

War on Our Doorstep

Not a Mere Crime Problem

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The television show *Miami Vice* regaled viewers with stories of undercover agents as they battled to keep Colombians and their Miami cohorts from smuggling cocaine and other illegal drugs into this country. In real life, US authorities did even better. They proved so effective that the Colombia cartels decided to shift operations west and outsourced drug trafficking to Mexican gangs. Instead of cash, they paid the traffickers in-kind, offering 30–50 percent of the drugs to sell on their own, and the gangs graduated from transport to distribution. Drug trafficking through Mexico had long been a problem, but this change triggered a great rise.¹

While Western media focus heavily on the civilian deaths in Syria, they often overlook our own backyard, where Mexican drug violence has claimed 110,000 lives.² Former president Felipe Calderon pronounced that “the most lethal war is the one being fought by criminal gangs among themselves.”³ That statement reflects only one element in the story, because cartel violence greatly affects the United States.⁴ As cartels battle for turf among one another, the threat transcends borders and raises *hemispheric security* issues that embrace the United States, Canada, Mexico, and their neighbors in Central and South America. Mexican security forces have made cross-border incursions into this country, hundreds of US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) agents have been attacked,⁵ and even US Soldiers have been suborned into acting as hitmen south of the border.⁶ The cartels are also increasingly active in US cities.

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Although Calderon's team boasts that it captured 25 of its 37 most wanted criminals,⁷ no one suggests the flow of drugs has been stopped. In this high-stakes struggle, while Mexico may not be a failed state, the war is eroding its credibility and ability to govern. It is also affecting security in the region. In Guatemala, cartels reportedly control 40–60 percent of the entire country.⁸ The Mexican Sinoloa cartel has formed links with Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), a gang started in Los Angeles by Salvadoran immigrants.⁹ Mexican cartels are also linked to murders in Argentina and Peru.¹⁰

While the United States wants to stop trafficking and eliminate kingpins, Mexicans want to stop kidnapping and violence. This has left both Mexico and the United States without a cohesive strategy for combating the cartels—a totally unacceptable situation. Most observers, including the Mexican government, believe this to be a law enforcement problem. We challenge whether that approach is most effective and argue that conventional definitions for characterizing this struggle do not apply to this emerging, unprecedented conflict. The required debate over how to protect vital US security interests has barely commenced. What legal authorities govern US action? What roles should our military or law enforcement play? Do we rely upon conventional definitions of high-intensity crime, terrorism, or insurgency to dictate solutions? What are the tradeoffs for using the military or law enforcement to battle the cartels? The threat to US national security interests calls for a different approach. A combination of law enforcement, social reform, covert intelligence, military special operations, and, as appropriate, selective military action by Mexico with indirect mission assistance from the US military offers a plausible path to success.

Characterizing the Conflict to Determine Strategy

How the war is characterized matters as to what body of law governs it—the law regulating law enforcement or the law of armed conflict?¹¹ The answer affects tactics and the nature of forces employed. For example, while police can use deadly force against suspects who pose a threat of serious physical harm, the principle of military necessity authorizes a military to take all necessary measures not prohibited by international law to defeat an enemy.¹² The US and Mexican militaries have a role in low-intensity conflict, fighting an insurgency, or combating terrorism,

especially if those terrorist groups support al-Qaeda.¹³ Scholars like Paul Rexton Kan argue that while drug cartels share certain organizational and operational characteristics of terrorist organizations,¹⁴ the Mexican drug war is not an insurgency because cartels lack a political agenda. Kan's key argument rests upon the widely—and mistakenly—held view that terrorists seek political goals while criminals are motivated by greed.¹⁵ Writing in *Small Wars Journal*, Brad Freden acknowledges that elements of counterinsurgency (COIN) operations are useful in fighting the cartels but argues that “the violence, drug trafficking, and lawlessness that we see in northern Mexico does *not* constitute an insurgency. Drug cartels have no ideology beyond profit, no aspirations other than to be left alone, and no popular support beyond that which can be purchased with money or intimidation” (emphasis in original).¹⁶ University of Maryland scholar Shibley Telhami also views terrorists as linked to political goals and defines them as those who deliberately target civilians for such ends.¹⁷

