On March 30, 2010, ten students, traveling to pick up federal scholarships in the northern Mexican state of Durango, were brutally murdered by drug gunmen only because they failed to stop at a makeshift checkpoint.¹ Almost two months earlier, on February 1, fourteen innocent individuals, eight of them teenagers, were killed by gunmen at a party celebrating a soccer victory, in Ciudad Juarez.² These individuals represent some of the over 10,000 who have died due to Mexico’s Drug War since the early months of 2007.³ These acts of brutal violence have spurned international alarm.

In 2008, the United States Joint Forces released a Joint Operating Environment (JOE) report stating, "In terms of worst-case scenarios for the Joint Force and indeed the world, two large and important states bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse: Pakistan and Mexico." The report continues, "The Mexican possibility may seem less likely, but the government, its politicians, police and judicial infrastructure are all under sustained assault and pressure by criminal gangs and drug cartels."⁴ Though Mexico has a long history of deep inequality, political violence and repression, corruption, and overall state weakness, this report suggested the possibility of failure, a prognosis new and unexpected in its severity.

The possibility of state failure in Mexico leads one to question the specific role of drug trafficking in the weakening of the state. More specifically, does narcotrafficking encourage state failure? And, why haven't the counternarcotics measures employed in recent years succeeded in alleviating the risk of failure?

**Thesis Question**

State failure and drug trafficking are deeply and complexly interconnected phenomena. State weakness is, interestingly, both a cause and effect of narcotics trafficking and counternarcotics measures. It is due to state weakness that drug trafficking is able to take root and flourish. As a result of drug-induced violence, corruption, and breakdown of rule of law, narcotrafficking further weakens the already weak state and its institutions. And, finally, it is due to the existing and increasing weakness that states implement counternarcotics policies designed to restore legitimacy and authority. These antidrug programs, paradoxically, spurn high levels of violence, corruption, and public mistrust, which undermine the state's ability to meet its responsibilities regarding its citizenry.

Though it has picked up speed and attention in recent years, the political field of failed states is still a fairly new subject of scholarship. Though the field continues to expand, there is, currently, a gap in the literature due to the absence of mention of narcotrafficking and the unique challenges it presents to state authority. Similarly, narco-trafficking literature, while discussing issues of human rights, corruption, and other state weakening mechanisms, fails to invoke the language of
state failure. This terminology-related absence constitutes a gap within literature on both drug trafficking and state failure.

This study borrows definitional terminology related to State Failure Theory from Robert Rotberg, political scientist and president of the World Peace Foundation. Assuming that the primarily function of a state is the delivery of political goods, states can be considered weak, failing, failed, or collapsed based on the extent to which they provide political goods to their citizens. Yet, also pertinent, not all political goods are equal. Within the hierarchy of goods, physical security is most important. Following security, other important goods include providing "predictable, recognizable, systematize methods of adjudicating disputes and regulating both the norms and the prevailing mores of a particular society or polity" and the protection of civil and human rights. Less significant but still relevant goods include social services such as health care and education. A state that provides many goods to its population but fails to provide security and protect human rights may be considered "failing" despite the maintenance of a strong educational system and national infrastructure. Strong states successfully provide a variety of distinct goods to their populations. Weak states "show a mixed profile," and may fulfill some of their objectives while neglecting others. As weak states perform more poorly, and move closer to becoming "failed," they become "failing

6 Ibid, 3.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
Kuperberg

states." A failed state is one that fails to deliver many (if not all) political goods, particularly the most valuable goods.

The following thesis attempts to extend the Failed State Theory beyond its current application in order to determine the unique implications of narcotrafficking on a weak state. It also strives to bring the language of state failure into the discussion of drug trafficking. Through these interrelated goals, this thesis strives to bridge the two, currently separate, bodies of literature. This scholarship is not only worthwhile in examining an area of state failure that has remained largely untouched but also in providing more information and a new perspective on drug trafficking, a highly problematic and relevant issue of international concern. In a decidedly interconnected world, state failure and transnational trafficking have increasingly significant implications for the larger global community.

What are the implications of illicit drug trafficking for state failing and failure? How can states effectively reverse the weakening trends of this illegal enterprise? This study suggests a preliminary means by which these questions can be addressed using a two-part hypothesis. The first phase of the hypothesis asserts that narcotrafficking contributes to state failing in the already weak states in which it takes hold. Furthermore, the illicit drug trade not only supplements existing and historic state weakness but also presents a new and unique challenge to state power and authority.

The second part of the hypothesis suggests that current state methods designed to decrease state weakness and limit the flow of illicit narcotics are not succeeding in meeting their intended objectives. Despite successes of large-scale
state militarization in decreasing the power of individual cartels, state action has spurned destructive retaliation, lead to immense human rights violations, called into question government legitimacy, harmed environmental climates, and has not succeeded in stemming the flow of illicit narcotics on the national and international levels.

Drug trafficking has had very different regional manifestations throughout the world and throughout Latin America, the primary focus of this thesis. Amongst this array of cases, this study will focus on a specific subset of cases characterized by high levels of narcotrafficking and extensive government responses. Colombia and Mexico, for these reasons, are a comparative subset of cases ideal for the testing of this hypothesis. Due to its small yet significant presence in existing failed state literature, Colombia is an especially useful case in studying failing states in Latin America. In comparison to all other Latin American cases, with the exception of Haiti,9 Colombia has regularly been classified, historically and presently, as a failing or failed state. Mexico provides a relevant comparative example due to the country’s causes of destabilization and its similar policies to Colombia. Whereas any study of state failure in Colombia is complicated by the country’s ongoing civil war, making it difficult to isolate the damage that has been caused only by narcotrafficking, the primary cause of state weakness in Mexico is the prevalence and threat of drug trafficking and narco-violence. As a result, state failings in Mexico can be considered a more direct result of narcotrafficking rather than a

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consequence of multiple, multi-faceted causes of conflict. Additionally, after the Colombian government’s war against its country’s cartels reached a level of perceived success, the Mexican government began to employ a similar counter-narcotics model. Thus, Colombia and Mexico are important cases in attempting to determine the destabilizing effects of drug trafficking and the success, or lack thereof, of current state-lead strategies.

While Latin America provides a host of potentially applicable case studies, the cases of Mexico and Colombia are most appropriate for this study due to their lack of confounding variables, particularly a relative lack of past military dictatorships. Though additional cases may be pertinent to a discussion of narco-trafficking and state failure, this particular study will focus on Colombia and Mexico.

**Literature Review**

In order to determine the gaps within failed state and narco-trafficking literature, as well as draw a causal link between the two phenomena, it is first essential to survey existing literature of both fields to determine areas of connection and departure. Both sets of literature reference the other implicitly but fail to explicitly include the language of the other in their arguments. This thesis aims to close the mutual gap within these two fields and determine the circumstances in which failed statehood and narcotrafficking impact one another.

The field of failed state theory is relatively new; the vast majority of the limited body of literature on the topic was published within the last fifteen years. The newness of the field, despite the centuries-old occurrence of state falling and
failure, reflects the growing importance of state failure for all members of the increasingly interconnected and interdependent global sphere.\textsuperscript{10} This phenomenon has also become increasingly problematic and common in the post-Cold War world.\textsuperscript{11} State Failure Theory, despite its occasional incoherence and literature gaps, works to determine indicators of failure in order to, ideally, prevent such failure and collapse from occurring. Such as with many modern, political disasters, such as genocide and civil war, states moving towards or on the verge of failure emit warning signals that, if properly identified and acted upon, may aid in the prevention of such a breakdown. Failed State Theory provides a variety of classifications and economic, political, and social indicators that aid in the determination and prevention of state weakness, failing, failure, and collapse.

State Failure Theory, likely given its Western focus and primarily Western authors, often conflates the duties of the state with democratic objectives. Thus, measures of state weakness may also serve to weaken democracy and visa versa. For example, Robert Rotberg includes free, open, and full political participation as a “key political good” offered by the state to its citizenry.\textsuperscript{12} Additionally, the “promotion of civil society,” though not a primary good, is included as a relevant political good.\textsuperscript{13} Other sources, such as the Fund for Peace, also view democratic obligations as important state functions. When these responsibilities are not met, state weakness, failing, and failure ensues. According to the Fund for Peace, the political indicators of state failure include loss of state legitimacy, chronic violation

\textsuperscript{10} Rotberg (2003), 1.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, vii.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 3.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
of human rights and suspension of rule of law. Using these commonly regarded indicators, state weakness and failure in a particular locality also points towards the faltering of democracy and democratic institutions. The two fields depart, however, in the underlying and fundamental indicator of state failure: a state’s failure to provide physical security to its population.

Though the literature contains these similar threads and a foundation of common understanding, there is no singular failed state definition throughout the literature. Particularly relevant to this study, failed state literature is marked by an absence of discussion on narcotrafficking and its potential contributions to the field. When narcotrafficking is included as a contributing factor to state failure, it is only referenced in conjunction with particular and isolated case studies (Kline, 168-170). Though some authors present indicators of failure that would not preclude the inclusion of drug trafficking and its effects, many others describe state failure indicators in socioeconomic, political, and situational terms that prove far too narrow for the potential insertion of the drug industry into the theoretical field. Regardless of the indicators used, the language of narco-trafficking is virtually nonexistent within state failure literature.

Similarly, the explicit language of failed states has yet to appear consistently or significantly in the existing literature on Latin American narcotrafficking. Despite this absence of overt language, the literature does suggest ways in which the drug industry has weakened democracy and democratic institutions such as through

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human rights violations, loss of state legitimacy (due to corruption and other factors), and the suspension of rule of law (often as a result of militarization).

Assuming (as suggested by the Failed State Theory authors above) that such indicators of democratic weakness can be used as indicators of state weakness and failure, the two bodies of literature suggest three ways in which state failure and narcotrafficking are interrelated: state weakness contributes to the growth and development of drug industries, narcotrafficking promotes the further weakening of an already weak state, and counternarcotics measures, often employed to combat existing and increasing state weakness, further weaken the state as well.

Robert Rotberg's classifications for state failure will be used, primarily due to the author's use of multiple categories in contrast to the more common dichotomous classification that considers states either "failed" or "not failed." Because so many nations exist between these two classifications, including the case studies under investigation here, the simple "yes" or "no" dichotomy is insufficient in studying state strength and weakness. In using more nuanced classifications, one can illustrate a more detailed state progression towards failing and failure. Finally, the use of multiple terms allows for a greater vocabulary when discussing the impact of specific events and industries on the strength of a particular state.

According to Rotberg, the key objective of a state is the delivery of political goods.¹⁵ States can be classified as weak, failing, failed or collapsed based on the extent to which they provide political goods to their populations. Rotberg believes that not all political goods are equal but rather, that there is a hierarchy of goods,

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¹⁵ Rotberg (2003), 4.
which inform the extent of state weakness. As previously mentioned, “the state’s prime function is to provide the political good of security.”16 Other goods include the existence of a justice system, the protection of civil and human rights, and the provision of social services and basic infrastructure. Strong states, then, successfully provide a variety of distinct goods, especially those most important under the hierarchy of goods, to their populations. Additionally, according to Rotberg, they have a relatively high GDP, high levels of development, high performance according to international indicators such as the Freedom House’s *Freedom of the World* Report, and low levels of corruption.17 Not all of these indicators (GDP and development), reveal weakness or strength in of themselves (or are, alone, causes of failure) but weak performance across these categories will, presumably, inhibit a state from most effectively providing relevant political goods to its population. Thus, weak states are often categorized by a falling GDP, high levels of corruption, and lack of social infrastructure, particularly in rural areas.18 In terms of delivery of political goods, weak states “show a mixed profile,”19 and may fulfill some of their objectives while neglecting others. Additionally, they are often “temporarily or situationally weak,”20 weak due to specific economic or geographical obstacles such as inter or intrastate conflict and leadership inefficacies. As weak states perform more poorly, and move closer to becoming “failed,” they become “failing states.” A failed state is one that fails to deliver many (if not all)

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16 Ibid, 3.
17 Ibid, 4.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
political goods, particularly the most valuable goods. It is classified by long-term, enduring violence and an inability to control its territorial borders. Failed states are generally classified as states with low GDPs or minimal development, high levels of corruption and minimal legitimacy. Furthermore, a collapsed state is a failed state that develops a complete absence of power and authority. As Rotberg describes, “A collapsed state exhibits a vacuum of authority” of which substate actors take advantage, often contributing to an anarchic political climate.

Authors within the state failure field agree with this general concept that a state fails when its institutions fail in their primary functions. Many of the authors agree that prominent among these duties, the state is responsible for providing necessary security for its population and protecting its citizens from unwarranted and avoidable harm. Thus, long-term violence, reflecting the state’s inability to provide physical security for its citizenry, is often seen as an indicator of state failing and failure. From this relatively simplistic definition, the authors depart into various subgroups as to classifications of failing and failure.

