ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: MICRODYNAMICS OF ILLEGITIMACY AND COMPLEX
                          URBAN VIOLENCE IN MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA

                          Robert Dale Lamb, Doctor of Philosophy, 2010

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For most of the past 25 years, Medellín, Colombia, has been an extreme case of

complex, urban violence, involving not just drug cartels and state security forces, but also

street gangs, urban guerrillas, community militias, paramilitaries, and other nonstate

armed actors who have controlled micro-territories in the city's densely populated slums

in ever-shifting alliances. Before 2002, Medellín's homicide rate was among the highest

in the world, but after the guerrillas and militias were defeated in 2003, a major

paramilitary alliance disarmed and a period of peace known as the "Medellín Miracle"

began. Policy makers facing complex violence elsewhere were interested in finding out

how that had happened so quickly. The research presented here is a case study of

violence in Medellín over five periods since 1984 and at two levels of analysis: the city as

a whole, and a sector called Caicedo La Sierra. The objectives were to describe and

explain the patterns of violence, and determine whether legitimacy played any role, as the

literature on social stability suggested it might. Multilevel, multidimensional frameworks

for violence and legitimacy were developed to organize data collection and analysis. The

study found that most decreases in violence at all levels of analysis were explained by increases in territorial control. Increases in collective (organized) violence resulted from a process of "illegitimation," in which an intolerably unpredictable living environment sparked internal opposition to local rulers and raised the costs of territorial control, increasing their vulnerability to rivals. As this violence weakened social order and the rule of law, interpersonal-communal (unorganized) violence increased. Over time, the "true believers" in armed political and social movements became marginalized or corrupted; most organized violence today is motivated by money. These findings imply that state actors, facing resurgent violence, can keep their tenuous control over the hillside slums (and other "ungoverned" areas) if they can avoid illegitimizing themselves. Their priority, therefore, should be to establish a tolerable, predictable daily living environment for local residents and businesses: other anti-violence programs will fail without strong, permanent, and respectful governance structures.

MICRODYNAMICS OF ILLEGITIMACY AND
COMPLEX URBAN VIOLENCE IN
MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA

By Robert Dale Lamb

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2010

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Dedication

Dale Russell Lamb
1943–1981

Patricia Anne Russell
1970–1994

Acknowledgments

I want to thank the members of my dissertation committee: my chair, John Steinbruner, who always gave me enough rope to hang myself with, but never let me get to the point of hanging: his sound and timely interventions have kept this project on track; Nancy Gallagher, who has been my fellowship supervisor and a constant mentor throughout the process; Karol Soltan, who challenged me to succinctly summarize the literature on legitimacy in a way that would distinguish it from the literature on rational choice (see the introduction to Appendix C for my response); David Crocker, whose classes on development and democracy sparked my interest in the relationship between legitimacy and governance; and Carol Graham, whose work on the economics of happiness has inspired me to look more deeply at the development literature. All have offered useful advice, encouragement, and flexibility as my research topic evolved.

I presented an early draft of my research topic at a seminar in Moscow sponsored by CISSM and the Institute for U.S. and Canada Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ISKRAN). The critical feedback I got there set me on a different, and what I

found Janeth by dumb luck, and she ended up being the most competent and dedicated assistant I could have hoped for: she understood and anticipated my research needs, set up and accompanied me on sensitive field interviews, acted as my interpreter for slang-speaking subjects, and occasionally took over in the middle of interviews when she saw I was missing some nuance, the value of which I did not recognize until the transcripts came back. I very much appreciate her intelligence and patience, her sense of humor, and, above all, her friendship.

Not all of the organizations or research assistants I approached with requests for assistance or data were helpful, so I want to express my gratitude to those staff members, too numerous to mention individually, who did give me the help I needed, including those at the office of the Government Secretariat (Secretaría de Gobierno de Medellín), the Medellín office of the national public prosecutor (Fiscalía General de la Nación), the Department of National Statistics Administration (DANE: Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística), the national police department (Policía Nacional), the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Sciences (Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses), the National Labor School (Escuela Nacional Sindical), the People's Training Institute (IPC: Instituto Popular de Capacitación), and the Medellín Cómo Vamos project at the office of the mayor. I thank especially Juan Carlos Palou and Maria Victoria Llorente at the Fundación Ideas para la Paz for permission to use a difficult-to-access dataset. I am enormously grateful as well to all the subject-matter experts who took time to speak with me, to the many residents of Caicedo La Sierra (mostly unnamed for security reasons) who shared their life stories with me, and to the countless residents

of Medellín who chatted with me informally and educated me on the nuances of their city's culture and history.

I would not be who I am today without the unconditional love and thoughtful support that my mother, Barbara Lamb, has always given me. She has always been my biggest fan and probably does not realize how much I have appreciated it. I am grateful to her and to the rest of my family for their love and support over the years.

Before I entered graduate school, I was craving a higher level of intellectual engagement and real-world influence than my career as a journalist and research assistant was offering me. Sometime after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, my wife, Amy Muhlbach, saw me writing something that later inspired her to leave a sticky note on my computer: "Bob, go to grad school." In the years that followed she tolerated a lot, and when I proposed that we pack up and move to South America so I could do field research for a year, she did not hesitate; while there, she kept me sane and on track. I cannot imagine a more supportive friend or loving wife. Thank you.

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Abbreviations

ACCU: Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá, Peasant Self-Defense Forces of
Córdoba and Urabá (paramilitary)

ACMM: Autodefensas Campesinas de Magdalena Medio, Peasant Self-Defense Forces of
Magdalena Medio (paramilitary)

AGC: Autodefensas Gaitanistias de Colombia, Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of
Colombia (paramilitary)

AP: Associated Press

AUC: Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia
(paramilitary network)

BCE: before common era; equivalent to BC (before Christ)

Coosercom: Cooperativa de Seguridad y Servicios a la Comunidad, Community Services
and Security Cooperative (demobilized militias)

DANE: Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, Department of National
Statistics Administration (state census bureau)

DDR: demobilization, disarmament, and reinsertion

DoD: United States Department of Defense

DoS: United States Department of State

ELN: Ejército de Liberación Nacional, National Liberation Army (guerrilla)

EPL: Ejército Popular de Liberación, People's Liberation Army, sometimes translated as
Popular Liberation Army (guerrilla)

FARC: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarios de Colombia, Revolutionary Armed Forces of

    Colombia (guerrilla)

FTO: Foreign Terrorist Organization (DoS designation)

GDP: gross domestic product

GWOT: Global War on Terrorism

IDP: internally displaced person

JAC: Junta de Acción Comunal, Community Action Board (state body)

JAL: Junta Administradora Local, Local Administration Board (state body)

M-19: Movimiento Abril de 19, April 19th Movement (guerrilla)

M-6&7: Milicias 6 y 7 de Noviembre, November 6-7 Militia (urban militia)

MAS: Muerte a Secuestadores, Death to Kidnappers (death squad)

MoD: Colombian Ministry of Defense

MPPP: Milicias Populares del Pueblo y para el Pueblo Popular, Militias of the People and

    for the People (urban militia)

MPVA: Milicias Populares del Valle de Aburrá, People's Militias of the Aburrá Valley

    (urban militia)

Pepes: Perseguidos por Pablo Escobar, People Persecuted by Pablo Escobar (death squad)

PLO: Palestine Liberation Organization

PUI: Plan Urbanístico Integral, Comprehensive Urban Plan

UGA/SH: "Ungoverned Areas and Threats from Safe Havens" (Lamb, 2008)

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UP: Unión Patriótica, Patriotic Union (political party)

USSOUTHCOM: United States Southern Command

Chapter 1. Introduction

If you have been paying attention, but not too closely, you might recognize the following story. Medellín, Colombia, known worldwide as the hometown and headquarters of Pablo Escobar and his Medellín Cartel, was at one point during the early 1990s the second most violent city in the world, behind only Beirut. Escobar's death in a rooftop shootout with police in 1993 did little to curb the violence, as the urban wars there only become more complex during the 1990s: wars between rival street crews and rival drug gangs; between drug gangs and community vigilante groups; between mafia-backed drug gangs and guerrilla-backed militias acting as community self-defense vigilantes; between guerrilla-backed militias and mafia-backed anti-guerrilla paramilitary self-defense vigilantes; and between the state security forces and guerrillas, gangs, militias, and … well, who else you got? By 2002, the homicide rate in Medellín was among the highest in the world. It was Fallujah before Fallujah was Fallujah. Even Beirut had become somewhat of a tourist destination by the turn of the millennium.