Those who oppose characterizing the Mexican drug wars as an insurgency argue that cartels have not “captured” the state to implement a social or political agenda and are not seeking to overthrow the government and replace it with their own, but focus on shoving the state aside in their pursuit of profits. This thinking, ably argued by Kan, is that “no insurgent or terrorist group . . . has been dismantled by rolling up its financial networks,” a statement that would come as news to the US Treasury and other agencies engaged in counterterrorism financing.¹⁸ The pivot of the argument is that cartels do not seek to “substitute their ideology for the existing one or to achieve any other political goal that is routinely associated with armed groups who instigate social upheaval.”¹⁹

So, should fighting the drug cartels be limited to law enforcement and political measures that effect a social reform agenda or is this a form of counterinsurgency for which properly trained military geared to special missions should play a key role? Most voices strongly oppose using the military to combat drug trafficking. At its core, their argument rests most importantly on three confluent propositions.

- The Mexican drug war is not an insurgency, terrorism, or low-intensity conflict (LIC), but at most, a “mosaic cartel war” that requires social reform and law enforcement.²⁰

- The military is not well suited for waging this war. Rice University scholar Tony Payan asserts that Mexico's military strategy has produced as many as 100,000 deaths and "let loose on the civilian population the military and, increasingly, a militarized federal police."²¹
- Institutional reforms to clean up Mexico's criminal justice system could provide meaningful social reform plus a better, cohesive collaboration with the United States.

Mexico's drug war presents a different kind of warfare, with different players and political dynamics, for which success requires achieving parallel political and security goals. Characterizing the war turns on whether the drug cartels—sometimes called drug trafficking organizations (DTO) or transnational criminal organizations (TCO)—have a political ideology and seek political power. Both factors apply to the cartels. They espouse an ideology rooted in surprisingly specific stories, narratives, themes, and messages that go well beyond what other groups who are widely accepted as political, such as al-Qaeda, Italy's Red Brigades, Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in Peru, Colombia's FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN), or Paraguay's Ejército del Pueblo Paraguayo (EPP) espouse. Those groups embrace the rhetoric of ideology but offer little content to define one. They all seek political power, either to overthrow the existing regime or, as in Mexico, to paralyze and remove the government as a threat to their operations. And they are all criminal.

Even then, the argument that the cartels do not present an insurgency because greed or profit, not a "political" agenda, motivates them is flawed. There is no accepted definition for what constitutes a political agenda. Yale political scientist Harold Lasswell probably came as close as anyone to how politicians view politics: "Politics is who gets what, when, and how."²² Whether parties seek money legally or illegally may affect their status as criminals or law-abiding citizens, but they may easily qualify as criminals and political actors. Most politicians would scoff at the idea that parties whose agenda in the political process is to seek money are not political. Crime and politics are not mutually exclusive.

Cartel Ideology

The notion of what constitutes an ideology lends itself to different expressions. In politics, almost any approach constitutes a belief system, although not all belief systems are ideologies.²³ Broadly, ideology consists of a collection of ideas that define goals, expectations, and actions and express a cohesive basis for thought and behavior. Ideologies exert influence over the beliefs and values that people share, how they see themselves, and how they perceive the world and their place in it. Ideology guides action and influences how people relate to one another. It defines hopes, dreams, and aspirations.

A striking quality about organizations labeled “terrorist” is their substantive lack of ideology. Harvard scholar Louise Richardson has pointed out that terrorist movements do not describe meaningfully the new world they intend to create.²⁴ All terrorist movements, she observes, “have two kinds of goals: short-term organizational objectives and long-term political objectives requiring significant political change.”²⁵ She points out that their political causes have been about changing the status quo, not offering an alternative vision for the future.

Colombian FARC leader Paul Reyes admitted he could not define a ruling program. Tamil Tigers leader Velupillai Prabhakaran’s description of the future was pabulum about a socialist state. Chechen Shamil Basayev said he stood for “power to the people,” whatever that meant. Shining Path’s Abimael Guzmán brushed off questions about his vision for the future, admitting that “we have not studied this question sufficiently.”²⁶ Colombia’s FARC and ELN and Peru’s Shining Path all morphed into criminal entities that finance themselves from drug trafficking, but all claim to fight for a political ideology. Except for regime change, it is hard to discern much content to their views. They do not discuss the exact form of government, health care, education, jobs, or items that define what real political parties or actors offer.²⁷ Al-Qaeda is no different. Richardson observes that in defining his vision, Osama bin Laden was “extremely vague.”²⁸ French scholar Olivier Roy eviscerated bin Laden for his empty rhetoric.²⁹