The State Failure Task Force, sponsored by the CIA, released the first major report contending with issues of state failure, primarily civil war-induced failure, in 1995. At the theory’s beginning, its authors focused primarily on large-scale,

21 Ibid, 5.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid, 9
semi-organized conflict, such as multinational and civil wars and, specifically, the increased likelihood of state failure during times of severe violence (State Failure Task Force (1995), Zartman (1995)). These authors used historical examples, primarily situated in the African continent, as bases for their theories on state failure. The theories emphasize widespread civil war and defunct military dictatorships as ideal conditions under which a state would lose power and authority. While these historically-based indicators of failure were and are likely pertinent in a number of cases, historic and modern, they are limited in their generalizability. These theories only address patterns of failure and collapse that involve a specific and limited trajectory, involving defunct dictatorships and subsequent military rule. This theory not only excludes explicit mention of narcotrafficking as a potential cause or indicator of failure but also, in using only political indicators, does not easily allow for the insertion of such a phenomenon into the theoretical framework.

In contrast to more narrowly characterized definitions of failure, more recent definitions of state failure more easily allow for the incorporation of the drug trade into failed state literature. Not dissimilar to arguments made by previous authors, these newer authors agree that human security constitutes the primary political good a state is, by definition, obligated to provide its citizens (Rotberg (2003), Rotberg (2004)). Accordingly, state failing and failure occur as states fail to offer political goods to their populations. The most important of these goods is, once again, security. Other goods include a nonviolent means of solving legal disputes,
respected rule of law, and respect for human rights.\textsuperscript{26} Though not explicit among these indicators, narcotrafficking directly influences these indicators and thus, could be incorporated into this theory. Despite the means by which the definition can thus incorporate drug trafficking, other indicators included by these authors, such as GDP and despotic leadership, limit the incorporation of cases such as Colombia and Mexico into this theory.\textsuperscript{27} Additionally, in further explanations of this definition, the authors describe civil wars, monetary greed linked to national resources (such as petroleum), and violence directed towards the state for the purpose of political power as situations at risk of leading a state to failure.\textsuperscript{28} These instances of violence hinder the state’s abilities to provide political goods, particularly security, to its population as described above. The narcotics industry is not explicitly mentioned in any of these examples of violence. While incorporation of narcotrafficking would not greatly disrupt or discredit this theory, this subset of Failed State Theory fails to establish an explicit link between the two trends. Though this theory is more open than its predecessors, it is not open enough to fully and explicitly incorporate narco-trafficking as an indicator and cause of failure.

Other sources within the literature focus on social, economic, and political indicators of failure. One such theory, presented by the State Failure Task Force, concludes that the following highly specific socioeconomic and political factors are indicative of state failure in a majority of cases: economic openness,\textsuperscript{29} infant

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid, 4.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, 5.
\textsuperscript{29} The Phase III task report measures economic openness using “imports plus exports as a percent of GDP”. Jack A. Goldstone, et al., vi.
\end{flushleft}
mortality rate, and level of political democracy. Though these indicators do not necessarily cause failure in of themselves, according to the theory's authors, such indicators correctly classified 72% of global cases analyzed. According to this theory, the strongest indicator of state failure is regime type. Partial democracies are seven times more likely to experience failure than full democracies and autocracies.

Despite the potential truth of these indicators in classifying a number of failing or failed states, they bear little applicability to a discussion on the specific effects brought on by illicit economic activity or, more specifically, drug trafficking. In fact, both Mexico and Colombia are known for relative and regional economic success, characterized by economic openness (evident in such agreements as NAFTA), and, at least in the case of Mexico, are considered democratically free. On a more general level, while state failure may be more likely in a partial democratic, developing, and socially unstable country, the absence of these factors does not prevent the weakening of the state through harms such as intrastate and interstate violent conflict. Thus, these indicators not only exclude the language of narco, they also limit the classification of countries that do not fit a particular and limiting economic, political, and social mold.

In contrast to these indicators of failure, The Fund for Peace provides a more open set of similarly socioeconomic and political indicators for failure that,
however, still similarly excludes the explicit language of narcotrafficking. While these indicators would, without a doubt, ring true in case studies involving drug trafficking, the theory still makes no mention of illicit economic activity or the drug trade within its indicator-based framework. Within this construction, social indicators include the displacement of large segments of a population and chronic violence; economic indicators include significant disparities in wealth; and political indicators describe a loss of state legitimacy, the chronic violation of human rights and suspension of rule of law, the existence of a "state within a state," and external intervention into state matters (The Fund for Peace). These indicators describe many of the weakening consequences of the narcotics industry on its resident state. However, once again, the language of illicit economic activity and drug trafficking remains absent from this theoretical framework.

In addition to the abovementioned authors whose distinct definitional indicators of failed states have contributed to the academic field, other authors have criticized the overarching theory itself. Failed State Theory is criticized as a postcolonial theory attempting to once again reduce African nations to a lesser and even deviant status (Hill, 2005). The theory is also critiqued as a disorganized, subjective theory with the purpose of allowing stronger states the opportunity to restrict the sovereignty of so-classified "failed states" as they see fit (Easterly). Both of these classes of criticism argue that the theory serves a political purpose for non-failed, developed, Western states rather than an academic purpose for better understanding of the failed state phenomenon. The conflation of democracy with
state strength within the literature supports critiques that the theory is too focused on the global West.

Another important field related to Failed State Theory discusses the “state within a state” phenomenon. Guillermo O’Donnell writes of “brown areas,” territories ruled by “subnational systems of power that have a territorial basis and an informal but quite effective legal system, yet they coexist with a regime that, at least at the national political center, is democratic.” This newer discussion of partially or differently governed territories within a state reflects a shift in the literature from an entirely state-centered outlook to one that accounts for regional inequalities and differences within a singular state. In a weak state, it is highly likely that the government will not have equal control or presence across its geographic territory. Even a strong state, depending on its size, may not maintain a strong state presence in every region under its domain. When a significant region of a country exists under little or no direct state authority, the state has effectively failed that part of its populace or territory. Regional failure can also continue to weaken the state by creating local or private institutions that step in to complete tasks of the nonexistent government. This shift in theory is highly relevant for the inclusion of narcotrafficking within the failed state theoretical framework. Not only do regions often characterized by a lack of governmental presence become sites for drug production and distribution, they also allow trafficking leaders to gain notoriety and

This shift, though once again not explicitly including the language of narco, provides an ideal opening for the incorporation of the drug industry as a cause and effect of state failure. Though the literature on Failed State Theory is slowly shifting to allow, at least implicitly, the incorporation of the drug industry, explicit mention of narcotrafficking is still absent from the field.

The field of narco-trafficking is a truly interdisciplinary area of study, incorporating the fields of history, anthropology, sociology, political science, and economics. Each of these fields approaches the drug industry from a particular and distinct angle. Additionally, the majority of the literature is focused on particular cases rather than regions, making generalizations about the phenomenon difficult.

Literature on narco-trafficking, like state failure literature, is similarly marked by an absence of language. In this case, drug trafficking literature fails to include specific mention of Failed State Theory. Instead, the literature emphasizes the ways in which drug trafficking weakens democracy and democratic institutions in the states in which it takes root. Given the state failure indicators mentioned above, many of which relate to both democracy and state strength, discussions of narcotrafficking's relationship to democracy can easily inform narcotrafficking's contributions to state weakness, failing, and failure. The relationship between narcotrafficking and state failure can be primarily categorized by three distinct causal links: state weakness contributes to the development and rise of drug trafficking, drug trafficking further weakens the state, and commonly used

counternarcotics measures, paradoxically, also contribute to state weakness, failing, and failure.

State failure's relationship to narcotrafficking, of the three causal relationships, is leased based on democracy-related indicators. Instead, factors such as political instability, lack of government presence in certain areas and regions, and the "state within a state" phenomenon allowed for and, at times encouraged, the rise of narcotrafficking in a significant number of states. This causal relationship, though proved through and presented in numerous case studies, is not prevalent in the general literature on narcotrafficking. Instead, cases such as Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru, particularly the latter three, provide evidence of such a relationship. In the latter three Andean states, drug production is primarily located in rural, mountainous regions.\(^3^9\) Civilians in these areas, due to difficult terrain, sparse populations, and a lack of infrastructure, lived (and, to some extent, continue to live) in virtual isolation of their governments. Without any significant state presence and as a result of extreme poverty, many peasants resorted to coca farming as a means of attaining income. Under this lack of governmental leadership, coca growing and cocaine production flourished.\(^4^0\) In Mexico, drug trafficking developed within the ranks and with the consent of the highly corrupt PRI (Revolutionary Industrial Party), in power until Mexico's 2000 election.\(^4^1\) In both sets of cases, though in different ways, state weakness and an absence of democratic


governance contributed to the growth and strengthening of the transnational drug trade.

Narcotrafficking literature also establishes that narcotrafficking, through environmental damage, corruption, and violence, weakens its state's democratic institutions. State failure indicators suggest that such a relationship can easily be extended from democratic weakness to state weakness, yet such a link is not explicitly mentioned in the narco literature itself. Though the literature implies an implicit link between the drug industry and state failure, the explicit language of Failed State Theory is absent from this argument.

Coletta Youngers and Eileen Rosen, in the introduction of their book Drugs and Democracy, write, "In Latin America and the Caribbean, international drug trafficking breeds criminality and exacerbates political violence, greatly increasing problems of citizen security and tearing at the social fabric of communities and neighborhoods. It has corrupted and further weakened local governments, judiciaries, and police forces." Additionally, they write, the drug industry has caused environmental damage to the ecosystems in which drug derivatives are grown and drugs produced. Environmental damages, corruption, and violence, for these others, contribute to the weakening of governments and government institutions. From another perspective, narcotrafficking threatens democracy because "it subverts and corrupts the government, legislature, judiciary, police,

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43 Ibid.
military, and other public institutions."\textsuperscript{44} Rubem César Fernandes, in a brief entitled "Drugs and Democracy in Latin America: An Introduction," writes that drug trafficking challenges democracy and rule of law because it promotes the "corruption of public life."\textsuperscript{45} In all of these cases, the authors establish that corruption, primarily by eroding rule of law, serves to weaken democratic institutions.

Drug-related violence, a byproduct of narcotrafficking, is also recognized, in the literature, as contributing to the weakening of democratic institutions. Violence pervades many levels of the drug industry. One example of such violence is that members of the narco industry use murder and corruption as means of establishing support and reducing opposition. Gordon Knowles asserts, "Drug cartels have the power to undermine popular trust and confidence in the government and even the sovereignty of the government itself."\textsuperscript{46} In order to achieve these aims, the purpose of which is to reduce opposition to their cause, cartels employ narco-terrorism and narco-corruption.\textsuperscript{47} According to Knowles, narco-terrorism is the assassination of individuals in order to increase one's own economic interests and increase profit. Violence is used against members of the government, police, military, and local population that provide resistance to the goals of narcotrafficking.\textsuperscript{48} Violence and corruption undermine the state's democracy and rule of law and demonstrate the

\textsuperscript{46} Gordon James Knowles, "Threat Analysis: Organized Crime and Narco-Terrorism in Northern Mexico" in Military Review (Jan/Feb 2008), 76.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, 77.
state's inability to provide the primary political good, security, to its citizenry. Thus, through violence and corruption, narcotrafficking contributes to state failure. Once again, though this link can be inferred, the language of State Failure Theory is still absent from literature on narcotrafficking and, in particular, narco-related violence.

Finally, the field of narcotrafficking establishes a third link between state failure and the drug industry; commonly employed counternarcotics measures, often used in order to overcome narco-induced state weakness, also contribute to the weakening of democracy. In some instances, counternarcotics policies simply augment the existing issues spurned by the drug industry. For example, according to the Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy, drug policies threaten democracy by encouraging greater narco-related violence, the "infiltration of democratic institutions by organized crime," human rights violations, and high levels of corruption that threaten rule of law. At the same time, however, counternarcotics measures present new challenges to democracy and the state. First, these counternarcotics measures, specifically militarization, are particularly dangerous in Latin America, a region with an altogether too recent history of repressive and genocidal military dictatorships. And militarization, a commonly employed counternarcotics strategy in Latin America, often leads to the leads to the widespread and continual violation of human rights, which undermines democracy. Eradication, another antidrug policy pursued throughout the region,

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50 Youngers and Rosin, 6.
Kuperberg

harms the physical health of farmers and the rural poor.\textsuperscript{52} In short, both eradication and militarization contribute to human rights violations against the populations they are supposed to be protecting. Counternarcotics policies, synthesized in the umbrella term, "the war on drugs," have weakened democracy and democratic institutions in the countries in which they are implemented.\textsuperscript{53}

Narcotrafficking literature presents three arguments that illustrate the deep interconnectedness between narcotrafficking and the weakening of democracy. The indicators of state failure mentioned within the field of Failed State Literature and the commonalities between such indicators and similar indicators of democratic weakness, allows for the extension of these three arguments from democratic weakness to state weakness. However, still relevant, narcotrafficking literature is marked by an absence of failed state language. Though both the narcotrafficking and failed state fields are undoubtedly interrelated, they do not incorporate the terminology and, additionally, some of the concepts, of the other. This study aims to fill this mutual gap within the two fields and, in doing so, enrich both.