But something funny happened the following year: after Colombia's security forces successfully ousted the last of the guerrilla-backed militias from the city, the biggest, baddest, anti-guerrilla–narco-terrorist–paramilitary–vigilante–pimp–hit-squad–racketeering mafia — the description is not an exaggeration — laid down its weapons, declared peace, and reentered society as responsible, and forgiven, citizens. In 2004, homicides plummeted. By 2006, the murder rate was actually higher in Washington, Baltimore, Detroit, and Miami than it was in Medellín. Huge community libraries and

public-transportation cable cars were being built in the former war zones of the city's hillside periphery. People were staying out late, dancing downtown again. Hippie backpackers from Europe and North America were showing up unannounced, hanging out for a few weeks, then moving on to their next cheap tourist destination with hardly an unpleasant experience to report in their travel blogs. There was a housing boom, a business boom, a self-confidence boom. Articles were appearing in the international press with titles like "Sustaining the Medellín Miracle" and "Medellín's Makeover."[1]

The city was an international success story, and policy makers facing complex urban violence in their own countries began showing up looking for advice. U.S. policy makers started talking about replicating its aid package to Colombia in other countries, such as Mexico, where drug violence was starting to look like Medellín's in the 1980s, or Afghanistan, where the drug trade had long funded civil wars and insurgencies but increasingly benefited pro-Taliban forces. These contexts may or may not have been comparable to the situation in Medellín. Nevertheless, to many observers, Medellín had become an example of how to overcome a very complex and very violent policy problem in a very short period of time, and many were interested in the answer to a question: How did this happen?

It turns out, however, that their question was premature. The decline in the homicide rate since 2003, the most widely cited indicator of the "Medellín Miracle," started to reverse itself sometime during 2007 or 2008 and skyrocketed during 2009: during just the first seven months of 2009, Medellín witnessed more murders than it had

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[1] Anthony Faiola, "Sustaining the Medellin Miracle: Colombia Struggles to Hold on to Gains from Globalization," *The Washington Post,* 11 July 2008; Forrest Hylton, "Medellín's Makeover," *New Left Review* 44 (2007): 70.

in all of 2008. In short, judging from the data, the miracle was over: the murder rate had

returned to the city's 2003 levels.

Before policy makers around the world start taking lessons from Medellín's

experience — and before critics start pointing told-you-so fingers at Medellín's elite —

the question to ask is not how the supposed miracle happened, but rather: *What actually*

happened?

1.1. Research Design

To answer that, I moved to Medellín in August 2008, when it was still unclear

whether the "miracle" was ending, and spent the next ten months getting to know the

people and the culture, consulting experts, interviewing residents, collecting documents

and data, reading books and newspapers, and engaging in informal conversations with

dozens of common people, cab drivers, teachers, social workers, and friends of friends. I

developed a framework, based on one developed in the public-health field, to

systematically analyze violence: not only homicides, not only violence by or against

certain populations, and not only violence during a single period of time — the standard

approaches of most work on violence in Medellín — but the full range of physical and

psychological forms of violence involving many different populations over five more or

less distinct periods over the past 25 years. From previous research, I knew that most

problems of violence and social instability in history have been strongly associated with

some kind of legitimacy deficit, and so, finding few works that had dealt with legitimacy

in Medellín both systematically and thoroughly, I modified and expanded a framework I

had previously developed for analyzing legitimacy, so that it could be used to analyze legitimacy and illegitimacy across multiple levels of analysis.[2]

Because life takes place at multiple levels but is experienced most immediately at the micro level, I studied the case at two levels of analysis: the city of Medellín as a whole, and a small sector within the city. To capture within-case variation, I studied both levels over five periods in recent history, divided according to whether homicides (as a proxy for violence) were declining or rising: the period 1984 to 1992 experienced a dramatic increase in homicides at both levels of analysis; the period 1992 to 1998 witnessed fluctuations in the magnitude of homicides but with an overall downward trend; this was followed by another spike in violence between 1998 and 2003; the period 2003 to 2007 experienced a dramatic decline in homicides at both levels; and, finally, beginning in 2007 or 2008 homicides began an ominous rise that continued into 2009. That design made it possible to compare the three periods in which homicides were rising with each other and with the two periods in which homicides were falling; and to compare the two declining periods with each other and with the three rising periods. Other forms of violence turned out either to track the patterns in homicides reasonably well or to go against them in ways that did not invalidate the division of time.

Using these frameworks as a systematic way to analyze and organize the quantitative and qualitative data I collected, I tried to answer three basic questions that seem never to have been asked before:

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[2] The previous research was Robert D. Lamb, *Ungoverned Areas and Threats From Safe Havens,* final report of the Ungoverned Areas Project (Washington: Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, 2 January 2008), http://www.cissm.umd.edu /papers/display.php?id=306. The earlier framework was discussed in Robert D. Lamb, "Measuring Legitimacy in Weak States" (paper presented at the Graduate Student Conference on Security, Georgetown University, Washington, 18 March 2005).

1. What have the overall patterns of violence been during the past 25 years?

2. What has caused those patterns to change?

3. What role did legitimacy or illegitimacy play in those changes?

The first question — what were the patterns of violence in Medellín? — was meant to go beyond those works that study only one type of violence (such as homicides),[3] only one category of perpetrator (such as gangs or paramilitaries),[4] only one type of victim (such as displaced populations or trade unionists),[5] only one brief period of time (such as annual human rights reports),[6] or only one case within the city (such as an

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[3] e.g. Marleny Cardona, et al., "Homicidios en Medellín, Colombia, Entre 1990 y 2002: Actores, Móviles y Circunstancias," ["Homicides in Medellín, Colombia, from 1990 to 2002: Victims, Motives and Circumstances,"] *Cadernos de Saúde Pública* 21, no. 3 (2005): 840.

[4] e.g. Ralph Rozema, "Urban DDR-Processes: Paramilitaries and Criminal Networks in Medellín, Colombia," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 40, no. 3 (2008): 423; Edwin Cruz Rodríguez, "Los Estudios Sobre el Paramilitarismo en Colombia," ["Studies of Paramilitarism in Colombia,"] *Análisis Político* No. 60 (2007): 117; Gilberto Medina Franco, *Una Historia de las Milicias de Medellín (Historia Sin Fin) [A History of the Militias of Medellín (A Never-Ending Story)]* (Medellín, Colombia: Instituto Popular de Capacitación–IPC, 2006), http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/colombia /ipc/historiamilicias.pdf (accessed 10 April 2009); Ramiro Ceballos Melguizo and Francine Cronshaw, "The Evolution of Armed Conflict in Medellin: An Analysis of the Major Actors," *Latin American Perspectives* 28, no. 1 (2001): 110; Alonso Salazar J., *No Nacimos Pa' Semilla: La Cultura de las Bandas Juveniles de Medellín [Born to Die: The Culture of Youth Gangs in Medellín]*, 5º ed. (Bogotá: Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular–CINEP, 1991).

[5] e.g. Clara Inés Atehortúa Arredondo, "Caracterización del Desplazamiento Forzado Intraurbano: Medellín 2000-2004" ["Characterizing Intra-Urban Forced Displacement: Medellín 2000-2004"] (Master's thesis, Universidad de Antioquia, 2007).

[6] e.g. César Augusto Muñoz Restrepo, ed., *Que los Arboles Dejen Ver el Bosque: Derechos Humanos en Antioquia–2005 [That the Trees Might Let the Forest See: Human Rights in Antioquia–2005]* (Medellín, Colombia: Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC) de la Corporación de Promoción Popular, 2006); Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC), "Situación de Violencia, Conflicto Urbano y Derechos Humanos en Medellín," ["The Status of Violence, Urban Conflict, and Human Rights in Medellín,"] *Observatorio de Derechos Humanos y Conflicto Armado* (2004); Roberto Armando Moreno Bedoya, *Conflicto Urbano y Derechos Humanos en Medellín: Balance desde Diferentes Sectores Sociales 2002 [Urban Conflict and Human Rights in Medellín: An Assessment of Different Social Sectors, 2002]*, 1a ed., Re Lecturas, No. 26 (Medellín, Colombia: Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC) de la Corporación de Promoción Popular, 2003); Rafael Rincón P., ed., *Antioquia, Fin de Milenio: ¿Terminará la Crisis del Derecho Humanitario? [Antioquia at the End of the Millennium: Will the Humanitarian Crisis End?]* (Medellín, Colombia: Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC) de la Corporación de Promoción Popular, 1999).

event or a neighborhood).[7] To get an accurate picture of the overall patterns of violence in the city, I took two approaches. I started by modifying the World Health Organization's violence framework (taking some inspiration from the frameworks that Caroline O.N. Moser and Cathy McIlwaine had developed through their work on violence in Colombia) to be sure that I was capturing both physical and psychological forms of violence in a way that took the relationship between the different types of perpetrators and victims into account.[8] The result was a framework that studies violence that individuals can commit against themselves, against intimate partners and family members, or against members of the public, and that groups can commit against others for social, political, or economic reasons. The framework, in other words, specifies twelve categories of violence: two manifestations (physical and psychological) across six "contexts" (individual, interpersonal-intrafamilial, interpersonal-communal, collective-social, collective-economic, and collective-political).