By contrast, the Mexican drug cartels are remarkably concrete in spinning a story, narrative, theme, and message that hold particular meaning for their targeted audiences. Greed may drive cartels, but what has made them effective is their ability to recruit and mobilize younger, alienated Mexicans through messaging what the cartels offer that the state does

not: social mobility, hope, opportunity, and prosperity. The Mexican drug cartels net a 6,000-percent profit from trafficker to user; counting from the purchase price paid to growers, the business yields an eye-popping 150,000-percent profit.³⁰ In such a lucrative market, cartels easily find a rich source of recruits among impoverished Mexicans, particularly in Juarez assembly plants established in the wake of NAFTA that pay \$200–300 a month. The cartels reportedly can pay teenagers \$5,000 for a single act of violence.³¹

Cartels articulate a story defining themselves as rooted in the romantic nineteenth-century image of a bandito preying upon the rich and a national history in which wealthy Mexicans and foreign investors have controlled much of the economy, leaving most Mexicans impoverished.³² Cartel ballads and music videos stem directly from the Mexican folk tradition of romanticizing revolutionary heroes and legend, except that today's songs glorify drug lords.³³

The songs (*narco-corridos*), videos, social media, signs, and banners (*narcomantas*) present a populist patina that celebrates the humble origins of cartel leaders and their exploits. Ricardo Ainslie points out that this strategic communication has shifted the terrain “for a political left long accustomed to an adversary defined as the nation’s elites and long accustomed to viewing itself as a movement that defended the downtrodden.”³⁴

The narratives help define a specific culture that appeals to teenagers and younger people who the cartels vigorously recruit. It is manifest in the attire: garish cowboy hats, ostrich-skin boots, flashy sneakers, brightly colored baseball hats, tight dresses, gaudy jewelry, lavish homes, fast cars, alcohol, and a glamorous life that offers the best food, beautiful women, and action. The cartels provide a way of life that offers a macho identity and pride for which recruits have no other means of access.³⁵

Writing in *Milenio*, Tijuana writer Heriberto Yépez accurately observed that the cartels have evolved from being an economy to an ideology that saturates society. The term *narco* becomes conflated in “drug trafficker” (*el narco*) and “drug life” (*lo narco*). Yépez argues that *narco* used to be an adjective that described one aspect of Mexican culture. Now it *is* culture: “narco and culture are synonyms.”³⁶ The cartels offer meaning and concrete opportunities that directly influence norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, opinion, and behavior.

The messaging is directed as well to the military. Los Zetas recruits by exploiting the fact that the minimum wage in Mexico is five dollars

a day, unfolding banners—*narcomantas*—asking, “Why be poor? Come work for us.”³⁷ One Zetas banner hanging over a major thoroughfare declared: “Operative Group ‘the Zetas’ wants you soldier or ex-soldier. We offer a good salary, food and benefits for your family. Don’t suffer any more mistreatment and don’t go hungry.” Members of at least one cartel, La Familia Michoacana, now succeeded by the Knights Templar (Caballeros Templarios), view themselves as resistance fighters against crime. They developed expertise in soft power to gain popular credibility.³⁸ They espouse an odd form of Christianity and run drug rehab clinics. The cartel offers jobs and organizes popular protests against the government.³⁹ Of course there is a darker side. The cartels employ directed violence to secure loyalty, extract revenge, send messages, claim turf, and fill power vacuums.⁴⁰ In short, the cartels *do* espouse a political philosophy that meets the hopes and aspirations, as well as playing on the fears, of their targeted audiences.

Seizing Political Power

The cartels also aggressively seek political power. They have succeeded so well that Calderon acknowledged, “This criminal behavior [by cartels] . . . has become a challenge to the state, an attempt to replace the state.”⁴¹ They have created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation that impairs the government’s ability to operate in any normal fashion in providing security or ensuring the welfare of the people. Tactics of intimidation have choked off press freedom.⁴² They have “superseded or seriously weakened” the government in a growing number of Mexican states, even in places becoming a “parallel government.”⁴³ Reportedly, the cartels spend a *billion dollars annually* to bribe police.⁴⁴ They have assassinated political candidates and high-ranking military and law enforcement officials. They engage in campaigns to subvert the Mexican government at all levels.⁴⁵ Their extortion has obstructed commerce.⁴⁶