**Research Design**

The purpose of this paper is to determine the effects of narcotrafficking and commonly employed counternarcotics measures on Latin American state weakness, failing, and failure. The hypothesis of this study suggests that drug trafficking contributes to state failing and failure in already weak states. Specifically, drug trafficking often leads to an increase of violence that highlights a government's

\textsuperscript{52} Youngers (2004), 2.
\textsuperscript{53} Youngers (2004), 1.
inability to provide security for its citizens, ignores rule of law, encourages
corruption, and introduces non-governmental power structures that undermine the
legitimacy and traditional roles of the state. Additionally, and for these reasons,
narcotrafficking is a specific threat to democracy in already fragile Latin American
democratic, or partially democratic, nations. The second part of the hypothesis
maintains that antinarcotics measures, specifically militarization, also contribute to
short-term and long-term state failing by decreasing state legitimacy in the eyes of
its population and inhibiting security through human rights violations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Colombia</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP (per capita)</td>
<td>$9,200</td>
<td>$13,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population below the Poverty Line</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary illicit substances produced</td>
<td>Coca, opium poppy, cannabis</td>
<td>Opium poppy, cannabis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest producer of cocaine derivatives in world.</td>
<td>About 90% of Colombian cocaine travels through Mexico on its way to the United States.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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**Figure 1**
Data from CIA World Factbook (CIA-The World Factbook—Colombia, CIA-The World Factbook—Mexico, "CIA-The World Factbook-- Field Listing:: Illicit Drugs

The Latin American cases of Colombia and Mexico will be utilized in order to
test this hypothesis. These cases will be studied individually but connections and
comparisons will be made throughout. In keeping with historical chronology and in
order to provide a more scholarly basis for the arguments made, the analysis begins
with an exploration of the Colombian case followed by the Mexican case. Each case
study investigation opens with an introduction followed by brief political and narco-related histories. These histories provide foundations of necessary information and establish the states as weak prior to and independent of large-scale narcotrafficking. These histories illustrate that state weakness contributes to the development of narcotrafficking within a nation’s borders. Weak political capacity, political instability, and failure to offer political goods to their populations are important indicators of determining early state weakness. Following the discussion of political history and history of narco in each country, I set out to determine the relationship between the aforementioned independent and dependent variables. First, I establish the causal relationship between narcotrafficking and state failure. In both nations, narcotrafficking contributes to state failing and failure by establishing overwhelming fear and anxiety through political violence and corruption. Second, I prove the second part of the aforementioned hypothesis, contending that counternarcotics measures also contribute to state failure. In the case of Colombia, this analysis is based on the environmentally and physically dangerous policies of fumigation and violence-inducing militarization, both of which impinge on the government’s ability to provide security and social services (such as health) to its population. The causal relationship between antinarcotics measures and state failure in Mexico will draw on militarization and its consequences, namely, vast human rights violations and the increasingly violent response from cartels.

Moreover, this study attempts to bridge a gap between literature on narcotrafficking and literature on state failure, both of which have developed without significant contribution to the other. In drawing connections between the
two phenomena, the understanding of both drug trafficking and state failure will be strengthened. Establishing a cause-effect relationship will also, ideally, lead to more appropriate domestic and international policy concerning the reduction of the illicit narcotics trade.

This study uses qualitative and quantitative data in order to determine state weakness and failure in Colombia and Mexico. Histories, analyses, reports, indexes and articles provide information regarding rates of narcotics trafficking and consumption, military interventions, human rights violations, incidents of violence, and individuals indicted for corruption. The research of other authors is used in order to determine the historical existence and the modern-day consequences of narcotics trafficking. Additionally, public opinion surveys and speech transcripts are utilized in order to determine the views of the nations' publics on their respective governments and, furthermore, the extent of state failure in the eyes of those whose opinions most matter, their citizens.

This survey will ideally yield information that is highly relevant and pertinent to the current "war on drugs" funded in significant part by the United States and waged in multiple Latin American countries. If proven correct, this hypothesis will indicate that current means of minimizing drug production are not successful on a long-term scale and should be replaced with alternative methods. Militarization and increased human rights violations may provide short-term results but are disastrous for the long-term success and stability of countries contending with narco-related issues. Additionally, in not actively reducing underlying causes,
these policies do not promote a sustainable reduction in drug trafficking and consumption.

**Colombia**

In 1988, former Colombian president Pastrana proclaimed, "Last year I said we were on the verge of the abyss. Today, I think we are in the abyss."\(^{54}\) His statement reflects the expansive and destabilizing affects of drug trafficking on the population and political landscape of Colombia. Politically, the extensive narcotics industry has undermined the power of an already weak state, weakening the government through its role in widespread paramilitary and guerilla violence as well as through its infiltration of the country's political systems. Through these forms, traffickers have undercut the legitimacy of the government, undermined rule of law, encouraged corruption, and, for these reasons, promoted the failure of the Colombian state. Though the government reaction has been varied in approach and has had some successes, counternarcotics programs such as fumigation and militarization have only furthered Colombian state failure.

Despite the antinarcotics policies of the last twenty years, the illicit drug trade has persisted at an all-time high. In the early 2000s, Colombia was the homicide capital of the globe and home to its third largest refugee population.\(^{55}\) Impunity is rampant; over 95% of crimes are unprosecuted notwithstanding attempted institutional reform. Like Mexico, a significant number of Colombian citizens are living in poverty (see Figure 1). And despite billions of Colombian and

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\(^{54}\) Bruce M. Bagley, "Colombia and the War on Drugs," *Foreign Affairs* (1988), 73.

\(^{55}\) Julia E. Swieg, "What Kind of War for Colombia?" *Foreign Affairs* (2002), 123.
international dollars being funneled into counternarcotics programs, the majority of consumed cocaine in the United States and Europe can still be traced back to Colombia.\textsuperscript{56}

Colombia is undoubtedly a failing state, as it has been for the majority of its modern national history. Yet, it has not entirely failed. As Harvey Kline asserts, existing successes of the Colombian government negate the country’s status as a completely failed state. As he writes, despite the fact that the government has given up political and social control of various territories to guerilla and paramilitary groups, drug trafficking continues to erode state power and funnel billions of illicit dollars into the country, violence and insecurity reign, and corruption continues to plague and delegitimize political leaders, the government continues to provide political services to its population.\textsuperscript{57} The Human Development Index classifies Colombia as having “high human development” in spite of the prevalence of kidnapping and murder in the country.\textsuperscript{58} The adult illiteracy level is 7.3%, relatively low, Colombia’s GDP per capita is slightly low for its place on the Human Development Index (HDI) but not alarmingly so (as opposed to its neighbor, Ecuador), and Colombia’s HDI is higher than the regional Latin American average.\textsuperscript{59} Colombia has free and fair elections and freedom of the press.\textsuperscript{60} Though the state has failed to deliver important political goods, namely security and protection of human rights, to its citizenry, Colombia’s political and economic strengths ensure

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Harvey F. Kline, \textit{State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror}, “Colombia: Lawlessness, Drug Trafficking, and Carving up the State” (New York: Brookings Institution, 2003), 179.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Sweig, 126
that it is not a state that has utterly failed to provide all goods to its population. The
Colombian government has not thoroughly failed in providing political, economic,
cultural and social services to its population; in spite of its failures, Colombia has not
failed.

Political History

In response to allegations that the narco-industry has encouraged the failure of the Colombian state, Harvey Kline writes, "It [the Colombian state] had never succeeded. It had always been weak." Kline continues, "Colombia began as a weak state. Nothing was done for most of the first 138 years of independence to change that sense of insufficiency." Francisco Thoumi echoes this statement in describing Colombia at the turn of the twentieth century as "more an aggregate of regions than a nation," a reflection of the country's lack of structural foundation and the weakness of its government. Colombia's state has remained weak from its establishment in 1820 through the middle of the 20th century onto the present, contributing to and resulting in damaging violence and political instability, especially during La Violencia from 1946-1965.

State weakness, endemic in Colombia's political history, changed its form following La Violencia, an internal armed conflict between the country's Liberals and Conservatives in which hundreds of thousands of Colombians were killed. The

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61 Kline (2003), 161.
62 Ibid.
conflict spurned the depoliticization of political parties and contributed to the autonomy of the armed forces. After over a decade of violence, political actors signed the 1958 agreement in order to put an end to La Violencia. As a result of this agreement, Colombian political parties became depoliticized and clientelistic.\textsuperscript{64} Additionally, throughout the sixties and seventies, power alternated between the two primary political groups who, moreover, prevented the inclusion of other groups into the political sphere.\textsuperscript{65} Disenfranchisement from the political process and Cold War military abuses against Colombia's civilian population contributed to the formation of a number of guerilla insurgent groups, some of which (such as FARC and the ELN) are still active to this day.\textsuperscript{66} According to Francisco Thoumi, "The pattern of political exclusion and the state's failure to respond to people's demands [for security, respect for human rights, and enfranchisement] has been the main cause of subversion and paramilitary activities in Colombia."\textsuperscript{67}

\textit{La Violencia} not only contributed to political disenfranchisement but also, to the granting of greater autonomy to the Colombian military. Since the mid-20th century, and the end of \textit{La Violencia}, Colombia's military has had almost absolute control over internal security policies and protocols, largely, if not entirely, absent of civilian oversight.\textsuperscript{68} In order to grant the military further rights, the Colombian government regularly called for a state of emergency that enacted immediate suspension of legal civil and human rights.\textsuperscript{69} Under the continuous suspension of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{64} Ibid, 278.
  \item \textsuperscript{65} Ramírez Lemus, et al., 101.
  \item \textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{67} Thoumi (2003), 279.
  \item \textsuperscript{68} Ramírez Lemus, et al., 123.
  \item \textsuperscript{69} Ibid, 124.
\end{itemize}
rights, the military held secret trials as well as detained and tortured numerous individuals throughout the mid-twentieth century. And, due to an absence of civilian oversight and the continued use of military trials, these crimes remained largely unpunished. Though the 1991 constitution placed a number of restrictions on military actions, "the military retained its autonomy and involvement in maintaining public order." 

In more recent years, the majority of human rights abuses and noncombatant deaths and disappearances have not been committed at the hands of the military but rather, by paramilitary organizations. These groups developed from the state-sponsored militarization of the civilian population into self-defense forces and became further consolidated throughout the 1980s and 1990s, not without the help of the armed forces. The harms perpetrated by the military and paramilitary organizations reflect early state failing and contribute to the continued weakening of the state.

**History of Narco-trafficking**

The lack of a strong state provided an ideal backdrop for the growth of large-scale drug production and exportation. Colombian growers often cultivate drugs in the Andean regions, territorial areas in which state presence is virtually nonexistent due to difficult terrain and scarceness of population. Additionally, in order to

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70 Ibid.  
71 Ibid.  
72 Ibid.  
73 Ibid, 102.  
74 Ibid, 96.
avoid government interference, displaced growers often resettle in lands on which they are less likely to be disturbed.\textsuperscript{75} Finally, the weakness of the police force and politicians allows drug traffickers to more easily manipulate such officials in order to protect their economic interests. It is a result of such state weakness that the drug industry was able to develop and expand. The lack of state presence over wide territorial regions of the country not only contributed to drug production, but, also, the greater inability of the government to effectively combat such production. Due to continued state absence, the implementation of the counternarcotics policies has proven difficult and, in some cases, altogether impossible.

Historically, the indigenous populations of the Andes have chewed coca, the plant derivative of cocaine, for over a thousand years. According to the Inca, coca is a sacred plant of the moon and sun gods.\textsuperscript{76} The plant was and is chewed in order to ease physical stress and for medicinal purposes.\textsuperscript{77} Despite occasional use by indigenous communities, overall coca use, production, and trafficking in Colombia remained minimal until the growth of the drug trade in the latter part of the 20th century.\textsuperscript{78}

The drug trade truly began to flourish in the 1960s as a result of rising demand for marijuana in the United States. Initially, growers began planting marijuana in order to meet small but growing domestic demand.\textsuperscript{79} In the 1970s, after U.S. operations successfully reduced marijuana trafficking from Mexico and

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Bruce Bagley (1986), 8.
\textsuperscript{78} Mary Roldán, "Colombia: Cocaine and the "Miracle" of Modernity in Medellin" in \textit{Cocaine: Global Histories} (London: Routledge, 1999), 166.
\textsuperscript{79} Thoumi (2003), 80.
Jamaica, Colombia's marijuana industry filled the supply vacuum. The industry grew in order to meet American market demands and, due to its size and reach, eventually gained international attention.

By the 1970s and 1980s, however, demand for cocaine, particularly in the United States, began to increase. Due to greater profit margin and traffickers' access to the Andean climate, the Colombian cocaine industry expanded and overtook the country's marijuana trade in prominence and profit.\textsuperscript{80} Marijuana trafficking opened transportation routes for illicit substances yet it was not until the expansion of cocaine production and distribution that the modern systems and organizations associated with Colombian drug trafficking (such as cartels) truly began to unfold.\textsuperscript{81}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{coca.png}
\caption{Cocaine cultivation (in hectares)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid, 83.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, 107.
The cocaine drug trade started slowly, with small-scale trafficking operations. As consumption of illegal drugs grew in the 1970s, primarily in the United States, the Colombian trade expanded to accommodate it. Using bribes and violence, drug traffickers increased their business ventures without much resistance from police and judicial officials. The cocaine trade in Colombia continued to grow throughout the 1970s. Then, in 1980, the Bolivian coup lead by General Luis García Meza Tejada contributed to a decrease in production of Bolivian cocaine. Colombia took advantage of this opening and expanded its production efforts. As a result of the continued growth and consolidation of cartels, Colombia moved up from its status as the "third largest coca-growing nation" in 1991 to the "largest coca-producing country in the world" by 2000 (see Figure 2). Colombia, to this day, remains "the world's largest producer of coca derivatives; [Colombia] supplies cocaine to nearly all of the US market and the great majority of other international drug markets." 

