbean region, Jamaica and Venezuela. In contrast, Colombia is categorized as a nation with elevated levels of criminal activity and nearly as significant resilience, alongside the United States and seven other countries.²¹⁷

Upon closer examination of the factors that contribute to the resilience scores in Colombia, Mexico, and Trinidad and Tobago, it is apparent that indicators such as political leadership, governance, territorial integrity, the judicial system, and detention play a significant role.²¹⁸ In situations such as these, where there is a lack of effective governance, there is a higher likelihood of the spread of corrupt practices. Conversely, a well-functioning judicial system plays a crucial role in upholding the principles of the rule of law. A further point of resemblance among these nations is that despite their significant international collaboration and adoption of global standards into their domestic frameworks, their levels of criminal activity remain elevated or close to average.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Global Organized Crime Index, *Global Organized Crime Index 2021* (Switzerland: Global Initiative, 2021), 29.

²¹⁷ Global Organized Crime Index, 102, 104.

²¹⁸ "Comparison of Criminalities between Mexico and Colombia," Global Organized Crime Index, accessed May 3, 2023, <https://ocindex.net/>.

²¹⁹ "Comparison of Criminalities between Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago," Global Organized Crime Index, accessed May 3, 2023, <https://ocindex.net/>.

The maintenance of territorial integrity encompasses more than just the physical boundaries of a given territory, as it also involves the establishment of efficient governance and authority within its confines.²²⁰ Colombia's Democratic Security and Defense Policy of 2003 emphasizes the importance of maintaining the country's Armed Forces as a means of deterrence, achieved through the regular advancement of their strategic equipment to safeguard national borders and territory.²²¹ Nonetheless, Colombia's observed territorial integrity is subpar,²²² and this indicates a deficiency in its ability to deter potential threats. Given that the proliferation of terrorism often involves a criminal component to provide backing and financial support, it is corruption in the state that enables these activities to go unchecked.²²³ Institutionalized corruption in Mexico and Colombia has led to "state capture" (to varying degrees) and several instances of state terror.²²⁴ The GOCI report indicates a positive and reciprocally influencing correlation between the level of corruption among public officials in a given country and its vulnerability to organized crime. This is because corruption tends to weaken and compromise the efficacy of existing resilience mechanisms.²²⁵

Apart from this, an atmosphere in which there is no consistent rule of law creates fertile ground for integration of these activities.²²⁶ Nations that share Mexico's classification tend to prioritize conventional approaches to addressing criminal behavior, such as law

²²⁰ Stuart Elden, "Terror and Territory," *Antipode* 39, no. 5 (December 2007): 826, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2007.00554.x>.

²²¹ Presidency of the Republic – Ministry of Defence, *Democratic Security and Defence Policy: Republic of Colombia 2003* (Colombia: Presidency of the Republic – Ministry of Defence, 2003), 38, https://www.mindefensa.gov.co/irj/go/km/docs/Mindefensa/Documentos/descargas/Documentos_Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf.

²²² According to the GOCI 2022, Colombia's territorial integrity index score is 4.5.

²²³ Nicole Drumhiller, "Dirty Entanglements: Corruption, Crime, and Terrorism. By Louise I. Shelley.," *Journal of Strategic Security* 7, no. 4 (January 2014): 120, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.7.4.9>.

²²⁴ Jessica Karcz, "Violence and Corruption in Mexico and Colombia" (master's thesis, Georgetown University, 2017), 47, <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/1043872>.

²²⁵ Yvon Dandurand, "Thinking Globally, Acting Locally: The Criminality–Resilience Nexus," *Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime* (blog), May 13, 2022, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/resilience-ocindex/>.

²²⁶ Emilio C. Viano, "Unholy Alliances and Their Threat: The Convergence of Terrorism, Organized Crime and Corruption," *International Annals of Criminology* 58, no. 1 (May 2020): 94, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cri.2020.18>.

enforcement and security strategies. Nonetheless, the efficacy of such endeavors is unavoidably undermined in the absence of adherence to the rule of law.²²⁷ The findings of Fearon and Walter suggest that nations which possess efficient legal systems, accountable governance, limited corruption, and robust safeguards for human rights are less likely to experience conflict and elevated levels of criminal violence.²²⁸

C. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the case studies of Colombia and Mexico reveals that the interdependent relationships required to facilitate partnerships between organized criminal entities and terrorist organizations are synergistic in nature. Similarly, this synergy is also necessary for an entity of one type to transform itself into the other type. In other words, as author Katharine Petrich puts it, “to achieve nexus status, groups either collaborate, combine, or convert.”²²⁹ This enables them to leverage each other’s resources, knowledge, and connections, thereby augmenting their competencies and fortifying their standings vis-à-vis law enforcement and competing factions.