Los Zetas stands out for why normal law enforcement will not defeat cartels, and drawing lessons, other cartels have stepped up their own capabilities. Recruiting from Mexico’s special operations forces and arming itself with AK-47s, IEDs, RPGs, and 50-caliber machine guns, Los Zetas has trained in small-squad infantry tactics, uses social media adroitly, operates with sophisticated intelligence capabilities, and could easily become an overt insurgency. It will be difficult for a regular police force to tackle this type of militia.⁴⁷ While we disagree with how Paul

Kan characterizes the drug war, we agree with a lot of his ideas on how to address it. His point that any strategy must take on the Zetas first is prescient. Among all the cartels, this one offers the greatest threat of evolving overtly into an antigovernment insurgency movement.⁴⁸ But one should never underestimate the lethality of the others.

Although concerned about the effect of labeling the Mexican drug war an insurgency, Christopher Ljungquist summed up the point that the cartels are political by stating that “the Mexican state is fighting powerful and atypical insurgencies, armed with virtually unlimited access to firearms, including anti-aircraft batteries, and funded by an expert trade in illegal narcotics worth billions of dollars.”⁴⁹ Former secretary of state Hillary Clinton is among those who concur that Mexico faces an insurgency, having declared that the cartels “are showing more and more indices of insurgencies.”⁵⁰

While not writing about Mexico per se, Bard O’Neil and David Kilcullen seem to agree that a confrontation qualifies as insurgency only where it is politically motivated and constitutes a political uprising.⁵¹ The Mexican drug war meets that definition. It is a war tailored for a *new form* of counterinsurgency defined as “an armed struggle for support of the population” that requires a holistic approach and unity of effort to achieve security, drug eradication, social reform, judicial reform, crackdowns on corruption, multinational partnerships with neighbors who the drug war affects directly and indirectly, and special-mission military efforts against heavily armed and trained cartels. It is an iterative, unique approach.⁵²

Not all criminal activity qualifies as insurgency.⁵³ But the Mexican drug war is a low-intensity conflict, and the cartels do qualify as insurgents, hostile combatants, and terrorists. The fact is the lines between crime, terrorism, and insurgency are becoming increasingly blurred. Indeed the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) reports that designated foreign terrorist organizations (FTO) involved in the global drug trade have jumped from 14 groups in 2003 to 18 in 2008.⁵⁴ Therefore, it is imperative the United States, whose vital security interests are linked with Mexico as well as the rest of the hemisphere in managing and prevailing in this conflict, recognize what is happening in Mexico and deal with it realistically.

A Different Approach

We start with two realities. First, Mexico's priorities are to stop violence and kidnapping, while the United States is focused on eliminating kingpins and stopping the flow of drugs.⁵⁵ Until the early 1990s, the drug business in Mexico was relatively peaceful. US citizens suffered, but the situation worked well for Mexicans.⁵⁶ Second, neither side has a strategy for managing or prevailing in this war—a problem complicated by extreme Mexican sensitivity that the United States will intrude upon its sovereignty. Success requires resolving these challenges. While there are no quick fixes, these actions merit consideration:

- Approach the situation as a low-intensity conflict against insurgents who are both criminals and terrorists—and treat them as terrorists. Make no settlement with the cartels. They are in the business in which they want to be. The cartels are an evil, and evil cannot be defeated. It must be eradicated.
- Seize and restrict access to cartel finances. This is pivotal since their wealth gives them exceptional power that must be broken. One challenge the United States confronts is the refusal of the Treasury Department to deal with the reality of the drug war—or counterterrorism—as requiring a combination of law enforcement and special operations. The *Washington Post* reports a proposal by the White House to target cartel assets was declined by Treasury. That mistake must be rectified.⁵⁷ Mexico could deplete cartel bank accounts and seize assets. The United States could provide intelligence and technical support to help locate such assets then defer to Mexico for action. If the United States seized such assets, it should share them with Mexico as an incentive to encourage Mexican cooperation. A key element of this approach lies in disrupting the relationships cartels have with international terror networks.
- Work with the Mexican government to develop a special-mission military force that will avoid human rights violations and work well with civilian authority but that has the expertise and military capability to take on and defeat heavily armed adversaries like Los Zetas. President Nieto is backing away from his suggestion of creating a national gendarmerie. Whatever the force is called, Mexico needs an effective, well-trained special-mission force. Critics worry the cartels will try to subvert and corrupt such a force. Be assured they

will make that effort. But Mexico and the United States must work cooperatively to ensure an effective force is recruited, trained, and retained. Though not an easy task, it should not deter us.