In addition to growing and trafficking marijuana and coca, Colombia also contributes to the heroin trade. During the mid-1980s, officials first detected beginnings of poppy cultivation in the country. Poppy grew in popularity, for growers, as cocaine prices declined during the late 1980s and 1990s. The plant also became a popular alternative for growers and traffickers due to its high price per volume ratio, especially when cartels had dissipated and small traffickers took

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82 Bagley (1986), 10.
85 Thoumi (2003), 91.
their place as the primary actors in Colombia's drug industry.\textsuperscript{86} Colombia is the only country in the world in which the three most important psychedelic drug plant derivatives are grown—marijuana, coca, and poppy.\textsuperscript{87}

The Colombian state, in the early 1990s, succeeded in destroying its two most powerful cartels and has employed expensive counternarcotics programs throughout the country. However, the amount of illicit exports exiting the country continues to rise (see Figure 2).\textsuperscript{88} The growth and expansion of the Colombian drug trade has not come without great consequences; one of these has been the destabilization of the Colombian state.

\textit{Narco-trafficking’s Contributions to State Failure}

Regarding perceptions state failure in Colombia, Harvey Kline writes the following:

\textit{By the 1990s, levels of violence reached the point that many believed that the state had ‘failed.’ Soon thereafter, when Colombia’s violence and drug industry spilled over into neighboring counties, the international community became aware of the government’s failure. By the end of 2001, many Colombian urban dwellers had also reached that conclusion, because they lived in contestant fear of attack […] nearly everyone agreed that the Colombian state had failed.}\textsuperscript{89}

Though Harvey Kline goes on to argue that the Colombian state has not yet failed, he successfully paints a picture of a state overwhelmed by violence and a population consumed with insecurity. Though inherently complicated by the civil war that has

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Ibid, 80.
\item \textsuperscript{88} "CIA- The World Factbook-- Field Listing:: Illicit Drugs."
\item \textsuperscript{89} Kline (2003), 161.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Kuperberg

ravished the country for over four decades, the unabated drug trade has contributed to promote an environment of violence, fear, and state failing. The Colombian drug trade has debilitated the state through its infiltration of the political system, specifically, through bribes and corruption, political violence, and explicit involvement in political offices or political activity. Through these mechanisms, narcotics traffickers have undermined the economic and political legitimacy of the state, encouraged violence and insecurity, eroded rule of law, and generally compromised the government’s roles and obligations to its citizenry. Narcotrafficking has thus contributed to state failing in Colombia.

Francisco Thoumi writes of the mutually enforcing relationship between corruption and drug trafficking. Corruption encourages growth of drug trafficking and drug trafficking contributes to corruption.\textsuperscript{90} Large-scale corruption is made possible by weak political and social institutions and, consequently, causes the further weakening of such structures. Corruption also contributes to the delegitimization of the government, and the erosion of public trust in officials and institutions.\textsuperscript{91} As such, corruption threatens democracy and the power of elected officials to be representative of their constituents. In the case of Colombia, corruption has also contributed to the impunity of traffickers and therefore, to the breakdown of rule of law.

Corruption has been a prominent and strategic tool used by cartels and traffickers against the Colombian government for many years. Drug traffickers, at a meeting in Cali, declared, "We have to finance the campaigns of the politicians and

\textsuperscript{90} Thoumi (2003), 170.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
keep them on our side."  

Corruption has infiltrated the positions of local political officials, police officers, members of national legislature, and even the country's presidents. In 1978, President Turbay came under domestic and international fire due to allegations that some of his political allies were closely connected to drug traffickers. Similarly, in 1994, President Ernesto Samper was pressured to resign after being accused of accepting multi-million dollar campaign contributions from the Cali cartel. In 1994, it was estimated that 30-40 percent of Colombia's legislature was involved in narco-corruption. Supposedly, 80% of the Medellin police force were "on the mafia payroll" by 1990. Those working with the cartels received monetary benefits and promotions while those who opposed them were threatened and often killed. Furthermore, high level of corruption afflicting presidents and legislative politicians has delegitimized the government in the eyes of its citizenry and lead to public mistrust of state institutions. In a 1999 poll conducted by Dow Jones for the Wall Street Journal of the Americas, 80% of a sample of Colombians answered that the narco problem in their country was "very serious." Additionally, 55% blamed corruption in the police and government as the primary state obstacle to effectively reducing narcotrafficking. High levels of corruption have contributed to

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92 Simons, 62.
93 Thoumi (2002), 104.
95 Ibid.
96 Simons, 62.
97 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
breakdown of rule of law and the weakening of political structures in Colombia and have therefore promoted state failing and failure.

Political violence is also a tool historically and presently utilized by narcotraficantes in order to incite fear in their opponents and the general public. Traffickers use repression tactics in order to enforce laws and demonstrate the consequences of opposition.\textsuperscript{100} Colombian narcotraffickers were responsible for the assassinations of over fifty judges, more than 400 policemen and military men, and a number of journalists solely between the years of 1985 and 1988.\textsuperscript{101} In addition, grassroots leaders, members of peasant communities who were considered supporters of guerilla groups, members of the leftist political party (UP), and anti-cartel moderate politicians have been regular targets of drug-related political violence.\textsuperscript{102} In 1989, three leading Colombian political figures were murdered in the span of 48-hours. Judge Carlos Valencia was first assassinated followed by Colonel Valdemar Franklin Quintero, the chief of police in the region that contains Medellin. Soon after, Senator Luis Carlos Galán, the leading candidate for the presidential election, was killed as well.\textsuperscript{103} These murders followed years of similar political murders, often aimed at pro-extradition politicians.\textsuperscript{104} These public displays of violence relay a message to victims as well as to those still alive that opposition to drug cartels is not tolerated. Political violence not only encourages political support of the narco industry but also incites fear in the general public. In

\textsuperscript{100} Thoumi, (2002), 111.
\textsuperscript{101} Bagley (1988), 73.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid, 32.
\textsuperscript{104} Forrest Hylton, Evil Hour in Colombia (New York: Verso, 2006), 69.
recent years, traffickers have continued employing the strategy of violence in order to encourage public and political cooperation with their economic endeavors. Anti-narco political leaders continue to suffer from threats and are periodically assassinated for their opinions and actions.

Political violence contributes to state weakness, failure, and failing by contributing to the government’s inability to provide a nonviolent justice system and physical security to its citizenry. Political violence indicates that anarchic and vigilante justice has superseded accepted and constitutionally lawful means of solving disputes through the country’s judicial system. Furthermore, a violent justice system contributes to the impunity of criminals and thus constitutes a breakdown in state morality and rule of law. Narco-related bloodshed illustrates the government’s inability to provide security to its populace which underscores the public’s lack of confidence in governmental institutions.

The regular employment of corruption and political violence by drug traffickers illustrates the drug industry’s contributions to state failure. Cartels have also undermined the state through their explicit involvement in politics and through the appropriation of functions generally reserved for state actors. Through penetration of the Colombian political sphere, members of the Colombian narcotics industry have destabilized the power and authority of the state. In the 1980s, cartels attempted to acquire direct power and sustain a larger base of support in order to increase the profit margins of their illicit enterprises.\textsuperscript{105} To complement their economic influence, "the Medellín traffickers reached out for a larger share of

\textsuperscript{105} Thoumi (2002), 111.
political power.”\textsuperscript{106} In order to accomplish this feat, members of Colombia’s most prominent drug families took up posts as mayors, governors, and senators. These politicians were known to have supplied political protection to drug traffickers.\textsuperscript{107} Furthermore, it has been said that, in some areas of Colombia, “traffickers have achieved a status comparable to ‘a state within a state.’”\textsuperscript{108} Through these means, narcotraffickers have directly and explicitly entered Colombian politics.

In addition to these direct measures, cartels have participated in indirect political activity by funneling money into political campaigns as well as by controlling media outlets and running social service projects. Famous Medellin drug trafficker, Carlos Ledher, managed a number of local media outlets and Pablo Escobar achieved a level of infamy for his social service initiatives in Medellin.\textsuperscript{109}

Through power over media channels and social services, cartel members established a higher level of public loyalty and allegiance. Forrest Hylton writes the following of the extent to which narcotraffickers became involved in the darker side of Colombian politics:

\begin{quote}
By the end of the 1980s, it was apparent that, unlike beefed-up insurgencies, cocaine mafias had the capacity to infiltrate the two parties, the police, military, and government intelligence services. Through urban terrorism and assassination of leading judges and politicians, they brought the national government to its knees.”\textsuperscript{110}
\end{quote}

Due to the extent to which illicit trade has become rooted within state apparatuses, the government has not only faced many obstacles in attempting to quell illicit activity but has also suffered claims of illegitimacy as a supposedly democratic

\textsuperscript{106} Bagley (1988), 77.
\textsuperscript{107} Bagley (1986), 99.
\textsuperscript{109} Bagley (1988), 77 and Roldán, 175.
\textsuperscript{110} Hylton, 78.
nation. Moreover, as drug traffickers have taken on roles usually attributed to the state, the already weak state has lost control over elements of its population and thus, has become weaker still. Finally widespread political violence represents a breakdown in the rule of law as well as the inability of the Colombian government to protect its own citizens and political officials. As non-state actors, such as paramilitary groups and cartel leaders, rise up to fill the void left by the state, this failure of state power is consolidated.

Narco-trafficking has similarly contributed to state failure by providing economic support to guerilla and paramilitary groups and, thereby, contributing to the continuation of the country’s civil war. The civil war has encouraged violence and prohibited the Colombian state from fully providing its population with the necessary political good of security. Consequently, if narco-trafficking supports the violent civil war, then it contributes to the government’s inability to meet its obligations to its citizenry. Additionally, *narco-traficantes* are directly responsible for the creation and continuation of conservative, paramilitary groups, who inflict violence on the Colombian population. The most direct example of cartel patronage over paramilitary groups can be found in the creation of MAS (*Muerte a Secuestradores*), "Death to Kidnappers." Cartels have also hired paramilitary groups to serve as their personal hit men and to protect their farmland and factories.

The relationship between cartels and paramilitary groups not only exists, it has serious political implications for the Colombian government. The necessity of

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111 Ibid, 68.
112 Hylton, 68 and Kline (2003), 170.
non-state groups, such as MAS, to guarantee security for civilians (in this case, against the threat of kidnappings) indicates the ineffectiveness of the state in providing adequate protection for its citizens. For, had state institutions such as the police effectively prevented or dissuaded kidnappings, individuals would not have needed to create their own, private organizations to ensure the upholding of some semblance of justice, albeit vigilante justice. In the act of taking over these state-held responsibilities, cartels accumulated more public support and greater political and social power. Paramilitary organizations highlight the government’s inability to provide security to its population by taking over government responsibilities such as protection of citizens as well as by contributing directly to violence and instability.

The narcotics industry additionally encourages the Colombian civil war by providing funds for paramilitary and guerilla groups. Paramilitary groups, of both the left and right, have received a large portion of their funding from the drug trade.\(^{113}\) According to Michael McCarthy, FARC and AUC (the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia) "support themselves primarily through coca and poppy industries [...]."\(^{114}\) FARC, in the early 1990s, protected drug farms and, in exchange, levied taxes on coca farmers. The group has now become a syndicate in its own right and has taken charge of its own processes of production and distribution of narcotics.\(^{115}\) According to various sources, FARC may be receiving anywhere from

\(^{113}\) Thoumi (2002), 111.
\(^{114}\) McCarthy, 16.
\(^{115}\) Ibid, 28
$300 million to over a billion dollars in narcotic-based income every year.\textsuperscript{116} AUC also has a strong economic investment in the drug trade. AUC may be receiving up to 80% of its income from narcotics. AUC also sells fertile land to those involved in the drug trade and provides protection to narco trafficers in exchange for a portion of their profits.\textsuperscript{117} Both paramilitary and guerilla groups have encouraged the planting and harvesting of cocaine in order to create and maintain the support of peasants in land under guerilla or paramilitary control.\textsuperscript{118}

The deep interrelationship between the narcotics trade and paramilitary and guerilla groups has served to undermine the state in a myriad of ways. Not only does drug-based support for anti-left groups sustain conflict, it also provides barriers to eventual peace by encouraging vigilante justice and supporting groups that are, effectively, uncontrollable.\textsuperscript{119} Drug-related power and money have created still more obstacles to peace by encouraging economic and political allegiance to narco over the peace-making initiatives. Additionally, money accumulated from the drug trade has been used to buy and distribute large quantities of weaponry within the country. As a result of the weapon trade (which is intrinsically related to the drug trade and guerilla violence), "reports indicate that guerilla groups, paramilitary squads, and drug dealers are better armed than the government."\textsuperscript{120} This inequality of arms and prolongation of violence undermines the physical authority of Colombian state and its ability to provide security for Colombian citizens.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, 39
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Thoumi (2002), 106.
\textsuperscript{119} Bagley (1986), 96.
\textsuperscript{120} Kline (2003), 177.
Finally, narco-related funding and violent tactics have also promoted the extension of ungoverned spaces within Colombia. By 1998, the FARC “controlled or operated freely in 40-60 percent of Colombian territory and had de facto control over much of the southwestern part of the country.”\footnote{Ramírez Lemus, et al., 106.} Thoumi writes, “In coca-growing areas, the guerrilla front substituted for the state; it imposed a highly authoritarian regime, defined and applied its own laws and regulations, provided education and police services, and administered a primitive civil justice system to solve conflicts among the population.”\footnote{Thoumi (2003), 88.} Guerrilla groups, in exchange, levied high taxes on growers and used the funds to continue their violent campaigns against the Colombian government. Not only did guerrilla organizations take over the role of government in drug-producing areas, they also compromised the success of government initiatives aimed at improving transportation and communication (such as highways) in rural, coca-cultivating regions, thereby literally preventing the state from overcoming its regional weaknesses.\footnote{Ibid.}

**Counternarcotics Measures' Contribution to State Failure**

In response to the continued threat of guerilla violence, uncontrollable paramilitary forces, and illicit drug trafficking, the Colombian government has implemented a variety of strategies, some more successful than others, with the stated purpose of increasing the power of the state and decreasing security threats to the Colombian population. The Colombian government has utilized a large array
of measures designed to combat drug trafficking. These policies include, but are not limited to, the imprisonment and extradition of *narcotraficantes*, aerial spraying and other forms of crop eradication, economic development programs, and the seizure of financial assets of cartel members. The most heavily funded and most significantly pursued of these programs are crop fumigation and militarization. Interestingly and ironically, despite limited successes, such efforts largely encourage further state weakness. According to Ramírez, Lemus, Stanton, and Walsh, “[T]he collateral damage from the fumigation strategy, and from privileging engagement with the military, is undermining the consolidation of democracy and rule of law.”