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[7] e.g. Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas, Héctor Gallo, and Blanca Inés Jiménez Zuluaga, eds., *Dinámicas de Guerra y Construcción de Paz: Estudio Interdisciplinario del Conflicto Armado en la Comuna 13 de Medellín [Dynamics of War and Construction of Peace: An Interdisciplinary Study of the Armed Conflict in Medellín's Comuna 13]*, 1a ed. (Medellín, Colombia: Universidad de Antioquia–INER, Universidad de Medellín, Corporación Región, y Instituto Popular de Capacitación–IPC, 2008); John Jaime Correa Ramírez, "Memorias de Pillos y Violencias: Barrio Castilla, Medellín 1950-2000," ["A Memoir of Crooks and Violence: Barrio Castilla, Medellín 1950-2000,"] in *Identidades, Localidades y Regiones: Hacia Una Mirada Micro e Interdiciplinaria*, ed. Renzo Ramírez Bacca and Álvaro Acevedo Tarazona (Medellín, Colombia: La Carreta Editores, 2007), 125; Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, *Dwellers of Memory: Youth and Violence in Medellín, Colombia* (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 2006); Juan Diego Alzate Giraldo, "Algún Día Recuperaremos la Noche: La Construcción de la Amenaza y el Miedo en Barrio Caicedo–Las Estancias" ["Someday We'll Get Back the Night: The Construction of Threat and Fear in Barrio Caicedo–Las Estancias"] (Undergraduate thesis, Universidad de Antioquia, 2005).

[8] The definitions and categories used in this chapter were partly informed by: Etienne G. Krug, et al., eds., *World Report on Violence and Health* (Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO), 2002); Caroline O.N. Moser and Cathy McIlwaine, "Latin American Urban Violence as a Development Concern: Towards a Framework for Violence Reduction," *World Development* 34, no. 1 (2005): 89; Caroline O.N. Moser, "Urban Violence and Insecurity: An Introductory Roadmap," *Environment and Urbanization* 16, no. 2 (2004): 3; Cathy McIlwaine and Caroline O.N. Moser, "Violence and Social Capital in Urban Poor Communities: Perspectives From Colombia and Guatemala," *Journal of International Development* 13, no. 7 (2001): 965; Panos D. Bardis, "Violence: Theory and Quantification," *Journal of Political & Military Sociology* 1, no. 1 (1973): 121.

Then, I tried to obtain data (both quantitative and qualitative) for all twelve categories of violence not only for the city of Medellín itself but for Colombia as a whole and for a small sector within Medellín called Caicedo La Sierra. This was an effort to understand both the national context and the local details of the violence taking place in the city. Quantitative data were not available for all twelve categories of violence at all three levels of analysis across all 24 and a half years of the study period, as would have been ideal. However, this study was the first to gather into one place almost all of the quantitative data that were actually available (even if only via proxies), that were reasonably reliable, and that were made available by their owners or could be found in the public domain. Moreover, qualitative data could be found or inferred for many of the missing data points, making possible general observations about yearly trends within each category of violence (whether it rose, fell, peaked, or hit a minimum in any given year), but not, unfortunately, about relative magnitudes across categories. This made possible a richer description of the patterns of violence than had previously been available from any other source. This framework is described in detail in Appendix B and the patterns of violence that were found are discussed in Chapter 8.

The second question — what caused the patterns of violence to change? — was meant to go beyond a descriptive account of violence in Medellín and toward an explanation (and its associated set of causal mechanisms) that could inform the work of policy makers facing difficult decisions about how best to lower the level and intensity of different kinds of violence. The vast literature on violence in Medellín does not want for candidate explanations. The most thorough review of studies about violence in and around Medellín published to date found a wide variety of explanations for violence,

attributing changes in violence to psychological, cultural, economic, social, political, historical, and other phenomena.[9] To determine which were correct I did two things. First I reviewed as many of these studies as possible and, relying on the findings of those with transparent methods and credible designs, extracted a set of candidate explanations, or hypotheses, for the patterns of violence. Second, I looked in greater detail at the cases using my own frameworks and my own interviews to see which made sense, meaning I first made a credible case in favor of each hypothesis by creating a narrative of the causal mechanisms implied by it, then identified the evidence that each of these causal narratives had to ignore in order to make the case credible, and finally revised or combined those that ignored the least evidence to develop a new causal narrative that accounted for the most evidence. These hypotheses are discussed in Appendix D.

The third and final question that I addressed in this study — what role did legitimacy or illegitimacy play in the changes in the patterns of violence? — was meant to go beyond those works that study conflict as something that takes place mainly between and among armed actors, whether agents of the state or agents of nonstate entities, and that therefore ignore the role played by members of the communities where the violence takes place. Community members are not only victims or collaborators in violence, but also perpetrators, enablers, denouncers, informants, pacifiers, supporters, financiers, and recruits. Understanding the roles played by nonstate actors and state actors, but not by community actors, therefore misses a significant part of the story.

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[9] Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas, ed., *Balance de los Estudios Sobre Violencia en Antioquia [An Evaluation of Studies about Violence in Atioquia]* (Medellín, Colombia: Municipio de Medellín y Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 2001); Carlos M. Ortiz S., "Los Estudios Sobre la Violencia en las Tres Últimas Décadas," ["Studies of Violence in the Last Three Decades,"] *Boletín Socioeconómico CIDSE,* No. 2425 (1992).

To get an accurate picture of the role of legitimacy, I took two approaches. First, I modified and expanded a framework I had previously developed for analyzing legitimacy. The intention was to overcome the greatest weakness of legitimacy research: measurement validity. Most authors who attempt to measure legitimacy acknowledge that they cannot be certain that it is legitimacy and not something else that they are measuring. Those who assert that legitimacy resides primarily in individual beliefs acknowledge the difficulties of recall and other biases inherent in measuring opinions. Those who assert that legitimacy resides primarily in group behaviors acknowledge the difficulty of determining whether certain behaviors derive from belief rather than coercion. And those who assert that legitimacy resides in the objective characteristics of the structure under study acknowledge that their outsider judgment of the system's legitimacy may well differ from that of insiders. Yet these authors draw the data or observations that underlie their studies of legitimacy from only one or, at best, two of these levels of analysis (micro, meso, or macro). My framework is intended to be used to look for evidence at all three levels and, by doing so, to provide a higher degree of certainty about what is being measured: if individuals say they believe some structure to be legitimate, and groups act as if they believe that structure to be legitimate, and that structure has characteristics that suggest it operates legitimately, then it is very difficult (albeit not impossible) to argue that legitimacy is not at work in the structure; but if one of those levels does not agree with the others, that suggests that something other than legitimacy is at play (coercion, for example). Furthermore, this framework does not measure only proxies for legitimacy, nor does it measure only causal indicators: rather, it

measures both a proxy variable and six causal indicators (transparent, credible, justifiable, accessible, equitable, and respectful).

Second, I tried to obtain or derive data for as many of these variables as possible across all three levels of analysis (individual, group, and system) by exploring published works and opinion polls and interviewing experts and residents about violence, legitimacy, governance, and territorial control in Medellín and the sector Caicedo La Sierra. This was an effort to understand both the microdynamics and the multi-level dynamics of legitimacy. Using this framework to organize the analysis, I tried to find evidence related to the legitimacy or the illegitimacy of community actors, nonstate armed actors, and state actors. I was not able to extract qualitative data for all seven indicators for all three types of actor at all three levels of analysis for all 24 and a half years of the study period. However, this study was the first even to attempt such a systematic analysis of the dynamics of legitimacy amid the complex violence of Medellín. As such, its findings provide a richer explanation of the causal mechanisms among territorial control, governance, legitimacy, and violence in Medellín than had previously been found (or sought), and therefore provides a sound foundation upon which to base future research on the dynamics of complex urban violence more generally. The framework and the analysis of the dynamics of legitimacy are discussed in detail in, respectively, Appendix C and Chapter 9.

The answers that emerged from these three questions — what were the patterns of violence, what caused them to change, and what role did legitimacy play? — provide a glimpse of what it might take for policy makers to succeed in sustainably reducing

violence in places such as Medellín. These findings and their implications are discussed in the next two sections.

1.2. Findings

The patterns of violence — answering the first question — are described in detail in Chapter 8. Violence is the dependent variable, but it is not described here as a single number, such as the number of homicides or an index of violence. Rather, the dependent variable used for this study was a qualitative description of the relative magnitudes of different forms of violence as they have changed over time. The emphasis of that description by necessity had to be on the three forms of collective (i.e. organized) violence (social, economic, and political) and one form of interpersonal (i.e. unorganized) violence (communal); reliable data, whether quantitative, qualitative, or impressionistic, were simply unavailable for the other categories of violence (see Appendix B for an extended discussion of these different types of violence). Given that limitation, two main observations stood out, one regarding a long-term trend, one regarding a short-term dynamic.

The most significant long-term trend observed over the 25-year study period was a gradual "corruption" of collective-social and collective-political violence by collective-economic violence; that is, the implicit ratio of economic violence to political or social violence has increased over time, although due to the paucity of reliable data, this ratio has not been able to be quantified. This has come about as violent organizations dedicated to illicit profits (primarily narcotrafficking mafias and hit squads) infiltrated and corrupted violent organizations dedicated to social order (e.g. community self-

defense groups), political change (e.g. anti-guerrilla paramilitaries), or both (e.g. urban militias). In other words, over time, the "true believers" in the city's armed social and political movements either lost out to organized criminals or were corrupted by the lure of easy money, to the point that there are now very few true believers left: almost everyone involved in organized violence today is in it for the money.