- The United States must persuade Nieto of the value of US assistance, particularly intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. The *Washington Post* reported last April that former president Calderon had granted US spy planes access to Mexican airspace to gather intelligence. US drones supported CBP patrols, and cyber technology was employed to combat trafficking. The *Post* reported the United States was also helping target and vet potential intelligence assets.⁵⁸ In Iraq, Gen Stanley McChrystal forged a task force that accounted for between 11,000 and 13,000 members of al-Qaeda. Their British counterparts accounted for another 3,500.⁵⁹ That was achieved through a fusion team that identified key terrorist leaders and middle-echelon loyalists and eliminated them. US-Mexican fusion centers were established, the *Post* reported, in Mexico City and Monterrey, as well as in regional headquarters. Apparently more limited than McChrystal's task force, this was still a step in the right direction.⁶⁰ Nieto may eschew such help, but we must persuade him to reverse course and make clear that vital US interests are at stake—and we will act accordingly.
- Except for its marines, who have proven relatively effective, Mexico's military should be employed with restraint. Those who argue that most military personnel are not trained for law enforcement have a valid point. Mexico's experience in using its military has produced mixed results, while alienating many Mexicans. The US Marines should continue and step up efforts to work with Mexico's marines through indirect mission assistance in training and equipping.
- Mexican leadership must persuade its population, especially its elites (who arguably have too often helped, not fought, the cartels),⁶¹ middle class, unions, and civil society organizations to support the fight against the cartels—stop kidnapping, extortion, robbery, human trafficking, arms smuggling, and drug trafficking. Calderon failed to lay a solid political foundation for waging the war. Success requires persuading Mexicans their own lives depend on defeating the cartels.⁶² The challenge is difficult, but Nieto must avoid repeating Calderon's mistakes.

- Work with Mexico to develop a joint strategy and support it with the necessary resources. Violence does not affect the entire country. One-third of Mexican states have violence levels similar to the United States. A strategy should focus on the most violent areas; the capital, Mexico City, and the financial center, Monterrey; and tourist areas which contribute heavily to the nation's economy, such as Acapulco, Leon, San Miguel, Cuernavaca, Guadalajara, and Toluca.
- Revamp the Merida Initiative.⁶³ Too much money went to US contractors and too little to Mexicans who could make a difference. Mexico lacks the resources needed to properly implement the institutional and social reforms needed to win this war. This is a long-term challenge, but success requires achieving social justice in Mexico. We can do more to help and we must.
- Forge border management solutions with realistic division of responsibility between the United States and Mexico.
- Abrogate the Brownsville Agreement, which former attorney general Janet Reno entered into in 1998. This agreement lacked foresight in that it compelled the United States to notify the Mexican government of undercover operations in Mexico. That agreement handicapped our law enforcement agencies on any number of fronts without Mexican compromise.
- A hemispheric approach must be reviewed by looking beyond Mexico to our regional neighbors. The drug war threatens Canada as well as Central and South America. Coordinate with Canadian SOF in providing training to Central and South American militaries for counternarcotics and to the military in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and other Latin allies through SOF assistance to help them develop special-mission capabilities for defeating drug traffickers.

The United States must move beyond defeatist rhetoric suggesting the drug war can only be managed, not won. It can and must be won. But that requires viewing it realistically and taking significant action against the cartels to help Mexico gain control of the strategic situation. While general-purpose military forces are unsuited for winning this conflict, special-mission units are essential to defeat heavily armed, often well-trained cartel forces whose capabilities can overwhelm any normal law

enforcement capability. Mexico lies on our doorstep, and much of what affects its vital interests is entwined with vital US interests. Recognizing that reality is the beginning, and it is time to get moving. **SSQ**

Notes

1. Blog del Narco, *Dying for the Truth: Undercover inside the Mexican Drug War* (Unknown site: Blog del Narco, 2012). The blog is written anonymously by Mexican journalists who conceal their identity to protect against drug cartel violence. The book documents the violence in 2010. Nobody is certain since so few homicides are reported—just 5 percent. The rest is guesswork. During Calderon's presidency, 60,000 deaths are estimated, but another 25,000 persons went missing (not all due to crime). Clare R. Seelke and Kristin Finklea, *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Mérida Initiative and Beyond* (Washington: Congressional Research Service [CRS], 12 June 2013), 3, www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf; and "Mexican Military Takes Over Drug-Ridden Port," *AFP*, 4 November 2013, <http://www.news24.com/World/News/Mexican-military-takes-over-drug-ridden-port-20131105-3>.