Fumigation, a policy that is supported by the United States government under Plan Colombia (2000), is aimed at reducing cocaine production at its source—coca leaves. As Plan Colombia states, “Military funding can be made available to Colombia only after the President certifies to Congress that Colombia has agreed to and is implementing a strategy to eliminate coca and opium poppy production by 2005 through a mix of [...] manual eradication; [and] aerial spraying of chemical herbicides.” Yet, not only is this strategy largely ineffective at reducing the amount of cocaine exported from Colombia to the international market, it has terrible consequences on the environment, Colombian citizens, and, consequently, the Colombian state. Crop eradication efforts in Colombia, as opposed to other states such as Mexico, emphasize aerial spraying and fumigation due an overwhelming lack of governmental presence in coca-growing areas as well as the

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125 Ramírez Lemus, et al., 137.
vastness of the territory in which coca cultivation is practiced. Due to the
impreciseness of aerial spraying, pesticides have not only destroyed potential illicit
crops, they have also eliminated perfectly legal and economically necessary peasant
crop-holdings. In destroying necessary crops, this strategy promotes the large-
scale, and at times unnecessary, destruction of crops and other plant life.
Furthermore, it seems that displacement of farmers has encouraged coca cultivation
in protected wildlife areas. This new cultivation, developed as a direct response
to eradication efforts, has encouraged deforestation, threatening Colombia’s diverse
ecosystem.

In addition to its environmental implications, fumigation has had negative
economic repercussions on a number of peasants and small-scale growers. The
majority of coca is grown on small plots and thus, fumigation is targeted not only at
industrial growers but also, small farmers, many of whom grow coca out of
economic necessity. Fumigation efforts have been said to destroy legal crops
(sources of subsistence food for many farmers) and endanger the physical health of
farming families. Because of the loss of income and food, "anecdotal reports suggest
that some farmers left destitute by fumigation are joining the guerrillas or the
paramilitaries out of economic necessity." Fumigation has also encouraged mass
displacement of individuals and, due to displacement-related poverty, has ironically
pushed some farmers into the industry of illicit coca cultivation. Thus, through

127 Thoumi (2002), 113.
128 Ramírez Lemus, et al., 120.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid, 117.
131 Ibid, 118.
132 Ibid, 119.
the creation of refugees and the promotion of physical insecurity rather than security, fumigation has contributed to, rather than reduced, state failure.

Furthermore, fumigation is unconstitutional under Colombian law. Thus, the use of aerial eradication as a counternarcotics strategy undermines the constitutionality of the government and rule of law. Fumigation efforts go against Colombian law, both established and recent. Aerial eradication has never been fully legal under the Colombian constitution and Bogota, primarily current president Álvaro Uribe, has disregarded judicial decisions regarding the unconstitutionality and illegality of fumigation. Despite legal barriers, President Uribe has continued eradication efforts. Ramirez Lemus, Staton, and Walsh write that "the implementation of the fumigation program in disregard of Colombian legal principles, and against the will of local and regional elected officials, has undermined the rule of law and government authority."\textsuperscript{133} In addition to its unconstitutionality, fumigation provokes the further dispersion of traffickers and growers and, along with them, guerilla groups. Drug and civil war–related violence thus spreads to new territory and, in so doing, weakens the power of the state to combat such violence and provide security to Colombians.\textsuperscript{134} And, to make matters worse, aerial sprayings have proven unsuccessful in limiting cocaine exportation. Fumigation has succeeded in destroying a number of coca plots but Colombia still remains the single largest producer of coca in the world.\textsuperscript{135} In 2003, cocaine

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid, 116. \\
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid, 114.
exportation was more than eight times that of the early 1980s.\textsuperscript{136} Additionally, coca cultivation reportedly increased in 2007 and 2008 despite such efforts.\textsuperscript{137} Though counternarcotics measures are aimed at decreasing narcotrafficking and thus, increasing the power and authority of the state, fumigation has not significantly affected Colombia's coca exportation and, as a result, has not reversed the trend towards state failure.

Militarization, the other primary counternarcotics strategy of the Colombian government, fits nicely with the state's chief policy for the last 150 years—force.\textsuperscript{138} Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Colombian government, aided by the U.S. government, successfully pursued the dismantling of the country's two largest and most powerful cartels, the Cali and Medellin cartels. On December 2, 1993, Pablo Escobar was located and assassinated by Search Force members.\textsuperscript{139} The Colombian government celebrated the death of Escobar, assuming that the death of Colombia's most powerful trafficker would, in time, decapitate the entire illicit industry. Yet, though the drug trade had been undoubtedly affected by the arrests and assassinations of many of its key players, particularly through the destruction of the country's two most powerful cartels, "the essential dynamics of the business remained securely in place."\textsuperscript{140} By 1996, leaders of both cartels had been assassinated or imprisoned. Yet, drug trafficking continued to grow. Colombia passed into "a new phase in the drug war" in which "cartels were quickly replaced

\textsuperscript{136} Thoumi (2003), 303.
\textsuperscript{137} "CIA- The World Factbook-- Field Listing:: Illicit Drugs."
\textsuperscript{139} Simons, 85.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid, 86.
by smaller organizations that lacked the capacity to operate transnationally and coca production in Colombia increased dramatically.”141 Once again, though the objective of state-sponsored militarization was to decrease supply-side narcotrafficking, the militarization strategy has done little to significantly decrease coca export flows. Militarization has, through the rise in violence and human rights violations, undoubtedly contributed to state failure; simultaneously, it has not met its intended objective aimed at decreasing state weakness and failings.

In response to this shift from distribution to production, Presidents Samper and Pastrana focused attention on eradication. In 1999, Pastrana announced “Plan Colombia,” a 7.5 billion dollar (USD) plan to “revive the Colombian economy, promote social development, eradicate illicit crops, and jump-start the stalled peace talks” (Crandall, 123). The Plan initially aimed at increasing economic opportunities for peasant coca growers.142 Though this plan was advertised as a Colombian-born solution to a Colombian problem utilizing international (and primarily United States) funding, it is likely that the proposal was primarily a U.S. creation or, at the very least, significantly altered by U.S. interests.143 In its final form, Plan Colombia drastically emphasized military spending over economic relief.144 Between 2000 and 2005, Colombia was given $3.15 billion in U.S. aid and $2.52 billion, or 80 percent, went to the police and military forces.145 The majority of the 2.52 billion dollars went to the military over the police force, consolidating the shift in funding

141 Ramírez Lemus, et al., 105.
142 Ibid, 106.
143 This is especially evident in the fact that the English copy of the Plan was available months before a Spanish one See Russell Crandall, Driven by Drugs: US Policy Toward Colombia (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pub, 2007), 124.
144 Ramírez Lemus, 106.
priority from the police forces to the military. Plan Colombia saw military armed conflict with guerilla groups as a means of "guaranteeing security conditions."¹⁴⁶

Álvaro Uribe, elected in 2002 and again in 2006, in landslide victories, has implemented a new strategy during his time as president, breaking from the failed diplomatic policies of his antecedents. Uribe ran on a platform oppositional to those of his predecessor; he opposed guerilla negotiation and advocated for the militarization of the country with the political goal of creating democratic security for all inhabitants of the Colombian state.¹⁴⁷ According to Uribe, security is a "public good," a fundamental right for all citizens.¹⁴⁸ In order to provide security for the Colombian populace, Uribe set out a number of security initiatives that involve establishing state presence in previously ignored regions, building up the armed forces, and involving civilians to a greater extent in their own security.¹⁴⁹ Through a one-time tax on wealthy Colombians, Uribe collected enough funds to overhaul the nation's armed forces.¹⁵⁰ Using this money, the state was able to train 35,000 soldiers, contributing to President Uribe's ideal goal of a 100,000 professional soldier army and 200,000-member police force.¹⁵¹ Though these measures may increase security temporarily, the net consequences of militarization lead to the weakening, not strengthening of the state.

Though this militarization strategy has been successful at capturing, arresting, killing, and promoting the desertion of many members of illicit groups,

¹⁴⁷ Kline (2003), 174.
¹⁴⁸ McCarthy, 21.
¹⁴⁹ Ibid.
¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 22.
¹⁵¹ Ibid, 21.
militarization has not been as successful as it has seemed. In an effort to increase security amongst the entire Colombian populace, Uribe has implemented policies that, at times, have threatened the country’s citizens. For example, human rights violations continue to increase in Colombia at the hands of police and military officials. In Julia Sweig’s article for *Foreign Affairs*, “What Kind of War for Colombia?” (2002), the author writes that the majority of human rights violations are attributed to paramilitary groups not without help from the military.\(^\text{152}\)

According to Human Rights Watch, Uribe has continually impeded legal investigations of paramilitary members and groups.\(^\text{153}\) In addition, more explicitly linked government arms of repression, such as the Colombian military, are also responsible for a number of human rights violations in recent years. In a June 2009 letter to President Obama, Human Rights Watch writes the following:

> The frequent extrajudicial killings of civilians attributed to the Colombian Army, which the United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions recently described as "systematic." The Attorney General’s Office is reported to be investigating cases involving more than 1,700 alleged victims in recent years. Uribe refuses to acknowledge the magnitude of the problem.\(^\text{154}\)

Furthermore, such violations expressly violate not only international but also domestic law. The 1991 constitution, which supposedly signaled a true start for the country’s democracy, provided a strong basis for the country’s recognition of human rights and even placed priority on international human rights law over domestic

\(^{152}\) Sweig, 126.


\(^{154}\) Ibid.
laws. However, despite a legal emphasis on rights, the citizens of Colombia are victims of continued violations of human rights by perpetrators who rarely see justice for their actions due to extremely high levels of impunity. According to the Inter-American Commission on Human rights, in 1999, Colombia’s human rights situation was "one of the most difficult and serious in the Americas." And this situation has only continually worsened with the rising human rights violations committed under the name of Plan Colombia. If the guaranteeing of physical security and protection of civil and human rights are among the most important political goods, state-committed human rights violations represent two distinct and significant failures of a government.

The purpose of Plan Colombia is "to assure order, stability and compliance with the law; guarantee national sovereignty over territory; protect the State and the civilian population from threats by groups in arms and criminal organizations; [and] break the links existing between these groups and the drug industry that supports them." Unfortunately, the policy may be compromising the very goals it seeks to realize. Despite occasional successes and periods of improvement, violence has continued to increase and state-sponsored human rights abuses persist in full force. If anything, due to rising violence, increasing human rights violations, and continued militarization, by 2002, the Colombian state was more of a failed state than it had been before.

155 Ibid, 122-123.
156 Ibid, 122.
In 2005, Ramirez Lemus, Stanton and Walsh wrote, "[F]our years after the approval of Plan Colombia, the country is no closer to overcoming its structural problems, drug trafficking continues unabated, and peace remains a distant dream." Bogota's primary counternarcotics programs, fumigation and militarization, have proven to increase human rights violations, inflict environmental damage, and hurt the very populations it aims to help thus contributing to the failure of the Colombian state.

Mexico

Around the turn of the twentieth century, then Mexican president, Porfirio Díaz is regarded as having said, "Poor Mexico; so far from God, so close to the United States!" To some extent, this sentiment still echoes true in the present day, particularly with regard to the country's current, narco-related crisis. Mexico, a country in which almost half of its populace is living under conditions of poverty, shares an almost 2,000 mile-long border with the United States, the world's largest consumer of cocaine. According to many authors, the drug trade is a product of the socioeconomic and historic relationship between the United States and Mexico. Neoliberalism, trade agreements, the historic conflicts between the United States and Mexico and border politics are all implicitly intertwined in the development of the modern drug trade between the two countries.