The most significant short-term observation was that most of the violence throughout the study period was interpersonal-communal (i.e. common, rather than organized, crime). This is so even during the peaks when the highest-profile forms of violence were collective-political (e.g. police massacres of young people in peripheral barrios, assassinations of Patriotic Union party members, wars between militias and paras), collective-social (e.g. street-gang turf wars, "social cleansing" death squads), and collective-economic (e.g. organized crime, drug wars). This is explained by observing that these spikes in collective violence created a context in which the rule of law was too weak to control interpersonal-communal violence, and those who engaged in the latter often used that broader context to their own advantage, either by recruiting or deceiving collective-violence organizations to carry out personal vendettas, or simply by taking advantage of the environment of impunity. Or to put it more simply: the gang wars made social control impossible, and violent crime increased as a result.

The study's second and third questions — what explains the patterns of violence, and what role did legitimacy or illegitimacy play in the relationship between territorial control and violence? — can be answered together (the roles of legitimacy and illegitimacy are analyzed in detail in Chapter 9). The answer has three parts:

1. *Territorial control has reduced violence.* Each statelet or micro-territory within the city (and, from 2003 to 2007, in the city as a whole) has experienced a decline in violence once a unitary actor has emerged capable of keeping other actors out.

2. *The cost of territorial control has been positively correlated with illegitimacy.* Legitimacy has reduced the cost, and illegitimacy has raised the cost, of gaining and holding territory.

3. *Illegitimacy has been positively correlated with unpredictability in the manner and outcomes of governance.* Communities for whom life has become dangerously unpredictable have been likely to withdraw support from, oppose, or begin to support rivals of, those actors who had been controlling their territory.

A synthesis of these findings yields the following explanation of the relationship between territorial control and increases in violence, including the role of illegitimacy. Within Medellín, control over micro-territories has required resources (e.g. money, weapons, communication, transportation) and people (e.g. recruits, financiers, facilitators, denouncers, informants, etc.) to counter opposition from external rivals (i.e. external to the micro-territory), from internal rivals, and from rivals to the internal allies of the controlling group. For resource-rich groups (for example, a mafia-backed gang with access to narcotrafficking income), legitimacy has not been necessary to hold territory because whatever support was needed for these fights could be purchased or coerced using resources they already had. To maintain control, therefore, the controlling group needed only to engage in a strategy of illegitimacy-avoidance (maintaining a reasonably

predictable living environment for residents). However, when that strategy has failed —
when their abuses, moral transgressions, or losses of credibility have caused life in the
micro-territory to become unpredictable and intolerable — then the level of morally
driven non-compliance and outright opposition has risen, increasing both the number of
rivals and the level of resources required to coerce or purchase needed support. This has
provided strategic opportunities for existing external and internal rivals to recruit more
people and resources into their own fight against the controlling group, making a real
contest for control tenable. As a consequence, the controlling group and its rivals then
engaged directly in collective violence against each other and each other's supporters, or
allowed themselves to be drawn into private grudges through false denunciations.
Moreover, as the controlling group focused on defense against rivals, it necessarily
shifted resources and attention away from maintaining general order in their micro-
territories. Inattention to order entailed a breakdown in social order and the rule of law
that created an atmosphere of impunity for common crime associated with interpersonal-
communal violence, which both fed back into problems of governance and further
damaged the credibility and therefore the legitimacy of the controlling group. Thus have
both collective violence and interpersonal-communal violence risen as a consequence of
contests over control of micro-territories.

When one side or another in such contests has managed to prevail and take (or
retake) full control over the micro-territory, it no longer had a need for violence against
rivals or rivals' supporters. As a consequence, collective violence associated with the
conflict has fallen, and the controlling group could again dedicate attention and resources
to protecting internal allies and maintaining order, so interpersonal-communal violence

associated with the breakdown in social order or the rule of law has fallen as well, which has fed back into improvements in governance in a virtuous cycle. Thus have both collective violence and communal violence fallen as a consequence of control over micro-territories.

These explanations, more than any others, account for the dynamics observed in dozens of micro-territories within Medellín, including in Caicedo La Sierra, across all of the time periods studied. They obviously leave out some details, such as the role of other categories of violence, the specific types of behavior that generate illegitimacy, leading indicators for an imminent illegitimation, longer-term trends, and auxiliary processes such as the legitimation of violence. Some of these factors are relevant and are discussed in detail in later chapters. But others have been left out because no evidence could be found to confirm or dispute their role, or because, while they might contribute to the explanation, they were not necessary for it.

The most important assumption underlying these findings is that they apply only to the short-term: No actor in control of any micro-territory in Medellín's violent periphery has managed to avoid delegitimizing or illegitimizing itself long enough to find out what would have happened in the long term.

1.3. Implications and Recommendations

These findings are suggestive — only suggestive — of propositions that merit further study in terms of their implications for general theory and strategies to implement anti-violence policies. They also point to a set of recommendation for those who make policy for Medellín.

Each of the three main findings enumerated in the previous section is potentially generalizable to theory. The first finding (that, within certain bounds, violence is negatively correlated with territorial control) tends to confirm the work of Kalyvas, albeit with a modified set of assumptions.[10] The second (that territorial control is positively correlated with illegitimacy) is consistent with the canon of legitimacy theory, but restates the general correlation between legitimacy and stability as a theory of *illegitimacy* and does so in terms of the mechanism through which illegitimacy leads to instability. And the third (that illegitimacy is positively correlated with unpredictability) represents a new proposition that merits further study.

Each of these three findings also potentially has a central implication for strategies to reduce violence as well: The first implies that any strategy of violence reduction should begin with a capability to prevent rival actors from governing. The second implies that, in any effort to attain or sustain territorial control, resource-poor actors should engage in a strategy of legitimation while resource-rich actors should engage in, at minimum, a strategy of illegitimacy-avoidance. And the third suggests that the essential element of an illegitimacy-avoidance strategy is *predictability*, whose main components might be *transparency* (accurate, correct, and comprehensive publicity of the rules, rights, duties, and identities of those who are in control) and *credibility* (capable and non-arbitrary enforcement or fulfillment of rules, rights, and duties), although these two components might prove to be neither necessary nor sufficient to predictability. These propositions should be tested in other contexts before these strategies are implemented outside of Medellín.

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[10] Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*.

Specific recommendations to those who make policy for Medellín are provided in the final chapter of this dissertation. The most important of these recommendations require the most immediate attention: Today, state actors who currently enjoy a modest and tenuous degree of public support in the micro-territories in which they currently have a (weak) presence (but formerly did not) should consider themselves to be resource-poor. This normally would suggest a strategy of legitimation. But because the illicit actors who are the main perpetrators of the collective-economic violence we are seeing today are engaged in a contest for control over markets rather than over territory, state actors should be able to hold that territory *in the short term* with a only strategy of illegitimacy-avoidance. As the violence in the city has begun to return to its formerly high levels, city and national security forces have been sent in to the peripheral barrios to keep order. The immediate priorities of the officials who manage those security forces should be:

1. to ensure that residents of those barrios know all relevant laws, their rights and obligations under the law, and the rights and obligations of the security forces patrolling their neighborhoods;

2. to ensure that rules against corruption within the security forces are strictly enforced; these first two recommendations are intended to ensure transparency, which contributes to predictability;

3. to give the security forces the troops/officers, resources, and training they need to protect residents' rights and enforce the law while engaging in operations against nonstate armed actors; this recommendation is intended to ensure credibility, which also contributes to predictability; and

4. to fully empower, support, and expand the local Immediate Attention Command units (CAI: Comandos de Atención Inmediata) to act as intermediaries between residents and security forces to ensure that residents do not turn to nonstate armed actors to resolve their grievances as they have in the past; this recommendation is intended to improve the state's credibility relative to that of the nonstate armed actors.

These recommendations, if implemented, should help to maintain a predictable and tolerable quality of life and avoid any illegitimizing actions that would raise the costs of control and begin a new cycle of violence. It should be added, however, that, if the nonstate armed actors who are the target of security forces' operations decide to contest control of the peripheral barrios, then the state should recognize that its resources will be inadequate for the task and that it will need to enlist the active and voluntary support of the community.

To reiterate: If the current trends in violence in Medellín were to reach a point where state actors begin to lose what little credibility they had earned as protectors of order over the past five years, and if state security forces were to engage in needless abuse or disrespect of citizens, then the costs of maintaining the tenuous control that city and national officials do have in the peripheral barrios today will rise so rapidly that only a dramatic flood of resources — at a level that is currently unplanned for and perhaps unavailable — would be able to prevent a return to city's violent past. If that were to happen, one would have to characterize the "Medellín Miracle" as a fluke at worst or a missed opportunity at best. As of this writing (October 2009), that moment has not yet arrived, but the window of opportunity is rapidly closing.

1.4. Roadmap

The remainder of this dissertation is divided into three parts. Part I (Chapters 2-7) tells the story of what happened in Medellín. Chapter 2 gives brief tours of the city and one sector within it called Caicedo La Sierra, which is the embedded case that was studied for the details of the dynamics taking place in the city as a whole; that chapter also provides historical context for the full study period. Chapters 3-7 describe what happened in each of the five case periods, focusing on the different kinds of armed actor, the forms of violence they employed, and their relationships with each other and with members of the communities whose micro-territories they controlled. Chapters 3 and 4 describe the rise and fall of guerrilla-backed militias in the city, with their rise coming in response to an explosion of violent crime in the peripheral barrios and their fall coinciding with their corruption by criminal elements. Chapters 5 and 6 describe the rise and fall of the paramilitaries in Medellín, with their rise facilitated by the corruption of the militias and backed by rural mafias funded in large part by narcotrafficking proceeds, and their fall taking the form of a demobilization, ultimately corrupted by the infiltration of drug money. Chapter 7 describes the challenge that the recent increase in violence in Medellín is posing to the very tenuous control and very tenuous legitimacy that the state had managed to establish during the preceding period in those barrios that had been under the control of the militias and the paras.