2. William C. Martin, "Cartels, Corruption, Carnage and Cooperation," in *A War That Can't Be Won*, eds. Tony Payan, Kathleen Staudt, and Z. A. Kruszewski (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013), Kindle Loc. 1166/7339.

3. Marcos Pablo Moloeznik, "President Felipe Calderon's Strategy to Combat Organized Crime," in *A War That Can't Be Won*, Kindle Loc. 1728/7339.

4. David A. Shirik, "The Drug War in Mexico: Confronting a Shared Threat," Council on Foreign Relations Special Report no. 60, March 2011, Kindle Loc. 74/933.

5. Paul R. Kan, *Cartels at War* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2012), 74.

6. Michael Kelly, "Mexican Cartels Are Recruiting US Soldiers as Hitmen, And the Pay Is Good," *Business Insider*, 5 August 2013, <http://www.businessinsider.com/cartels-are-recruiting-us-soldiers-as-hitmen-2013-8>.

7. "Mexico's Drug Lords: Kingpin Bowling," *Economist*, 20 October 2012.

8. "Drug Traffickers Have Stranglehold on Guatemala Says Top Prosecutor," *El País*, 23 February 2011; and Hal Brands, *Crime, Violence and the Crisis in Guatemala* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), 2.

9. Adam Elkus, "Gangs, Terrorists and Trade," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 12 April 2007. Salvadoran gangs in Los Angeles founded MS-13.

10. Strategic Forecasting, Inc. (Stratfor), *Mexico in Crisis: Lost Borders and the Struggle for Regional Status* (Austin, TX: Stratfor, 2009), 197.

11. See Gregory E. Maggs, "Assessing the Legality of Counterterrorism Measures without Characterizing Them as Law Enforcement or Military Action," 80 Temp. L. Rev., 661 (2007), 3 (online copy), http://scholarship.law.gwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1826&context=faculty_publications.

12. See *Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1, 11 (1985); US Army Field Manual (FM) 27-10, *The Law of Land Warfare*, 1956, chap. 2, sec. II, para. 29, citing annex to Hague Convention no. IV, 18 October 1907, embodying the Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, art. 23(c); and Maggs, "Assessing the Legality of Counterterrorism," 4. See also Jimmy Gurule and Geoffrey S. Corn, *Principles of Counter-Terrorism Law* (St. Paul: West Group, 2010), 65; Army FM 6-20-10, *Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for the Targeting Process*, 8 May 1996, chap. 2. See generally "Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949 and relating to the Protections of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (1977), 1125 UNTS 3 (entered into force 7 December 1978)"; and "Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (1977), 1125 UNTS 609 (entered into force 7 December 1978)."

13. The Authorization to Use Military Force passed by Congress on 14 September 2001, P. L. 107-40, authorizes “all necessary and appropriate force” against persons who aided organizations involved in the 9/11 attacks “to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States.”

14. Kan quotes from Michael Roth and Murat Sever, “The Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) as Criminal Syndicate: Funding Terrorism through Organized Crime,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30 (October 2007): 903, to state that cartels are “(1) involved in illegal activities and frequently need the same supplies; (2) exploit excessive violence and the threat of violence; (3) commit kidnappings, assassinations and extortion; (4) act in secrecy; (5) challenge the state and the laws (unless they are state funded); (6) have back-up leaders and foot soldiers; (7) are exceedingly adaptable, open to innovations, and are flexible and (8) enact deadly consequences for former members who have quit the group.”

15. Kan, *Cartels at War*, 6–13.

16. Brad Freden, “The COIN Approach to Cartels: Square Peg in a Round Hole,” *Small Wars Journal*, 27 December 2011, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrn/art/the-coin-approach-to-mexican-drug-cartels-square-peg-in-a-round-hole>. Freden concedes, however, that some COIN principles and practices can support a law enforcement strategy to weaken or destroy the cartels.

17. Shibley Telhami, *The Stakes* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002), 35. Telhami’s focus is on distinguishing between hostile or enemy forces and terrorists. For example, he points out that while the United States deems Hezbollah a terrorist organization, other parties, especially in the Middle East, do not, viewing it as a political or religious movement; and *Ibid.*, 9.