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Since Mexico's so-called democratic transition in 2000, drug-related violence has exploded in the country. The levels of violence and political corruption have become so high that several U.S. agencies, most namely the Pentagon, vocalized concern over the potential for state failure. Though most of these concerns were quickly and diplomatically refuted, a level of apprehension over Mexico's abilities to adequately protect its own citizens has remained. As journalist and author Michael Petrou writes, "The overall situation of governability, in the sense of the government convincing its own people that it can really govern and control territory, is in doubt."\(^{161}\)

In response to allegations of failure, Tony Garza, former U.S. ambassador to Mexico, refuted such claims saying, "Failed states do not have functioning executive, legislative, and judicial branches. They do not boast the world's 12th-largest

economy, nor do they trade with the United States at a pace of more than $1 billion a day.”162 Felipe Calderón echoed these sentiments in the following: “Mexico has never been a weak state. It is not today. It will not be in the future.”163 Yet, despite these arguments, is undoubtedly clear that Mexico’s situation is becoming increasingly more precarious due to growing levels of violence (see Figure 3).

Though Mexico is not a failed state, the effects of the country’s narcotics industry as well as state-sponsored counternarcotics measures have contributed to the further weakening of an already fragile state.

In the Mexican case, the narcotics industry and counternarcotics government policies are inextricably linked in a cycle that spawns increasing violence and violations of human rights. Much like Colombia, the narcotics trade in Mexico encourages high levels of corruption within politics and the nation’s security forces (primarily, local police forces). The Mexican narcotics trade has also incited a strong arms trade from the U.S. to Mexico, which has contributed to the trafficking of hundreds of thousands of illegal firearms into the country. Though violence existed prior to 2000, drug cartels lost their stable political support after the so-called democratic transition and have become increasingly violent. In response to this violence and the extent of the illicit industry, the PAN (National Action Party) government leaders have aimed to destroy the grip that drug cartels currently hold on Mexico’s economy and populace. Yet, due to high levels of corruption, political leaders have increasingly turned to the military to achieve these goals, a tactic that has lead to an increase in human rights abuses. This government crackdown, in

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163 Ibid.
Has only lead to more violence on the part of the cartels who are now fighting state security forces in addition to one another. Civilians are becoming increasingly caught in the crossfire and violence, insecurity, and instability prevail, especially in states with the highest level of drug production and trafficking. Though Mexico has not yet failed, the state is becoming increasingly weak. Though the objective of militarization strategies has been to decrease violence and thus increase the state strength, this effort has only increased violence and incurred civilian casualties. Despite small successes, state-sponsored counternarcotics measures have not succeeded in significantly limiting the power of drug cartels, have not stemmed the flow of illicit narcotics out of Mexico, and have only been met with an increase in nation-wide violence.

Political History

According to Hector Aguilar Camín, a Mexican sociologist, "Mexico is not a failed state; it's a mediocre state." A better understanding of Mexico's supposed mediocrity can perhaps be achieved through a brief examination of Mexico's political history. As a result of periods of past violence, particularly the Mexican Revolution and Dirty War, the Mexican state can be categorized as a historically weak state in certain capacities. This weakness, particularly historic, state corruption and the illegitimate, hegemonic PRI rule, permitted the rise of narcotrafficking.

In 1810, Mexico achieved independence from Spain. For the next century, prior to the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the country underwent numerous political obstacles to stability and economic prosperity. During this period, from 1846-1848, the Mexican-American War occurred. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the conflict, stipulated the selling of a significant portion of Mexico's territory to the United States. This war and its consequences have shaped U.S.-Mexico relations since the event over a century ago.

In 1876, Porfirio Díaz was elected president of the Republic. Though he initially ran on an anti-reelection platform, Díaz was to remain the country's president for about thirty-five years until he was driven out by imminent war. Díaz lead Mexico through a stage of rapid and widespread industrialization. He supported privatization of industry, mechanical production, and foreign investment in Mexico. Though successful in increasing the economic standing of his nation as a whole, inequality was endemic during and as a result of Díaz's policies. It was a result of this socioeconomic inequality, and the dictatorial politics of Díaz's multiple presidencies, that revolution broke out in 1910. In 1929, after years of political and social instability, the PRI (the Institutional Revolutionary Party) took power for what was to become 71 years of hegemonic party rule.

Though likely legitimate at the onset of the their multi-decade run, the PRI resorted to repression and "dirty war" tactics in order to hold onto power after losing democratic legitimacy. From the late 1960s to early 1980s, the government, using police and military forces, implemented a power-holding strategy that
involved disappearances, torture, and killing. This policy of repression included
the notable student massacre of 1968 in Mexico City. Additionally, police have
historically violated human rights in order to solve crimes. According to Howard
Campbell, the Mexican police system has operated under a vertical structure of
command for a number of decades. The historic purpose of the police was to serve
those with political, economic, and social power rather than to promote a just
society. As such, the police were not set out to protect citizens or to uphold the
principles of their nation but rather, to support those with monetary power. This
helps to explain the prevalence of corruption and bribery within the police force.

Corruption has also been an established facet of Mexican politics for a
number of decades and has only been helped by historically and presently high
levels of impunity. Laurie Freeman and Jorge Luis Sierra write, "In this context, the
Mexican justice system has evolved not to establish the rule of law but to preserve
the power of the powerful—from local political bosses all the way to the
president." The roles of the military and police during Mexico's Dirty War set the
stage for modern day abuses by these security-maintaining forces. Due to the PRI's
hegemonic rule over Mexico, the state remains on uncertain ground with its
population. The PRI employed repression as a tool for control, contributed to the
fraudulence of elections nationwide, and on the whole, created a facade of
democracy with little basis.

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166 Howard Campbell, Drug War Zone: Frontline Dispatches from the Streets of El Paso and Juárez (Austin: University of Texas, 2009), 24.
167 Freeman and Sierra, 267.
Throughout Mexico's political history, the country's judiciary system has also remained a source of state weakness. Human Rights Watch argues the following regarding Mexico's weak judiciary:

Perhaps the most glaring failure of the Mexican justice system was the way it had allowed egregious human rights violations to go unpunished. These violations included the massacres of student protesters in 1968 and 1971, and the torture, execution, and forced disappearance of hundreds of civilians during the country's "dirty war" in the 1970s and early 1980s.\(^\text{168}\)

High levels of impunity, despite a supposed effort to investigate and prosecute Dirty War crimes, are persistently high. Modern-day human rights abuses, corruption, and impunity have long held roles in the history of the Mexican state and have contributed to the historic weakness of the nation.

Narcotrafficking flourished within the *priista* political power structure.\(^\text{169}\)

Though violence between traffickers erupted occasionally, such conflict did not undermine political support (or, at the very least, compliance) for cartels and their illicit activities. Similar to those in Colombia, Mexican cartels garnered support primarily through corruption and occasional acts of murder. Under the PRI, various political officials benefitted from the illicit drug industry. State officials often turned a blind eye, or even profited from, traffickers within their jurisdiction, "provided they keep a low profile."\(^\text{170}\)

Thus, under the PRI, the relationship between the drug industry and the state was stable; trafficking and traffickers had an established position within the political structure and did not fear serious, state-initiated obstacles to their collection of profit. In the 2000 elections, PAN (The National

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\(^{168}\) "Justice in Jeopardy: Why Mexico's First Real Effort to Address Past Abuses Risks Becoming Its Latest Failure," Human Rights Watch (July 2003), 1.

\(^{169}\) Aguayo Quezada, 165.

\(^{170}\) "On the Trail of the Traffickers; Dealing with Drugs."
Action Party) received the voting majority and, putting an end to the PRI’s undemocratic reign, won the election. According to numerous authors, this so-called democratic transition may not have marked the country’s transition to democracy, as it appears. Regardless, the 2000 election did have important implications for the status of narcotrafficking within the Mexican state. With the transition, members of Mexico’s illicit drug economy no longer had the same security or protection within the political sphere. Economic, social, and political ties with PRI political leaders were no longer applicable. Concurrently, Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón made decreasing the power of the drug industry a priority for their presidencies. Within this hostile political environment, drug cartels and traffickers have only become more violent and unpredictable.

History of Narcotrafficking

Drug production and trafficking has a long history in Mexico and has, in part, developed as a result of state weakness. Farmers have grown poppy in the country since the 1800s.\(^{171}\) The poppy flower has been used to create opiates, particularly heroine and morphine, for domestic and transnational consumption. Mexico’s opiate business grew during the American Civil War as Mexican traffickers provided heroin and morphine to the United States military and individual soldiers.\(^{172}\)

Despite early growing and selling, today’s drug trafficking networks primarily have their roots in the era of Prohibition. At the turn of the twentieth century, marijuana, cocaine, and opiates (namely morphine and heroine) were legal

\(^{171}\) Roberto Kruger, Interview (25 April 2009).

\(^{172}\) Francisco E. Gonzalez, “Mexico’s Drug Wars Get Brutal,” *Current History* (February 2007), 72.
drugs that were routinely sold between Mexico and the U.S. without difficulty. Due to increasing addiction, American states began to establish regulatory laws against such narcotics. Yet, it was not until 1919 with the passing of the Volstead Act in the United States and the progressive criminalization of drugs, that regulation reached the level of all-out, federal prohibition. When alcohol became legal once again, traffickers began to export persistently illegal substances, such as heroin, across the border. In the process of smuggling narcotics and alcohol into the United States, networks for growing and distributing began to form.

In the 1940s, poppy was used to create morphine used by multiple Western countries and throughout the 1950s, heroine exportation from Mexico to the United States increased. From the 1960s to the 1970s, U.S. attitudes about drugs began to change while, simultaneously, demand for narcotics (particularly cocaine and marijuana) began to rise. During this period, cocaine production and trafficking was still (almost) exclusively controlled by Colombian cartels. However, in the 1980s, as the DEA disrupted trafficking networks from Colombia to the Caribbean and Florida, Mexican traffickers became the primary cocaine middlemen between Colombia and the U.S. Mexican traffickers, who had already established networks from trafficking marijuana and heroine, began to displace Colombian distribution and took principal control over cocaine trafficking efforts.

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175 Campbell, 41.
176 Recio, 37.
177 Kruger, Interview.
As in Colombia, cocaine transitioned traffickers in Mexico from small time marijuana and heroin border-runners into more organized crime networks and later, cartels.\textsuperscript{178} As cocaine networks became increasingly solidified, traffickers made greater profits from the narcotics industry.\textsuperscript{179} To this day, the narcotics industry brings more money to Mexico than any other domestic industry, including tourism and petroleum.\textsuperscript{180} The first Mexican cartel was established in Sinaloa in the 1930s but most major cartels began as family businesses in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{181} Currently, there are seven major cartels in Mexico. The most powerful among them are the Tijuana Cartel (Cártel Arellano Félix), the Juarez Cartel (Cártel Carillo Fuentes), the Sinaloan Cartel (Cártel Beltrán Leyva), the Gulf Cartel, and the Cartel of the Pacific.\textsuperscript{182}

\textit{Narco-trafficking’s Contributions to State Failure}

\textit{Proceso}, in the spring of 2009, released a special edition magazine focused on narcotrafficking. The edition’s editor, in his introduction states, "From one end of the Republic to the other, from border to border and coast to coast, cartels impose their law in blood and fire."\textsuperscript{183} Narcotrafficking has certainly shifted from affecting just border or territorially advantageous states to all states in the republic. Cartels

\textsuperscript{178} "On the Trail of the Traffickers; Dealing with Drugs."
\textsuperscript{179} The average kilogram of cocaine in 2005 was bought for $2082, sold in Mexico for $7,880 and in the United States for $24,000. See El Almanaque Mexicano 2008 (page 166) for more information.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{181} Corchado, 18.
\textsuperscript{183} Rafael Rodríguez Castañeda, \textit{Proceso}-“El Mexico Narco: Primera Parte” (2009), 3.
operate in 30 of the 32 Mexican states. All seven major cartels are present in
_Distrito Federal_ (D.F.), the state home to Mexico City. According to a former
Attorney General, traffickers control at least 80 counties (municipios). Additionally, it is estimated that approximately 600,000 individuals partake in
organized crime in Mexico. And, within these states and amongst these people, drug traffickers are inundating populations with violence and bloodshed. One indicator of this violence is the continually rising narco-related death toll. In 2009, over 6,000 were killed due to narco-violence.

It is difficult to determine the individual implications of narcotrafficking on the state without bringing in counternarcotics policies and their subsequent effect on the drug industry and, in particular, the increased violence of cartels. It is clear, however, that _narcotraficantes_ and their cartels use murder and corruption as means of establishing support and reducing opposition to their goals, namely, profit-making.