Part II (Chapters 8-10) presents an analysis of what happened in Medellín. Chapter 8 answers the study's first question: what were the patterns of violence in Medellín? Chapter 9 answers the study's second two questions: what explains the patterns of violence in Medellín, and what role did legitimacy or illegitimacy play?

Chapter 10 lays out the study's findings, discusses their implications for theory and strategy, and offers a set of recommendations to policy makers.

Part III includes four appendices that provide context and further detail for the study. Appendix A elaborates many of the key concepts employed throughout the study and defines terms that I use in ways that might be considered idiosyncratic (e.g., *statelet, control,* etc.) or controversial (e.g., *state, subsidiarity,* etc.). It also provides a broader discussion of how these concepts and the findings of this study might be relevant to today's policy-making environment, a context in which globalization presents deep and unresolved challenges, in terms of both the types of security threats that emerge today and the way those threats can and cannot be addressed through policy. (One such challenge was the topic of this study: to determine what role legitimacy played as violence waxed and waned and shifted its shape over the past 25 years, a period during which, worldwide, the accessibility and affordability of global communication and transportation networks grew exponentially, the world went from being majority rural to half urban, and identities and loyalties simultaneously expanded beyond the boundaries of states and contracted toward local communities and small groups, making obsolete existing academic assumptions about governance and governability, states and statelets.) Appendix B introduces the concept of complex violence, looking specifically at how that concept can be used to make a study of complex security environments such as Medellín tractable. It then walks through the framework used in Chapter 8 to analyze the patterns of complex violence as they evolved in Medellín. Appendix C introduces a scalable conceptualization of legitimacy, that is, a framework that may be used (as it was for Chapter 9) to analyze, measure, or develop a strategy to influence legitimacy at micro,

meso, macro, or multiple levels of analysis. Appendix D discusses the motivation behind

this study, the method and data sources used to carry it out, and its findings in terms of

the hypotheses that were tested, rejected, and synthesized.

Part I. Illegitimacy and Violence in Medellín, Colombia

If there is one country where it is difficult to write about violence, that is Colombia. And yet, year after year, more and more research reports, articles, and books are accumulated. As if by surrounding violence with words we believe we can exorcise it or at least corner it. But in vain. And so the paradox takes on the characteristic of a symptom: immersed as we are in its daily frenzy, it is nearly impossible for us to keep our distance, yet, with tenacious effort, the majority of what is written tries to keep to the cold language of statistics or to the dispassioned discourse of typologies and cause/effect explanations. It is a subtle way of looking at violence without letting oneself get trapped in its whirlwinds, but also of impeding its "comprehensibility."

—*Jesús Martín-Barbero (1997)*[1]

There has been a lot of interest among policy makers worldwide in explaining the "Medellín Miracle" — the city's transformation, beginning in 2002, from one of the most complex and violent cities in the world to one that is eminently stable and livable. If the policies put in place in Medellín by the local and national governments worked so well there, it is thought, perhaps they could be replicated in other places experiencing complex urban violence as well. Policies that are transplanted from one place to another, however, rarely work so well in their new home without appropriate modifications to account for

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[1] "Si hay un país donde sea difícil escribir sobre violencia ése es Colombia. Y, sin embargo, los reportes de investigación, los artículos y libros se acumulan en modo creciente año tras año. Como si al cercarla con palabras creyéramos poder conjurarla o al menos acorralarla. Pero en vano. Con lo que la paradoja adquiere rasgos de síntoma: sumergidos como estamos en su vértigo cotidiano nos es casi imposible tomar distancia, pero, en tenaz esfuerzo, la mayoría de lo que se escribe trata de mantenerse en el frío lenguaje de la estadística o en el distanciado discurso de las tipologías y las explicaciones causa/efecto. Es una sutil manera de mirar la violencia sin dejarse atrapar en su remolino, per también de imposibilitar su 'comprensión'." Jesús Martín-Barbero, prologue to *Maquinaciones Sutiles de la Violencia, [The Subtle Machinations of Violence,]* by Gisela Daza and Mónica Zuleta (Bogotá: Siglo de Hombres Editoriales y DIUC–Universidad Central, 1997).

local conditions. So what were the local conditions in Medellín that might explain the dramatic changes there? Why did the positive trends that began in 2002 start to reverse themselves in 2008? And what broader policy lessons should be drawn from this initial success and its incipient reversal? To answer these questions, I compare the conditions present during the "Medellín Miracle" period, between 2002 and 2007, to what was going on in the city and the country the last time homicides fell, from 1991 to 1998; and I compare the conditions present today, as homicides are rising again, to the last two times homicides rose in the city, from 1984 to 1991 and again from 1998 to 2002. In these comparisons, I pay close attention not only to homicide levels and the public policies implemented to lower them, but to the overall patterns of violence present in the city, the most significant events that took place at the local and national levels, and the microdynamics of legitimacy during each period.

The explanation that emerges is neither as straightforward as that offered by official government sources (briefly, that strong-state and good-governance policies worked) nor as conspiratorial as that offered by the country's political left (namely that the government made secret pacts with paramilitaries to ignore their crimes in exchange for their keeping the homicide rate under control). While both of these explanations have a basis in reality — in fact, combining parts of both does get closer to the truth — the first does not identify the causal mechanisms through which specific policies supposedly led to a decline in violence while the second does not adequately explain the actual behavior of key state actors with respect to the paramilitaries with whom they supposedly had made the pacts. What both explanations are missing is an account of the role that

legitimacy — or more accurately, illegitimacy — has played and continues to play in the changes in the patterns of violence in the city.

Part I provides evidence for the proposition that, in Medellín, illegitimacy was an intervening phenomenon in a positive-feedback cycle of collective and interpersonal-communal violence associated with contests over territorial control. This proposition is a variant of the long-established association between legitimacy and stability in social structures,[2] but it refines and explains that relationship: legitimacy is correlated with stability at least partly because its opposite enables and magnifies the forces that lead to instability; territorial control is possible, if costly, in the absence of legitimacy, but it is significantly less likely to be sustained in the presence of illegitimacy. The history of violence in Medellín over the past 25 years is evidence of this. At both the city level and the level of small sectors within the city, conflicts over control of micro-territories have been nearly constant, but within those micro-territories have alternated periods of violence with periods of relative stability. The periods of low violence and stability have tended to be associated with successful *illegitimacy-avoidance* (sometimes also accompanied by legitimation) by the armed actor in control of each micro-territory, whereas the periods in which violence has risen — primarily interpersonal-communal and collective physical violence[3] (especially homicides) — have tended to be preceded by failures in illegitimacy-avoidance, usually characterized by abuses against community members and transgressions of community values by the armed actor in control. More

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[2] See, for example, Morris Zelditch, Jr., "Theories of Legitimacy," in *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations*, ed. John T. Jost and Brenda Major (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 33.

[3] i.e. physical violence committed either by one or two individuals acting on their own (communal) or by members of groups organized for social, economic, or political purposes (collective); see Appendix B.

broadly, the story of Medellín has been the story of a society incrementally legitimizing itself to itself — and incrementally delegitimizing different forms of violence and the armed actors perpetrating violence. As the epigraph points out, these stories has been buried beneath the "daily frenzy" of the violence itself. They emerge clearly only once one looks closely at that violence and the human stories underlying it.

Part I of the study tells some of those stories. Chapter 2 provides extensive but important background information on the city of Medellín and the sector within it that was studied in detail, Caicedo La Sierra, with a particular emphasis on the underworld figures who had set the stage for the violence to come. After that, in Chapters 3-7, the relevant history of Medellín and Caicedo La Sierra is given for each of the five study periods: 1984-1992, 1992-1998, 1998-2002, 2002-2007, and 2007 to the first half of 2009. The first two periods were dominated by the rise and fall of the guerrilla militias; the second two periods, by the rise and demobilization of the anti-guerrilla paramilitaries and their criminal allies; the final period, by questions about the relationship between the state and the underworld. These histories are then analyzed in Part II.