18. See Juan Zarate, *Treasury’s War: The Unleashing of a New Era of Financial Warfare* (New York: Public Affairs, 2013).

19. Kan, *Cartels at War*, 8.

20. *Ibid.*, 7; See also Payan, Staudt, and Kruszewski, eds., *A War That Can’t Be Won*.

21. Tony Payan, “The Many Labyrinths of Illegal Drug Policy,” in *A War That Can’t Be Won*, Kindle Loc. 352/7339.

22. Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When and How* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith Publishing, 1990).

23. Maurice Cranston, “Ideology,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <http://www.compilerpress.ca/Competitiveness/Anno/Anno%20Cranston%20Ideology%20EB%202003.htm>. The French philosopher Destutt de Tracy expounded affirmative characteristics. Karl Marx saw ideology as a set of beliefs with which people deceive themselves—a theory that expressed what they are led to think as opposed to that which is true. *Ibid.*

24. Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want* (New York: Random House, 2006), 85.

25. *Ibid.*, 75. She discusses various motives that animate terrorist organizations, including revenge, publicity, seeking concessions, causing disorder, provoking repression, making a show of strength.

26. *Ibid.*, 86–87.

27. W. Alex Sanchez, “The End of Ideologically Motivated Violent Movements in Latin America?” *e-International Relations*, 24 September 2012, www.e-ir.info/2012/09/24/the-end-of-ideologically-motivated-violent-movements-in-latin-america/. Sanchez also falls into the trap of conventional definitions in failing to recognize that profiting from illegal activity can qualify as both a criminal and political agenda, although one does not necessarily imply the other.

28. Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 86.

29. Olivier Roy, trans. Carol Volk, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994). Roy argues persuasively that political Islam has failed to define a concrete vision and, to the extent that one has been, it bears a closer resemblance to radical leftwing politicians than religion.

30. Ioan Grillo, *El Narco*, (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2011), Kindle Loc. 2747/6409.

31. “Teens Lured into Mexican Drug Cartels,” *Big Country* (Nexstar Broadcasting, Inc.), 19 April 2009, www.bigcountryhomepage.com/story/teens-lured-into-mexican-drug-cartels/d/story/cSPztt2XMEW2GeUVZ-XmRQ.

32. Watt and Zepeda, *Drug War in Mexico*.

33. Sylvia Longmire, *Cartel* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 102.
34. Ricardo C. Ainslie, *The Fight to Save Juarez* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), Kindle Loc. 4206/6219.
35. Grillo, *El Narco*.
36. Quoted in Josh Kun, "Death Rattle," *American Prospect*, 5 January 2012, <http://prospect.org/article/death-rattle>.
37. Ashley Fantz, "The Mexico Drug War: Bodies for Billions," *CNN.com*, 20 January 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/01/15/world/mexico-drug-war-essay/index.html>.
38. Kan, *Cartels at War*, 43–45; and Akbar Khan, "The War on Drugs: Mexican Cartels," *Generation.net*, 29 May 2013, <http://the-generation.net/the-war-on-drugs-mexican-cartels/>. Kan quotes one observer who calls La Familia Michoacana a "faith-based, right-wing populist socialist movement" run by a criminal organization.
39. Tim Padgett and Ioan Grillo, "Mexico's Meth Warriors," *Time*, 28 June 2010, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1997449,00.html>; and William Finnegan, "Silver or Lead," *New Yorker*, 31 May 2010, www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/05/31/100531fa_fact_finnegan?currentPage=all.
40. Kan, *Cartels at War*, chap. 2, well describes the business plan that cartels employ.
41. Payan, "Many Labyrinths of Illegal Drug Policy."
42. Blog del Narco, *Dying for the Truth*; Oscar Villalon, ed., *Blood Calls to Blood: Mexican Writers on the Drug War* (San Francisco: By Liner, 2012); Alfredo Corchado, *Midnight in Mexico: A Reporter's Journey Through a Country's Descent into Darkness* (New York: Penguin Press, 2013); Ainslie, *Fight to Save Juarez*; and Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera and Jose Nava, "Drug Wars, Social Networks and the Right to Information," in *A War That Can't Be Won*.
43. Payan, "Many Labyrinths of Illegal Drug Policy." See also Ed Vulliamy, *Amexica: War along the Borderline* (Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2010), 246. Shawn Teresa Flanigan has drawn interesting parallels between the Mexican drug cartels and Hamas and Hezbollah. All are tied to relatively defined geographic locations. All seek to control specific territory to maintain access to drug trade routes. All have deep, sophisticated relationships with the states within which they operate. See Flanigan, "Terrorists Next Door? A Comparison of Mexican Drug Cartels and Middle Eastern Terrorist Organizations," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 2 (2012): 279–94.
44. Payan, "Many Labyrinths of Illegal Drug Policy."
45. Ainslie's *Fight to Save Juarez* offers a riveting account of the bloodbath that cartel violence has inflicted on that city. It is an excellent study of how Mexico's government has failed to cope. See also George W. Grayson, *Mexico: Narco-Violence and a Failed State?* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009). There is wide reporting on the corruption problem.
46. See Vulliamy, *Amexica*, 247. He goes into great detail about the extortion practiced among even small businesspeople.
47. George W. Grayson and Samuel Logan, *The Executioner's Men* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012); and Longmire, *Cartel*.
48. Kan, *Cartels at War*, 150–51.
49. Christopher S. Ljungquist, "Mexican Cartel War: Profiling an Unorthodox Insurgency," *Geopolitical Monitor*, 4 February 2013, <http://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/mexican-cartel-war-profiling-an-unorthodox-insurgency-4777>.
50. "Clinton Says Mexico Drug Crime like an Insurgency," *BBC News*, 9 September 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-11234058>.
51. Bard O'Neil, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed. (Washington: Potomac Books, 2005); and David J. Kilcullen, "Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency," remarks delivered to the US Government Counterinsurgency Conference in Washington, DC, 28 September 2006, both cited in Freden, "COIN Approach to Mexican Drug Cartels."
52. Army FM 3-24.2, *Tactics in Counterinsurgency*, April 2009, <https://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24-2.pdf>.