Before discussing the specific means through which violence and corruption erode the power of the state, it is useful to redefine the existing state weakness that allowed for the growth of narco-related illegal mechanisms, such as corruption and murder. Journalist and author Sam Quiñones, writes about local weaknesses that encourage the growth of narcotrafficking and undermine the power of the state in the following:

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184 Supposedly Hidalgo and Tlaxcala are the only states without trafficking, despite the capture of Zeta members in Hidalgo.
185 Aguayo Quezada, 167.
186 Campbell, 276.
187 Corchado, 19.
Mexico’s gangs had the means and motive to create upheaval, and in Mexico’s failure to reform into a modern state, especially at local levels, the cartels found their opportunity. Mexico has traditionally starved its cities. They have weak taxing power. Their mayors can’t be reelected. Constant turnover breeds incompetence, improvisation, and corruption. Local cops are poorly paid, trained, and equipped. They have to ration bullets and gas and are easily given to bribery. Their morale stinks. So what should be the first line of defense against criminal gangs is instead anemic and easily compromised. Mexico has been left handicapped, and gangs that would have been stomped out locally in a more effective state have been able to grow into a powerful force that now attacks the Mexican state itself.¹⁸⁹

Due to weaknesses within the police force, the Mexican government has continually relied on the military to maintain order. However, the armed forces are also crippled by, among other things, military desertion. Over a hundred thousand soldiers deserted their military positions during the presidency of Vicente Fox, possibly to join cartels and other armed organizations, such as the Zetas.¹⁹⁰ Amidst this existing state and security force weakness, corruption and terror have become even more powerful strategies for drug traffickers and cartels seeking to gain power, influence, and profit.

Violence is a tool used by traffickers to reduce opposition to their cause and industry. This violence weakens the state by preventing the state’s capacity to provide physical security to its populace. The transnational arms trade aids such traffickers in reducing political and social opposition. Due to arms smuggling, primarily from the United States, traffickers are able to commit serious and widespread acts of violence, particularly because, similar to those in Colombia, traffickers often outgun state security personnel. During Vicente Fox’s presidency, over 4 million guns are estimated to have entered Mexico illegally. The government

¹⁹⁰ “The Merida Initiative: ‘Guns, Drugs and Friends,’” Minority Staff Report to Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (December 2007), 168.
confiscated only 29,360.\textsuperscript{191} About 2,000 weapons are estimated to enter Mexico every day.\textsuperscript{192} According to these statistics, security forces manage to seize less than one percent of all guns entering Mexico. This represents a failure of the Mexican government to control its territorial borders and, indirectly, to protect its citizens.

The primary international contributor to Mexico's fight against narco, largely through the Merida Initiative, is also the nation responsible for providing the vast majority of illegal firearms to Mexico: the United States.\textsuperscript{193} On the reverse side, the U.S. and its citizens are responsible for selling and sending 90\% of the illegal firearms in Mexico.\textsuperscript{194}

Howard Campbell writes that Mexican academics are discussing the \textit{colombianización} or "Afghanistian-ization" of their country. These terms refer to a "condition of uncontrolled, extreme violence, a terrified citizenry, and a government outgunned in certain regions by traffickers and riddled with corruption."\textsuperscript{195} In 2004, Mexico had the second highest rate of kidnapping in Latin America, second only to Colombia.\textsuperscript{196} Journalists have also become popular targets for drug-related violence and murder; 5 journalists were killed and one was disappeared in 2009 alone.\textsuperscript{197} These instances of killing and kidnapping have only increased in recent years. Such violence illustrates that the government is unable to protect the

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\textsuperscript{191} Aguayo Quezada, 167.
\textsuperscript{192} "The Merida Initiative: 'Guns, Drugs and Friends;'' 9.
\textsuperscript{193} Corchado, 20.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{195} Campbell, 7.
\textsuperscript{196} Knowles, 77.
\textsuperscript{197} "Mexico: Human Rights in United Mexican States."
physical security of its population and fails to defend its citizen’s fundamental rights to life and speech.

Narco-violence directly illustrates the state’s inability to protect its own citizenry as well as the inefficiencies and insufficiencies of existing security forces in maintaining security. Mexico is failing as a state due to its increasing failure to provide physical security, the most important political good, to its population. Drug killings, a growing phenomenon in Mexico, not only serve to remove opposition and destroy lives but also “send a sociopolitical message that the state [...] can neither completely control its national territory nor fully protect the populace.”\textsuperscript{198}

Political scientist Jorge Chabat similarly writes, “‘[T]rafficking is the main problem in Mexico because of the corruption it generates.’\textsuperscript{199} Though illicit drugs may not threaten the state due to domestic consumption, they do in terms of their ability to corrupt state officials.\textsuperscript{200} Corruption encourages state failure by undermining rule of law and provoking public mistrust of state. Bribery also strengthens and coerces political support for trafficking goals while limiting the state’s ability to effectively counter and reduce the power of cartels and traffickers. According to a RAND report written in 1992, “many powerful smugglers have been able, through corruption, to establish protected positions for themselves and their businesses within Mexico’s political system, on a regional, if not national, basis.”\textsuperscript{201}

Corruption takes the form of bribes, political contributions, and social service

\textsuperscript{198} Campbell, 27
\textsuperscript{199} Jorge Chabat, “Mexico’s War on Drugs: No Margin for Maneuver,” \textit{Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science} (July 2002), 135.
\textsuperscript{200} Chabat, 146.
\textsuperscript{201} Silvana Patenostro, “Mexico as a Narco-Democracy,” \textit{World Policy Journal} (Spring 1995), 42.
projects to communities.\textsuperscript{202} Through these forms, narco-corruption uses monetary reward to create and sustain support for the drug industry.

Not only does corruption encourage impunity and therefore undermine rule of law, it also threatens the democratic nature of a government. The Mexican public agrees with the sentiment that corruption in Mexico is affecting their country negatively. In a 2009 survey from the Pew Research Center, 68\% of the Mexican surveyed individuals indicated corruption among leaders as a big issue.\textsuperscript{203} Such a significant response may reflect growing mistrust of government institutions. This data is echoed by Transparency International. Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index gives Mexico a corruption rating of 3.3\textsuperscript{204} while Colombia fared slightly better, scoring a 3.7.\textsuperscript{205} This numerical rating reflects relatively high levels of public corruption.

Corruption is so widespread that it prohibits the state from effectively reducing its existence and from adequately and successfully winning this so-called "war" against drugs. Corruption is not only pervasive but also, high-reaching. In 1997, the head of the National Institute for the Combat of Drugs, Jesus Gutierrez-Rebollo, was arrested for suspected collusion with the Juarez Cartel.\textsuperscript{206} State governors, members of presidential cabinets, and even presidential campaigns

\textsuperscript{202} Ibid, 77.
\textsuperscript{205} “Corruptions Perception Index 2009.”
\textsuperscript{206} Chabat, 138.
themselves have been sullied by accusations of corruption. Impunity has protected government officials from prosecution for these crimes and, as such, the absence of guilty sentences does not necessarily reflect innocence. Jorge Chabat writes, "If these accusations are at partially true, drug trafficking really is posing a threat to the Mexican state's ability to govern."  

Corruption has remained a political norm even after the 2000 election that supposedly ushered in a new era of democracy for Mexico. *Federales*, members of the Federal Judicial Police, "have been found guilty of being involved in drug trafficking at all levels, from guarding airstrips, fields, and shipments to warning drug traffickers about up-coming raids." Additionally, in 2005, one-fifth of the Attorney General's Office (PGR) was under investigation for accusations of corruption and collusion with drug cartels. Even more recently, beginning in 2008, President Calderón initiated an anti-corruption operation, "Operation Clean House." As a result of this investigation, a number of high-ranking as well as junior officers have been removed from their positions on accusations of corruption. Unfortunately, given the extent of corruption among the police force, many of these empty positions have been filled with former or current members of the military, furthering the militarization goals of President Calderón.

Corruption has also impeded the Mexican government's ability to employ diverse strategies against the narcotrafficking industry. Due to corruption in the

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207 Chabat, 139.  
208 Chabat, 139.  
209 Patenostro, 44.  
210 Chabat, 138.  
police force, President Zedillo mobilized the army to aid in drug law enforcement.\textsuperscript{212} Though the military has been involved in eradication efforts since the middle of the 20th century, its entrance into law enforcement represents an undesirable shift not only in the role of the military but also, Mexico's counternarcotics program.\textsuperscript{213} As a result of the extensiveness of narco-corruption in Mexico, there are very few proposed alternatives to the military's new domestic role, despite the fact that such a change in obligation has raised valid and proven concerns about human rights and constitutional legality.\textsuperscript{214}

Eduardo Valle, the former counternarcotics adviser to the attorney general under President Salinas, told the President after leaving his position, "Politicians are at the service of drug traffickers. They have been able to create a state within the Mexican state."\textsuperscript{215} After the defeat of the PRI at the hands of the PAN, the state began to seriously fight back. Decades of corruption and violence have weakened the power of the state but President Fox, and even more so President Calderón, have made it their missions to restore the state's power. To meet this goal, both Presidents have employed a strategy of militarization.

\textit{Counternarcotics Measures' Contributions to State Failure} 

Georgina Sánchez, an expert on issues of security, recently said that Mexico "appears to be in the center of a volcano of violence." Despite efforts to decrease such violence and regain state power, counternarcotics measures seem to be

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\textsuperscript{212} Chabat, 139
\textsuperscript{213} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{214} Chabat, 140
\textsuperscript{215} Patenostro, 43.
contributing to increased bloodshed. Due to the state's rising inability to protect its citizens from violence, employed counternarcotics policies have contributed to state failure in Mexico.

Counternarcotics measures date back to the mid-1980s and have largely been implemented, at least in part, due to economic and political pressure from the U.S. Laurie Freeman and Jorge Luis Sierra write, "Although these policies have not had a discernible impact on the amount of drugs entering the United States via Mexico, they have become obstacles to consolidating democracy, protecting human rights, and establishing civilian oversight of the military of Mexico."216 The primary policy strategy of the Mexican government has been militarization. This strategy, though supposedly temporary, has continued unabatedly into the present and appears not be slowing into the future.217 Like in Colombia, militarization in Mexico has contributed to state failure by contributing to countless human rights violations, many of which have not been investigated or prosecuted. Additionally, militarization has encouraged state failing by provoking retaliation on the part of drug cartels thereby incurring more corruption and violence. Human rights violations perpetrated by the state and state institutions not only go against the government's duty to protect the fundamental rights of its citizens but also, undermine the state's most important obligation, the providing of security to its citizens.

Though militarization has been used increasingly often as a counternarcotics policy in recent years, expansion of military programs has been occurring since the

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216 Freeman and Sierra, 263
217 Ibid.
middle of the 20th century. Prior to the 1980s, the military served as the manpower behind Mexico's eradication programs. And, since the 1980s, the role of the military has continually expanded to other drug related functions.\textsuperscript{218} This expansion has followed two major paths: "the expansion of the antidrug role of the military as an institution into domestic law enforcement responsibilities; and the appointment of military personnel (whether active duty, on leave, or retired) to posts inside civilian law enforcement institutions such as the police and attorney general's office."\textsuperscript{219}

The military was called upon to perform these tasks due to its physical resources as well as its perceived lack of corruption (at least in comparison to the police forces). In the mid-1990s, under President Zedillo, military officials began to enter the police forces in large numbers. Despite evidence of corruption, the project continued to grow until military personnel held formerly-civilian positions in thirty of Mexico's thirty-two states.\textsuperscript{220} For instance, Calderón expanded the police force from 9,000 police officers in 2006 to 26,000 officers in 2009. Half of these new police officers are current or former soldiers.\textsuperscript{221} After the 2000 transition, Fox continued to employ the militarization strategy that he inherited from his predecessors. Yet it was Calderón, elected in 2006, who truly took the militarization policy to a new level.

Calderón's policy of fighting narco, primarily involving the large-scale and widespread militarization of Mexico, has lead to the deployment of tens of thousands of military soldiers throughout the country. Gonzalez writes, "Calderon

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{218} Ibid, 277.
\footnote{219} Ibid.
\footnote{220} Ibid, 278.
\footnote{221} On the Trail of the Traffickers; Dealing with Drugs.
\end{footnotes}
declared a war on drugs by deploying the Mexican military in a series of large-scale operations that by the end of 2008 had involved close to 40,000 troops and 5,000 federal police.\textsuperscript{222} Currently, the Mexican military has high-ranking positions and important duties in the areas of counternarcotics intelligence, eradication, seizures, arrests, and anti-cartel initiatives, responsibilities that vastly extend their previously limited mandate.\textsuperscript{223} These increased responsibilities provide additional opportunities for the military to commit civil and human rights violations, crimes that will likely be protected under a military judiciary that is shrouded in impunity.

Militarization, designed as a short-term strategy (aimed at giving civilian institutions time to grow stronger and more stable), has continually been extended. In February 2009, the Mexican government deployed an additional 5,000 troops to Juárez in order to supplement existing police and military personnel already in the city.\textsuperscript{224} Expansion of military responsibilities related to drug trafficking can also be demonstrated by the Attorney General Office’s spending budget for narco-related programs. In 2000, the PGR spent 798 million pesos on narcotrafficking initiatives. In 2006, the office spent 5,421 million pesos.\textsuperscript{225} Increased militarization has also been helped by the 2008 Merida Initiative, a U.S.-sponsored program that pledged 1.4 billion dollars to Mexico and Central America over a three-year period and focuses on further increasing the role of the military.

This policy of militarization has lead to serious human rights violations on the part of the military and police forces, violations that continue due to high levels

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{222} Gonzalez, 74.
  \item \textsuperscript{223} Freeman and Sierra, 282.
  \item \textsuperscript{224} “On the Trail of the Traffickers; Dealing with Drugs.”
  \item \textsuperscript{225} Aguayo Quezada, 170.
\end{itemize}
of impunity. The police and armed forces committed human rights violations in Mexico prior to the appearance of illicit cartels and consequent antinarcotics measures. Today, military and police officials have continued in the tradition of Mexico’s Dirty War though now, in the name of The War on Drugs. Modern day human rights violations, according to Human Rights Watch, include arbitrary detentions, torture, rape, murder, and forced disappearance. Many of the victims of these abuses have no direct connections to drug cartels. Security forces, in committing human rights violations, are going directly against the mandate of the state to protect the human rights and physical security of the citizens of their state.