Chapter 2. Background: Medellín and Caicedo La Sierra

When I was in high school in southern New Jersey, three friends and I spent a weekend afternoon playing Monopoly, a notoriously long board game in which individual players compete to purchase enough of the board's properties and utility companies that nobody else can earn enough Monopoly Money from rent and service payments to stay in the game. After a few hours of play, none of us had yet emerged as a clear winner. Then my friend John, rulebook in hand, pulled Bob M. out into the kitchen. Matt and I heard nothing but whispers and giggles for about five minutes, after which John and Bob returned to announce that they were merging all of their assets and that we should henceforth consider them a single player. We weren't sure this was within the rules, but John, ever the businessman, referred us to the rulebook, which apparently did not explicitly forbid mergers and acquisitions. Within a few rounds, both Matt and I realized we couldn't compete (Johnbob now held almost half the properties on the board), so we held our own kitchen-merger meeting. The competition between Johnbob and Mattbob was cut-throat and it breathed new life into the game — for maybe an hour. Dinnertime was approaching, and we were all ready for the game to be over. But Monopoly can be addictive: you can't just end the game before a winner emerges. As our energy level waned, one of us sheepishly proposed something that also was not explicitly forbidden by the rulebook: a grand merger of Johnbob and Mattbob. The idea was immediately accepted and, the four of us, now a very large (as far as group games go) corporation, celebrated our having achieved a true monopoly over the board's entire

territory. We put away the pieces, folded up the board, and went our separate ways, home to dinner.

Add a few more players and some brutal motorcycle assassinations to this scenario, and you would have more or less the history of illegal armed activity in Medellín from the late 1980s to the demobilization of the Cacique Nutibara Bloc, which had co-opted, absorbed, or conquered every militia, gang, mafia, and paramilitary group of any importance in Medellín before it laid down its weapons in December 2003. A *cacique* (ka-SEE-kay) is a chief, and Cacique Nutibara was a powerful indigenous chief of the 16th century. His armies had conquered territories and trade routes in the Aburrá Valley (where modern-day Medellín is) and the surrounding region of what today is the department (province) of Antioquia. Nutibara was notorious for the public display of the heads and limbs of his enemies as trophies.[1] His notoriety and his valiant but ultimately unsuccessful efforts to defend his chiefdom against the Spanish conquerors are still celebrated today in local lore. The city of Medellín named an important hill after Nutibara. A hotel and other businesses have named themselves after him as well. And so did a paramilitary-narco-terrorist mafia, which conquered the territories and trade routes controlled by the underworld of the same region that the cacique himself had conquered nearly 500 years earlier — and did so about as brutally. The difference is that in 2003 the Bloque Cacique Nutibara (the Cacique Nutibara Bloc) was not dismantled as a result of defeat: it handed in its weapons and dismantled itself in the wake of its mergers and its victories over all of its competitors — in other words, it achieved a monopoly, turned in its pieces, and went home.

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[1] Frank Salomon and Stuart B. Schwartz, *South America,* vol. 3, The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 598.

Or did it? Most people think the Bloque Cacique Nutibara (BCN) and several related paramilitary blocs (or "paras") demobilized in name only. BCN had been affiliated with both a counterinsurgent paramilitary confederation and a narcotrafficking mafia. Since its anti-guerrilla objectives had been achieved by early 2003 — the last of the leftist militias was ejected from East Central Medellín in February of that year (see Chapter 3) — BCN no longer had a need to continue as a paramilitary force. But since nobody asked it to demobilize as a criminal force, its members "demobilized" only as paras and many of them merely continued their criminal operations under different names. The peace that descended upon Medellín after BCN's demobilization, most people believe, is mostly explained by the fact that the underworld economy and the violence that went with it was now almost completely controlled by a single strongman without any real competitors within the city: without competitors, there is no war.

If this were the whole story it would be easily explained by existing theories of violence and conflict, such as Kalyvas's theory that violence in civil war is a function of territorial control: violence is lowest when one side or the other fully controls the territory in question, highest when control is incomplete and contested.[2] In broad outline, the findings of this study certainly support that theory, as far as it goes. But the Kalyvas theory and the version of events offered in the previous paragraph do not account for why and how such contests over territorial control begin in the first place. To understand that, one has to study the local social and political dynamics of the micro-territory in the period leading up to the conflict, as well as the broader context in which it takes place. In

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[2] Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*.

Medellín, there were many such conflicts, many micro-territories and statelets[3] that alternated between violence and relative calm. BCN's final victory over Medellín's underworld, its members' immediate post-monopoly demobilization, and their evolving relationship with important state actors since then — indeed, the sheer significance of the fact that a monopoly over illicit violence was even achieved in Medellín — can be understood fully only after a detailed review of the history of those complex micro-conflicts. And that history begins with how the violence in Medellín became so complex in the first place. This chapter tells that story by reviewing the historical background and the social, political, and economic contexts in which it all began.

2.1. Medellín: From the Conquest of Nutibara to the Rise of Cocaine

2.1.1. A Brief Tour of the Valley of Aburrá

When the Roman consul Quintus Cæcilius Metellus Pius was sent to western Hispania during the first century BCE to subjugate a rebellious proconsul, he began by establishing a series of military bases. One ended up being named after him: Metellinum. Over the centuries, the base expanded into a village, and "Metellinum" contracted into "Medellín." It was near this village of Medellín, in the province of Badajoz, Spain, about midway between Madrid and the Atlantic Ocean, that Hernán Cortés was born in 1485 and Gaspar de Rodas was born in 1518. Cortés, of course, was the Spanish *conquistador* who later subjugated the Aztec Empire in Mexico. Rodas, less known in world history,

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[3] A *statelet* is a territory that is controlled in such a way that it would qualify as a state according to most academic and legal definitions but that is not internationally recognized as such. See Appendix A.

was a conquistador who became governor of Antioquia, a region of the central range of

the northern Andean mountains of South America. Rodas was appointed governor after

the death of his former protector and colleague, the marshal Jorge Robledo. Robledo,

while exploring the region in 1541, had glimpsed a valley in south-central Antioquia and

sent an aid to check it out. The aid, Jerónimo Luis Téjelo, found it when he arrived during

the night of 23 August 1541, and the Spaniards dubbed it the Valle de San Bartolomé (St.

Bartholomew Valley). The natives who lived there, led by the tribal chief known as

Cacique Nutibara, were fierce but poor; had they been fierce but rich, Robledo would

likely have tried to conquer them. Instead, war with the natives was postponed for some

decades. In the end, however, Nutibara and his armies were defeated by the Spaniards,

the native populations in the area were almost completely annihilated, and the survivors

were enslaved. The natives had called the valley "Aburrá" and, despite their defeat at the

hands of the Spaniards, it was this name, rather than San Bartolomé, that was the one that

stuck. Governor Rodas established Spain's first presence in the Aburrá Valley in the late

16th century. Permanent settlements followed over the next century, and in 1674 the

Spanish royalty approved a request to name the settlements after the Old World

birthplace of the region's Spanish colonizers: La Villa de Nuestra Señora de la

Candelaria de Medellín. At the time, Medellín was home to about 3,000 settlers.[4]

     Antioquia (an-TYOH-kya) was a fairly independent region among the Spanish

colonial possessions; its main interactions with the outside world were economic, with

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[4] Information on the distant history of Medellín in this and the next three paragraphs is drawn from Gerard Martin, et al., *Medellín: Transformación de Una Ciudad [Medellín: Transformation of a City]* (Medellín, Colombia: Alcaldía de Medellín and Banco Interamericano de Desarollo, 2009); Forrest Hylton, "Medellín: The Peace of the Pacifiers," NACLA Report on the Americas, published electronically by North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), http://nacla.org/node/4459 (accessed 13 April 2009); Forrest Hylton, "Medellín's Makeover"; and common knowledge in the city.

outside political and cultural influences playing a much smaller part there than in other Spanish settlements. Its capital at the time was a small village called Santa Fe de Antioquia, some fifty kilometers northwest of the Aburrá Valley. Early on, gold mining, with the hardest labor done by slaves, was its most important commercial activity; banking followed, and, later, as world demand for coffee grew, descendents of the colonists — or *paisas* (PIE-suhs), as the people who settled Antioquia came to be known — helped finance the development of the "coffee axis" south of Antioquia. During the Wars of Independence that began in 1810, Ecuador, Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama (Panama was then still part of Colombia) seceded from Spain and formed a single independent country (named the Republic of Colombia), but despite a decade of fighting in other parts of the country and region, isolated Antioquia was never really affected by the war. (Ecuador and Venezuela seceded from Colombia in 1830; Panama separated from Colombia in 1903.) Gold and coffee exports thus fueled the region's economic growth, bringing wealth and prestige to many landowners and traders. Medellín, situated between the crops and mines to its south and west and the capital city of Santa Fe de Antioquia to its northeast, became an increasingly important trading post, attracting wealthy traders, suppliers, and most importantly merchant bankers. Its local political and economic importance continued to grow until it finally was named capital of the Antioquia in 1826.

During the Industrial Revolution in the late 19th century, merchants diversified beyond coffee to light industry, the city began a broad range of urban-planning efforts, and by the early 20th century, "Antioquia — having emerged unscathed from the three-year civil conflict of 1899-1902, known as the War of a Thousand Days — had moved to

the centre of national economic life, and Medellín became an important nexus for investment, speculation and the accumulation of value."[5] Among such investments were textile factories, the growth of which in the 20th century made the Aburrá Valley one of the most important textile centers in the country (and today it is one of the most important centers of fashion in Latin America).