53. Terrorist organizations and criminal groups may have peripheral connections (arguably, al-Qaeda). Terrorist organizations may have criminal sympathizers (arguably, Hezbollah). Criminal entrepreneurs may act as specialists or shadow facilitators for terrorist groups (arguably, Viktor Bout, Abu Ghadiyah, Monzer al-Kassar). Terrorists groups and criminals organizations may collude (arguably, the Taliban and drug traffickers). See <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/141615.pdf>.

54. Statements by Stephen W. Casteel (DEA) and Raphael Perl (CRS), "Narco-Terrorism: International Drug Trafficking and Terrorism—A Dangerous Mix," prepared for a hearing conducted by the Senate Judiciary Committee, 20 May 2003; and Michael Braun, "Drug Trafficking and Middle Eastern Terrorist Groups: A Growing Nexus?" speech at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 18 July 2008. The CRS observes that the US government lacks a strategy or policy to address comprehensively the confluence of terrorism and transnational crime. John Rollins and Liana S. Wyler, *International Terrorism and Transnational Crime: Security Threats, U.S. Policy and Considerations for Congress* (Washington: CRS, 18 March 2010), 4:

55. Dana Priest, "U.S. Role at a Crossroads in Mexico's Intelligence War on the Cartels," *Washington Post*, 27 April 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/us-role-at-a-crossroads-in-mexicos-intelligence-war-on-the-cartels/2013/04/27/b578b3ba-a3b3-11e2-be47-b44febada3a8_story.html.

56. See Pamela F. Izaguirre, "Narco-Politics: How Mexico Got There and How It Can Get Out," *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, 22 August 2013, www.coha.org/narco-politics-how-mexico-got-there-and-how-it-can-get-out/.

57. Priest, "U.S. Role at a Crossroads."

58. Ibid.

59. Mark Urban, *Task Force Black* (Little, Brown, & Co., 2011).

60. Priest, "U.S. Role at a Crossroads."

61. Watt and Zepeda, *Drug War in Mexico*.

62. See James P. Farwell, *Persuasion and Power: The Art of Strategic Communication* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2012); and Longmire, *Cartel*. Longmire presents an excellent description of those challenges and how Calderon perceived and addressed them.

63. Seelke and Finklea, *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation*, 3. See also Craig A. Deare, "U.S.-Mexico Defense Relations: An Incompatible Interface," Strategic Forum, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, July 2009; and Statement of Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs William Brownfield, US House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, "U.S.-Mexico Security Cooperation: An Overview of the Merida Initiative 2008–Present," 113th Cong., 1st sess., *CQ Congressional Transcripts*, 23 May 2013.

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