The propositions used to demonstrate the nexus capabilities of these entities within Latin American and Caribbean region suggest that they possess the capacity to further their respective objectives, thereby rendering policy implementation a more intricate process. When considering strategies for enhancing resilience against criminal activities and acts of terrorism, it is crucial to prioritize governance and anti-corruption measures as fundamental and indispensable elements. Since international cooperation, a key component of resilience, is already well-established in the region, efforts to improve the situation must focus on the individual countries’ institutions and policies.

²²⁷ Global Organized Crime Index, *Global Organized Crime Index 2021*, 105.

²²⁸ John de Boer and Louise Bosetti, *The Crime-Conflict “Nexus”: State of the Evidence*, Occasional Paper 5 (Japan: United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, 2015), 6.

²²⁹ Katharine Petrich, “The Crime–Terror Nexus,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, March 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.608>.

V. CONCLUSION

This thesis's purpose was to shed light on the potential for a crime-terror nexus to exist in Trinidad and Tobago. An analysis of Phil Williams's crime-terror continuum and the case studies of Mexico and Colombia has shed light on the dynamics of this potential nexus. The examination of the correlation between crime and terrorism demonstrated that these groups can modify their strategies and tactics in accordance with their goals and, at times, external factors. In nearly all cases, these groups establish some form of coalition with one another, whether short or long term, and in rare cases, a permanent metamorphosis takes place. Furthermore, it is evident that the influential nature of organized crime (especially where funding is concerned) and the potential for radicalization can open avenues for these groups to adopt violent extremism. To address these threats, some multinational bodies and initiatives have adopted policies and legal instruments that promote a holistic approach to combating either terrorism on one side or organized crime on the other.²³⁰ As such, a unified and cohesive policy should be implemented to "harden" this system, as the silo approach to these security threats appears to be less effective than desired.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR "HARDENING" THE SYSTEM

Criminal and terrorist organizations have demonstrated a remarkable ability to modify their goals and tactics in order to circumvent law enforcement and security protocols, thereby showcasing their adaptability and versatility. Therefore, the formulation of additional policies to counter these threats along the same lines would be redundant. Instead, this research recommends the modification of existing legislative measures with greater coherence. Existing policies adopt a direct approach that relies on reactive and security-oriented measures while overlooking the underlying factors that contribute to the emergence of organized crime and terrorist groups. The initial step in understanding the

²³⁰ Lukas Meyer-Daetsch and Matteo Bonfanti E., "Tackling the Nexus at the Supranational Level," in *Organized Crime and Terrorist Networks*, ed. Vincenzo Ruggiero, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2019), 156, <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.libproxy.nps.edu/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429435102-10/tackling-nexus-supranational-level-matteo-bonfanti-lukas-meyer-daetsch>.

growth and functioning of such groups and their alliances is to identify the precise factors that contribute to their development and operation. Long-term, proactive solutions should focus on addressing issues such as political grievances, ideological motives, and social isolation to hinder their development and make some progress toward a desirable goal.

Organized criminal gangs and their illegal operations are ubiquitous across the Caribbean. To combat them effectively, policy makers in the region should work together, adopting the same approach crime and terror groups use in forming their alliances. As this research has shown, addressing crime and terror solely through a national lens will continue to produce limited results. It is imperative, therefore, to undertake a critical examination and reassessment of regional interagency task forces. Furthermore, to succeed, an effort of this magnitude will require the establishment of inter-regional trust among the member states of the Caribbean Community.

The persistent nature of transnational crime and terrorism continues to pose significant challenges to global security and stability. The interconnectedness of today's world, facilitated by globalization and advancements in technology, has enabled criminal and terrorist organizations to operate across national borders, making their activities more complex and harder to combat. In other words, in addition to their conventional criminal activities, crime organizations engage in contemporary forms of organized crime via digital channels. Furthermore, they have exploited today's technology to develop unique synergies. These 21st century crime-terror networks utilize the internet and encrypted communication channels to enlist followers, coordinate attacks, and carry out illicit transactions. For these reasons, it is imperative to continually enhance regional cyber security and intelligence capabilities—not only to intercept communications, but also to safeguard vital infrastructure and government and private sector systems against malevolent attacks.