In the beginning of the 20th century Medellín had fewer than 60,000 inhabitants. By 1928 that figure had doubled, and at mid-century there were more than 350,000 people living in the city. Growth was rapid thereafter: The population exceeded one million by 1973, was nearly 1.5 million in 1985, and reached 1.6 million by 1993, a 50% increase in just 20 years. The 2005 census found more than 2.2 million people living in Medellín — 37 times the size of the population one hundred years earlier — and 2.3 million in 2008.[6] Antioquia is today Colombia's sixth largest department by area and, with nearly six million people, the second largest by population (after Bogotá). Medellín is the department's largest city.

The Aburrá Valley is essentially the Medellín River water basin: all the creeks and streams from the surrounding mountains drain into the river. Between Antioquia's clay-and-mud geology and its industries' less than environmentally friendly waste-disposal practices, the Medellín River today is little more than a concrete channel for muddy, polluted water, although efforts have been made recently to clean it up. If the city of Medellín is the heart of the valley, the Medellín River is its backbone, and the geography of the area is best understood by reference to it, as locals do. Imagine yourself

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas (DANE), "Censo 2005," http://www.dane.gov.co (accessed 2 August 2009); Gerard Martin, et al., *Medellín: Transformación de Una Ciudad*, 43.

floating down the river. The muddy-water tour would begin in the south and take you northward through the valley's ten municipalities, starting in Caldas, passing through La Estrella, then past Sabaneta, Itagüí, and Envigado before reaching the city of Medellín. The municipality of Itagüí (ee-ta-GWEE), just south of Medellín and on the west bank of the river, is the first stop of the Metro, an above-ground public-rail system that runs along the river from Itagüí in the south to Bello in the north, with a branch running from the city center to the west side of Medellín, and two cable-car systems taking traffic up the sides of the mountains, one to the West Central slope, one to the Northeastern slope. As you float northward on the river, the areas that were settled first — such as El Poblado on the south side of the city and Candelaria in the city center — are situated to your right, on the east bank; as the city's population grew, the west bank became settled as well, and today the entire valley is inhabited on both sides. Newer arrivals have generally settled the areas farther and farther from the river, until today even the mountainsides are packed with everything from luxury high-rises to tin-roof shacks.

In the valley, when people say "up," they mean *away from the river* (eastward on the east side, westward on the west side); "down" means *toward the river*. Streets and roads are arranged more or less as a grid where the geography allows it. Those roadways that take you away from the river (east-west) and toward or up the mountainsides are called *calles* (KAH-jheyss) and are numbered sequentially, beginning with Calle 1 in the Poblado neighborhood in the south, to Calle 50 running through the middle of the city center, and to Calle 126 at the city's northern border. Roads running parallel to the river (north-south) are called *carreras,* also numbered sequentially, with Carrera 1 at the top of the mountains on the east side, Carrera 43 running through the city center, Carrera 80 at

the foot of the western mountainside, and higher numbers as you climb up the mountain. On the mountainsides themselves, most of which were not settled according to the city's plans but rather were settled illegally, the grid system breaks down severely, with houses and streets emerging wherever there was space, according to nobody's plans. Many of the steep, winding roads are little more than mud paths or concrete stairways; some residents have to climb more than 300 stairs to get home.

The municipality of Medellín (meh-dheh-JHEEN) is the heart of the Aburrá Valley. The whole valley has a population of about 3.5 million people, and all but about one million of them live in the city of Medellín itself. The city is divided administratively into six zones, 16 *comunas* (wards), and 271 *barrios* (neighborhoods), with between 11 and 26 barrios in each comuna; the city has a few rural zones, called *corregimientos,* as well. The zones are the Northeastern (Zone 1: Comunas 1-4), Northwestern (Zone 2: Comunas 5-7), East Central (Zone 3: Comunas 8-10), West Central (Zone 4: Comunas 11-13), Southeastern (Zone 5: Comuna 14), and Southwestern (Zone 6: Comunas 15-16).

As a general rule, and with a few key exceptions, the farther from the river and the higher the elevation, the poorer the barrio and the lower the quality of life (and during some periods, the greater the violence). Aside from overcrowding and poverty, many residents of these peripheral barrios suffer a major geological risk: mudslides. Heavy rains wreak havoc on the clay mountains, blocking roads nearly every time it rains, and occasionally wiping out as many as a dozen families living in mountainside shacks. (The dark joke in Medellín is that, on the hillside communities, the only law that functions is the law of gravity.[7]) The bright side of this region's climate, however, is the temperature.

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[7] Alonso Salazar J., *No Nacimos Pa' Semilla: La Cultura de las Bandas Juveniles de Medellín*, 190.

With an elevation of about 1,500 meters (4,900 feet) above sea level and a humid

subtropical climate, the valley enjoys year-round temperatures hovering around 22ºC

(about 72ºF) and rarely venturing beyond a range of about 15ºC–30ºC (60ºF–80ºF). For

this reason Medellín is known as the City of Eternal Spring. (During the city's most

violent times, another dark joke played on the Spanish version of this nickname: "La

Ciudad de la Eterna Primavera" became "La Ciudad de la Eterna Balacera," or the City of

the Eternal Shootout. A similar joke played on the city's other nickname: "Medallo," or

Medallion — a reference to the region's pride and its historically important role in the

country's gold trade — became "Metrallo," which would translate, roughly, as Machine-

Gun City.)

As the rains raise the river and carry you northward on your floating tour of the

valley, you'll pass housing of all economic levels, from wood-and-tin shacks near (and

some in) the city dump to middle-class brick houses to high-class high-rises. You'll float

by the city center, under a few bridges, and past a few industrial centers. And soon the

river will carry you out of the city limits, past the Metro's last stop, and through the

northern municipalities of Bello, Copacabana, Girardota, and Barbosa. After that, the

river's name changes to Porcí and flows into the Nechí River, which spills into

Antioquia's largest river, the Cauca, which continues north through the department of

Bolivar and merges with largest river in the country, the Magdalena. The Magdalena

River is the boundary between the departments of Magdalena and Bolivar, then, at the

coast, between Magdalena and Atlántico; its mouth is the port city of Barranquilla, and its

waters carry you into the Caribbean Sea — where the ships of conquistadors, and then

pirates, were the first to link the international trade in Colombian goods with violence

and social and territorial control, a link that has only strengthened since then.

2.1.2. Bad-Asses, Punks, and Low-Lifes Take Over the City

The textile factories that opened in metropolitan Medellín in the early part of the

20th century produced a working class that enjoyed decent wages and benefits. This

industrial precedent, plus the urban-planning system and the business-friendly regulatory

climate, attracted light industry to what many industrialists considered one of the most

progressive cities in the country. Together with the Catholic Church, the families who

monopolized the different industrial sectors helped to build a paternalistic social order

based on conservative values: "A model of social control based in early industrial sites

and factories was developed, and its discipline-oriented content, inspired by the work

ethic, spread over the rest of the city."[8] Self-discipline, and loyalty and respect for

authority, became the key both to getting and keeping a job that provided a reasonably

comfortable living, and to getting into heaven. The strength of these social structures was

such that La Violencia, Colombia's civil war — like the Wars of Independence and the

War of a Thousand Days before it — hardly touched Medellín proper during the late

1940s and 1950s: there was little violence within the city limits and the city's economy

continued growing strongly. While the elite industrialists were themselves mostly

Conservative supporters, they "prohibited partisan propaganda in their factories" and

continued to hire supporters of the Liberal party without serious discrimination: "the

Medellín elite consciously promoted an image of the city as an 'oasis' of peaceful

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[8] Ramiro Ceballos Melguizo, "The Evolution of Armed Conflict in Medellín," *Latin American Perspectives* 116, no. 28 (2001): 110.

capitalist productivity, beneficial to the nation, thanks to the social responsibility of its major industrialists."[9] (La Violencia was fought nationwide between members of the Liberal and Conservative parties over the course of about a decade, ending in 1958 with a power-sharing agreement called the National Front, through which Liberals and Conservatives would alternate power. The National Front excluded other political parties, however, and the most radical of them took to the mountains to begin another civil war that continues today.)

Beginning in the 1960s, inexpensive exports from Asian manufacturers began to depress demand for Medellín's products on the global market, while the same cheap Asian imports into Colombia began to undercut its manufacturing sector. At the same time, coffee prices on the world market were beginning to decline, and the resulting economic pressure on smallholder farmers in Colombia's coffee axis led to a rapid increase in migration to the city. Supply of labor was rapidly outpacing the availability of jobs, and despite Medellín's record of success in urban planning, the city simply was not prepared to absorb the influx of rural migrants:

> Squatter neighbourhoods sprouted up the green hillsides on either side of the Medellín River, especially in the northern Aburrá Valley: warrens of hand-built dwellings constructed from cheap brick, wood, cinder blocks or *bareque* [cane and mud], interconnected by steep flights of steps. … Within a few decades these fast-growing slums would house half the city's 2.2 million population. Meagre state resources were funneled through neighbourhood committees, the Juntas de Acción Comunal. But the fact that police and army units were sent in to demolish hillside settlements was a symptom of the crisis of authority on the city's new frontiers.[10]

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[9] Forrest Hylton, "Medellín's Makeover."

[10] Ibid.