Amnesty International began their 2009 Report about Mexico with the following: "Serious human rights violations committed by members of the military and police included unlawful killings, excessive use of force, torture and arbitrary detention. Several journalists were killed. Human rights defenders faced threats, fabricated criminal charges and unfair judicial proceedings." Torture has been a particularly rampant problem facing the country. According to the UN Committee on Torture, torture in Mexico is "habitual and is used systematically as a resource in criminal investigations." Torture is also a common strategy used by security forces in order to obtain confessions of responsibility, even though it is commonly known that confessions obtained under torture cannot be trusted as truthful.

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226 Freeman and Sierra, 287.
228 "Mexico: Human Rights in United Mexican States.”
229 Freeman and Sierra, 267-268.
Reports of human rights violations perpetrated by the military have only continued to rise in 2009. The military has been accused of torture, unlawful killings, and arbitrary detention among other abuses.\textsuperscript{231} Similarly, Amnesty International has recorded instances of unlawful killings, arbitrary detention, and torture by police in 2009. These abuses undermine the state’s mandate to provide physical security to its citizenry. Despite these offenses, police accountability for international and domestic crimes remains virtually nonexistent. As in Colombia, military courts retain judicial control over military-related crimes and abuses and rarely, if ever, sentence the accused. These military courts, absent of civilian oversight, allow for the reign of impunity. This impunity contributes to the ineffectiveness of the state’s judicial system and the erosion of rule of law, indicators of increased state failing and failure.

The very mechanisms put in place to reduce the likelihood of such abuses, namely the criminal justice system and National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) have proven ineffective at curbing human rights violations. Freeman and Sierra even go so far as to say that such institutions contribute to increased violations. 

"[The criminal justice system] does not adequately safeguard against abuse; on the contrary, it often provides incentives for illegal arrest and torture. Nor does it hold human rights violators accountable."\textsuperscript{232} According to the authors, these incentives include the acceptance and use of illegal evidence in trials.\textsuperscript{233} Human Rights Watch also chronicles the failures of human rights institutions to protect Mexican citizens.

\textsuperscript{231} "Mexico: Human Rights in United Mexican States."
\textsuperscript{232} Freeman and Sierra, 269.
\textsuperscript{233} Ibid, 270.
Because the failure of state institutions reflects the failure of the state itself, the failure of intrastate human rights commissions (such as the National Commission of Human Rights or CNDH) and the state judicial system reflect state-wide failure.

Human rights violations, and the impunity that protects them, contribute not only to the breakdown of rule of law but also, directly undermine the state’s ability to provide physical protection for its inhabitants. These crimes violate both domestic and international human rights laws. Thus, human rights violations including torture, rape, and murder have eroded the power and legitimacy, both domestic and international, of the Mexican state.

Increased militarization in narco-related law enforcement has not only contributed to the continued violation of human rights in the country; in response to militarization, cartels have become increasingly violent, both against one another and the state. Nationwide increases in violence and political corruption are unfortunate and unintended byproducts of Mexico’s militarization policy. Increased violence indicates that policies intended to increase state strength, such as militarization, are actually further solidifying its weaknesses. Militarization has contributed to mounting death tolls and, thus, only indicates the state’s increased failure to provide physical security to its inhabitants.

Since the early 2000s, trafficking-related violence has been on the rise in Mexico as a direct consequence of Mexico’s military-based attack on drug cartels.\textsuperscript{234} Yet, it was under Calderón (2006) that the policy of militarization truly took off and, consequently, that violence began to increase at a terrifying rate. Calderón, upon

\textsuperscript{234} Gonzalez, 72.
taking office, deployed 45,000 troops in areas of significant illicit trafficking, with the aim of encouraging security. Violence has not faltered due to such measures but, instead, has only increased in those areas. Approximately 5,300 individuals were killed in narco-related murders in 2008 alone.\textsuperscript{235} This number is almost double the number of deaths reported in 2007.\textsuperscript{236} Similarly, in 2009, violence further increased to over 6,000 individuals (see Figure 3).\textsuperscript{237} The final, drug-related death toll for the first half of Calderón's presidency tops 10,000 individuals.\textsuperscript{238} These victims of narco-violence were individuals connected to the drug trade, innocent civilians, and members of security forces such as the police and military.\textsuperscript{239} Growing casualties reflects the extent to which militarization has proven unsuccessful and has contributed to the furthering of Mexican state failure.

Additionally, due to government crackdowns on members of the narcotics industry, cartels have begun to expand their business interests from solely drug-related production and trafficking to such activities as kidnapping and extortion. Sam Quiñones writes, "Mexico's surge in gang violence has been accompanied by a similar spike in kidnapping. This old problem, once confined to certain unstable regions, is now a nationwide crisis."\textsuperscript{240} Thus, militarization has not only contributed to greater violence in the country but, also, a more diversified violence.

Narco-related violence has created a climate of fear and insecurity in Mexico. As a result, victims, victims' relatives, bystanders, and community members "lose

\textsuperscript{235} "The Merida Initiative: 'Guns, Drugs and Friends,'" 2.
\textsuperscript{236} Quiñones, 76.
\textsuperscript{237} "The Merida Initiative: 'Guns, Drugs and Friends,'" 16.
\textsuperscript{238} Corchado, 18.
\textsuperscript{239} "Mexico: Human Rights in United Mexican States."
\textsuperscript{240} Quiñones, 77.
faith in the government and law enforcement that are supposed to protect them."\textsuperscript{241} Individuals additionally become fearful of reporting crimes, which then contributes to impunity that encourages greater crime. This cyclical nature of crime and impunity only serves to strengthen the cartels and their highly illegal activities.\textsuperscript{242} Thus, it is not surprising that along with a swell in violence, corruption and impunity should remain strong presences in Mexican society.

The significant rise in violence, be it torture, drug-related killings, or kidnapping, reflects the growing inability of the state to protect the physical security of its population and, thus, indicates the growing failure of the Mexican state. Paradoxically, this crisis is due, in significant part, to efforts by the government designed to increase order and stability. Swells of violence and impunity reflect suspension in rule of law, the disrespect of human and civil rights, and the government's inability to protect its citizens from violence. Interestingly, these increased weaknesses have not uniformly transferred into a lack of government legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

A 2009 public opinion survey from the Pew Research Center revealed that 83\% of Mexicans support the use of the military to combat the narcotics industry.\textsuperscript{243} Additionally, 66\% of those surveyed indicated that the country was "making progress" on the war against narcotrafficking. Only 15\% indicated that the government was "losing ground" and 14\% answered that narco-violence has neither

\textsuperscript{241} Campbell, 167.
\textsuperscript{242} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{243} "Troubled by Crime, the Economy, Drugs and Corruption," 14.
increased nor decreased substantially. Though this data does not match the numerically evident rising violence within the Mexican state, it may reflect the support of the Mexican public for concerted state-sponsored action against narco. While the strategies employed by the government do not seem to be yielding ideal results, President Calderón, in contrast to the multi-decade policy of his predecessors, is visibly and powerfully taking a strong stand on narco-trafficking and narco-violence. Yet, somewhat in conflict with these views, 73% of Mexicans surveyed in 2009 considered drugs a "very big problem" in comparison with 66% of those surveyed in 2007. Thus, though most of those surveyed see the government as making progress in its fight against narco, the majority also see narco as an increasingly significant, growing problem.

According to this same survey, 77% of respondents saw the government as a positive influence on Mexico's state of affairs and 75% supported Calderón in this regard. Surprisingly, this support is strong across demographic groups though undeniably stronger among PAN members. Because this particular data does not explicitly discuss drug trafficking, such public support could be based on issues outside of the realm of narco-trafficking. Yet, these results are somewhat contradicted by a 2007 Gallup poll which discovered that 53% of Mexicans are "not confident" in their national government (while 37% are confident), 59% are "not confident" in their judicial system and a significant majority, 61%, are unconfident.

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244 Ibid.
246 Ibid, 19.
in the honesty of elections.\textsuperscript{248} Though this data seems to be directly contradictory to the former public opinion data included, factors such as question format and delivery complicate the commensurability of these surveys. This lack of confidence in government institutions likely reflects the fragility of Mexico’s democracy, primarily the state’s maintenance of free and fair elections, protection of civic rights, and preservation of a nonviolent and fair judiciary. While these indicators illustrate potential fissures in the democratic nature of the Mexican government, they also reveal aspects in which the state has failed or is failing its citizens.

Moreover, an August 2008 Gallup poll showed that the visible presence of gangs and narcotics has increased. Respondents also indicated a concern for their country’s stability. 42\% of Mexican residents “view the sociopolitical situation in their country as unstable.”\textsuperscript{249} Only 8\% considered the situation “very stable” and 46\% said the country’s sociopolitical position was “somewhat stable.”\textsuperscript{250} These results, though not entirely supported by the Pew data, demonstrate the weakness of the Mexican state and the lack of support for specific state institutions, particularly the police and judicial systems.

Unfortunately, the policy that has partially contributed to such instability and insecurity, militarization, is not only detrimental to Mexican society, it is also ineffective. The Mexican government, however, tends to focus on its successes.


\textsuperscript{250} Ibid.
Over 57,000 drug-related individuals were arrested between 2006 and 2009. And the Mexican government has seized tons of illegal narcotics as well as tens of thousands of firearms (though these seizures make up less than 1% of firearms that enter into the country). Despite the numbers, these arrests and seizures have not translated in a larger-scale trafficking decline. The drug flow from Mexico to the United States has not been significantly reduced. In fact, cultivation of marijuana rose 9.74% between the Zedillo and Fox administrations and poppy 17.13%. Illicit drug exportation also increased for marijuana and heroin during this period but decreased for cocaine. Similarly, despite the assassinations and incarcerations of high profile cartel leaders and traffickers, cartels continue to function and even gain strength. According to some authors, such techniques are ineffective because they fail to address the systemic problems that contribute to the existence of the narcotrafficking phenomenon. As a result, the policy of militarization had had some successes but has failed to destroy the roots of narcotrafficking. After a number of years and billions of dollars, many see Mexico's counterdrug policy as a failure.

Conclusion

Narcotrafficking and commonly used counternarcotics measures contribute to the further weakening of already weak states which they inhabit. By preventing the state from delivering crucial political goods to its population, namely the providence of physical security, the maintenance of a free and nonviolent judicial

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251 Corchado, 18.
252 Freeman and Sierra, 265.
253 Aguayo Quezada, 171.
254 Chabat, 141.
system, and the protection of civil and human rights to its citizenry, these phenomena encourage state failing and even state failure. The interconnected relationship between narcotrafficking and state failure manifests itself in three primary ways. State weakness contributes to the development of the narcotrafficking industry, narcotrafficking promotes increasing state failure, and counternarcotics measures designed to increase state strength, paradoxically also contribute to state failure. The case studies of Colombia and Mexico prove these causal relationships to be true.

Despite this bleak prognosis of failure, there is hope yet. The mere fact that commonly used counternarcotics programs often erode, rather than enrich, state authority does not mean that all counternarcotics measures are doomed to fail. Rather, it is the nature and implications of militarization and eradication programs that is problematic. Though this is not a policy thesis, I will conclude by offering policy suggestions for the reduction of narco-trafficking and transnational violence. Alternative development and institutional reform, in the place of eradication and militarization, may contribute to the successful realization of trafficking reduction. Through these means, the augmentation of state authority might finally be realized.

Alternative development programs have long been suggested as means to decrease drug production, especially by drug-producing countries. In Colombia, many growers produce illicit plants and narcotics out of economic necessity. Should alternative development programs be implemented successfully, such individuals would not be forced to rely on coca cultivation in order to survive. Though this strategy may have prove less successful in Mexico, due to the prominence of
traffickers over growers, it may still serve to somewhat stem the flow of narcotics across borders. Of the hundreds of thousands of individuals involved in the drug trade, some (if not, many) undoubtedly see the industry as a means to escape poverty. For these individuals, economic development programs could prove a necessary alternative to trafficking. In both Colombia and Mexico, slightly less than half of the country's citizens are living in poverty (see Figure 1). Alternative development could provide a means of economic survival for a number of the nations' citizens and a viable, economic alternative to the drug trade.

Institutional weakness has unquestionably contributed to the existence and continued growth of narcotics industries in Colombia and Mexico. Institutional reform aimed at the police and judiciaries of these countries could decrease corruption, impunity, and human rights abuses. If institutional reform proved effective, these states could scale down militarization, replace police positions with civilians, and reinstate rule of law. Institutional reform and alternative development programs are two examples of policies that can be implemented by drug producing and trafficking countries in order to successfully and legally reduce violence, stem the flow of narcotics from their borders, and regain authority and legitimacy.

Despite seemingly endless increases in violence and an altogether bleak outlook for the future, drug producing can change their policies in order to successfully increase state legitimacy and authority, turn back the effects of state failing, and effectively reduce transnational drug trafficking. The future of narcotrafficking is not yet written in stone.
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