The “balloon effect,” which is often observed in the context of illicit activities such as drug trafficking,²³¹ accurately describes the way transnational crime and terror networks operate in the Caribbean. To illustrate, when a balloon is pressed in a particular spot, the air moves inside the balloon, and it expands in other areas. Figuratively speaking, the application of pressure on a particular region leads to heightened criminal or terrorist activity in a different one. Hence, the capacity of these violent groups to identify new ways of circumventing or adjusting to prohibition and law enforcement interventions renders them formidable to counteract. Therefore, understanding the mechanisms underlying this phenomenon is of paramount importance to proactively address and mitigate the adaptive tactics employed by criminal and terrorist organizations. Predictive models and early warning systems can help law enforcement agencies intervene proactively and selectively, but these systems demand constant scrutiny in relation to evolving crime and terror network methods and strategies.

It is recommended that the establishment of a robust legal and regulatory framework be developed to facilitate the delineation of procedures for interregional collaboration across CARICOM member states. This foundation should foster a common legal language and approach to address joint investigations, mutual legal assistance, and most importantly, intelligence sharing. Apart from building capacity and development of cooperation protocols, the framework should incorporate provisions for tackling corruption. Additionally, measures to promote transparency, accountability, and good governance should be factored in. The rotation of judges and magistrates in the region to lessen familiarity with counsel and other prevailing circumstances is one example that the Prime Minister of Barbados suggested during a Regional Symposium on Crime and Violence.²³² The implementation of such rotations could potentially serve as a mechanism for deterring corrupt practices and further bolstering the public’s perception of judicial

²³¹ Luca Giommoni, Giulia Berlusconi, and Alberto Aziani, “Interdicting International Drug Trafficking: A Network Approach for Coordinated and Targeted Interventions,” *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 28, no. 4 (December 2022): 563, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10610-020-09473-0>.

²³² CARICOM: Caribbean Community, “Barbados PM Mia Mottley at Round Table Discussion, Regional Symposium on Crime and Violence,” video, 12:29, YouTube, April 19, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ws5n960EPEM&t=380s>.

impartiality. Nonetheless, to guarantee that this legal framework maintains its continued applicability and efficiency, there should be a harmonization of the laws and the ongoing assessment of the framework's provisions.

B. FINAL THOUGHTS

Smaller countries should have an advantage in dealing with problems related to crime and terrorism. Organized criminal syndicates exhibit a high level of differentiation, characterized by their diverse range of illegal activities and a high degree of intercommunication among members. As a small nation both geographically and demographically, Trinidad and Tobago should have an advantage in monitoring and identifying criminal organizations. By contrast, criminal organizations could potentially find it easier to conceal their activities within larger nations like Mexico and Colombia. Since the governments of these nations do not have optimal surveillance capabilities, there are specific areas where organized crime may thrive without being detected or stopped.

The argument being presented pertains to the potential benefit that small countries, particularly those that are island nations, may possess due to their insular nature. While this does not mean that a small country is completely safe from these organizations, it should prevent them from growing to an unmanageable size and level of organization. Of course, if such a country is controlled by a corrupt and compromised government, the size of the country becomes a negligible factor as the governing body is not actively engaged in monitoring and addressing issues. Moreover, even if the government were to become aware of any illegal conduct, its ability to act may be hindered by its pre-existing relationships with organized criminal entities. On the other hand, if the government of a small country is operating with integrity and efficacy, it becomes increasingly challenging for organized criminal factions to conduct their activities due to the requisite economies of scale that such groups necessitate.

The thesis underscores the significance of the recommendations in enhancing the resilience of Trinidad and Tobago against the crime-terror nexus. Moreover, it also highlights the vital importance of perpetual learning, adaptation, and cooperation at the national, regional, and global levels to ensure the enduring efficacy of these endeavors.

Trinidad and Tobago, being a small island nation, encounters distinctive challenges and prospects related to addressing this nexus. The valuable lessons that can be derived from the experience and efforts of this country can be useful for other nations facing similar challenges. Moreover, the success of this country can play a significant role in augmenting security and stability not only within but also beyond the Caribbean region.

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