These "invasions" (the word used in Colombia for mass migrations into illegal settlements) drove the growth of Medellín's population, which nearly tripled between 1951 and 1973, and a created a "parallel city" of "pirate barrios" representing the emerging divide between center and periphery.[11] For the first time, workers, both new migrants and longtime residents, the uneducated as well as those with university degrees, faced a job market that simply could not absorb them. As in many other countries during the 1960s, there was campus and labor unrest and growing radicalization among a small but vocal minority. In short, the traditional authority structures that had helped maintain social order in Medellín were breaking down and the quality of life was deteriorating for much of the population.

Despite its conservative exterior, Medellín had always had a vibrant but repressed subculture that suggested a degree of quiet tolerance for vice. Prostitution and alcoholism were common, with several red-light districts in the city, and especially in the tougher neighborhoods marijuana consumption was common among the boys and young men who hung out on street corners with their buddies, a formation commonly referred to as a *gallada* [ga-JHAH-da]. The galladas, a much looser collection of people than a crew or a gang, were a social problem mostly for the communities they hung out in, since street fights between galladas were not uncommon, and they were known as well to commit robberies and sometimes to harass and rape women. Medellín had a high rate of imprisonment as well, mostly from petty crimes committed by galladas or by *pillos* [PEE-jhohs], the generic slang term for a young punk or a small-time crook who was not

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[11] Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas, "Comentario a la Investigación 'Estado del Arte Sobre Política Criminal y Violencia Juvenil'," ["Comments on the Study 'The State of the Art in Crime Policy and Juvenile Violence',"] in *Balance de los Estudios Sobre Violencia en Antioquia*, ed. Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas (Medellín, Colombia: Municipio de Medellín y Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 2001), 76.

necessarily part of a gang but who was certainly involved in crime.[12] During the 1960s, as stronger drugs became more readily available and overcrowding began causing serious social problems, *encapuchados* or *capuchos* (hooded vigilantes) and "civil defense" groups (death squads) began appearing in some neighborhoods — often with the approval or direct support of the city's conservative elites — to undertake "social cleansing," that is, to "clean up" these human sources of public disorder: drug addicts, prostitutes, homosexuals, vagrants, criminals, homeless children, and other low-status groups and individuals who were sometimes referred to as *desechables* (disposable people).[13]

Crime, however, was not just the domain of pillos, galladas, and desechables. Smuggling was common as well, often as a side job by otherwise respected businessmen, gentlemen who went to the best parties and were members of the best social clubs. They smuggled everything from stolen cars and appliances to emeralds and cigarettes, using specialized routes to get some goods (e.g. cars and appliances) that had been stolen from North America into Colombia, other goods (e.g. emeralds and marijuana) out of Colombia to North America, and yet other goods (e.g. cigarettes) to different places within Colombia or between Colombia and the tax-free zones of places such as Panama. Some of these smugglers were family-based, but others were more powerful but discreet criminal consortia involving corrupt officials and otherwise legitimate businessmen, sometimes called *pesados* (heavyweights) whose way of doing business was later to be typified by Medellín's mafia *oficinas* (see Chapter 5).

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[12] John Jaime Correa Ramírez, "Memorias de Pillos y Violencias."

[13] Luis Fernando Quijano Moreno, Interview No. 5.

Table 2-1. Brief Glossary of Key Spanish, Lunfardo, and Parlache Terms

autodefensa: self-defense group; sometimes synonymous with (right-wing) paramilitary, but there have been both leftist and nonaligned community self-defense or civil-defense groups as well

banda: gang, usually a crime gang or an organized-crime ring, with a relatively closed membership and somewhat formal organizational structure

barrio: neighborhood; the smallest administrative unit on official maps (whose borders may differ from popular understandings of the borders); there are 271 *barrios* in Medellín as of 2009

bazuco: cocaine paste, which is cheap and highly addictive

camaján: an earlier term for *malevo*

capucho: a slang term for *encapuchado*

chichipato: a "low-life" individual or gang member who commits crime in his or her own neighborhood, often but not exclusively as a result of a drug addiction

combo: crew or street gang; less organized and with looser membership requirements than a *banda*

comuna: ward; an administrative unit containing a group of barrios; there are 16 *comunas* in Medellín

corregimiento: rural subdivision; an administrative unit into which *departamentos* are divided

departamento: department, or province (like a U.S. State); an administrative unit headed by a governor; Colombia has 32 departamentos; Medellín is the capital of the department of Antioquia

desachables: "disposable" people; members of low-status social groups, such as drug dealers, addicts, prostitutes, homosexuals, and street children; often the target of social cleansing

encapuchado: hooded vigilante, usually associated with social cleansing but sometimes as part of a death squad, hit squad, or other armed group

escuadrón de la muerte: death squad; kills for political or social reasons, rather than for hire

gallada: a loose collection of young men, sometimes involved in crime; more closed and organized than a parche, but more open and less organized than a pandilla or a banda

gato: cat, slang term for *guerrilla*

guerrilla: a member of an insurgent group who engages in guerrilla warfare, or the group itself

Junta de Acción Comunal (JAC): Community Action Board; an elected body that represents communities at the barrio level or smaller

Junta Administradora Local (JAL): Local Administration Board; an elected body that represents communities at the comuna level, usually in cooperation with the JACs within its jurisdiction

limpieza social: social cleansing, the killing or displacing of desechables

malevo: a "bad-ass" street tough who wears flashy attire, carries a knife, and manages relatively small-time criminal activities; mostly predates the 1980s

oficina: office; a term used to refer to a criminal organization that connects customers with contractors (often for assassinations)

paisa: a person born and raised in or around Antioquia; think of them as the "Texans" of Colombia; the coffee-advertising character Juan Valdez is always portrayed in typical *paisa* attire

pandilla: crew or crime gang, similar to a *combo,* usually more open and less organized than a *banda*

para: short for *paramilitar,* or paramilitary

paraco: another term for a *para*

paramilitar: a member of a paramilitary group, or the group itself; usually aligned with the state

pájaro: "bird," slang for *para*

parche: "patch," slang for a group of friends or the place they hang out

parce: "bro," "mate," "buddy," "dude"; a name you call a friend or a member of your *parche*

pesado: "heavyweight," slang for a man with a lot of power, sometimes involved in organized crime

pillo: small-time crook, or young punk involved in crime

pistolero: gunman

sicariato: assassination, or the social phenomenon of young people working as hired assassins

sicario: hired assassin, usually working as part of a hit squad or gang of assassins

zona: zone; an administrative unit containing one to four comunas; there are 6 *zonas* in Medellín

NOTE: Common usage of some terms (e.g. banda, combo, pandilla) may differ from these more formalized definitions, which are intended as a rough guide to how the author uses them in this work.

But in the 1950s through the early 1970s, the most visible sign that an underworld existed — standing somewhere between the high-society gentleman smugglers and the "low-life" disposable people — was a particular, iconic figure of Medellín's rougher cityscapes. Picture a Texan. Take off the cowboy hat and six-shooter. Make him a guy who carries a knife and knows how to use it. He walks like a 1980s gangster, dresses like a 1970s pimp, and smokes weed like a 1960s hippie. He talks a combination of street jive and Pig Latin. And he listens to tango. With some exaggeration, you now have in your mind an image of the stereotypical Colombian *malevo,* a word that translates, roughly, as "bad-ass." In the 1950s and into the 1960s, this figure was sometimes called a *camaján* (kah-mah-HAHN), which is sometimes translated (inaccurately) as "pimp," but *malevo* was the more common term by the 1970s.[14] You're picturing him as a Texan because *paisas* (people from Antioquia and some nearby regions) are a lot like Texans: proud, provincial, and territorial about where they live, and, in their social relations, friendly and hospitable but pragmatic and instrumental. The paisa malevos displayed these traits with an aggressive self-confidence that, according to their chroniclers, was hard to miss.

Hanging out in their galladas, many of the camajanes and malevos spoke to each other in a street jive that was a modified form of Lunfardo, the ghetto slang that was spoken in the slums and outskirts of Buenos Aires and Montevideo during the late 1910s and 1920s when street poetry was first set to tango music. Soon thereafter, Lunfardo-laced tango records from Argentina and Uruguay introduced the rest of the Spanish-speaking world to a whole new set of slang terms (most having to do with sex, money, and life on the street) and to a Pig Latin-like way of playing with words whereby

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[14] John Jaime Correa Ramírez, "Memorias de Pillos y Violencias."

syllables were reversed *(amigo* becomes *gomía*, *barrio* becomes *rioba,* etc.).[15] Tango

records were readily available in Medellín beginning in the 1930s, and paisas have been

crazy about the music and the culture surrounding it ever since: Medellín has a tango

museum, tango clubs, tango schools, tango competitions, tango festivals, tango-themed

restaurants, and even tango-playing dive bars in gritty neighborhoods. The genre's

greatest star, Carlos Gardel, died in a plane crash in Medellín while on tour in 1935, and

the city has adopted him as their own. Although the music was refined or rewritten for

upper-class audiences in the 1930s and 1940s, the most beloved tango songs among

common people remained those that spoke to themes that the camajanes and malevos of

Medellín could well relate to: street brawls, unfaithful women, broken hearts, dreams of a

better life. (The first tango song ever recorded with lyrics was Carlos Gardel's 1917

rendition of "Mi Noche Triste," or "My Sad Night," which tells the heartbreaking tale of

a pimp who has been dumped by his favorite whore — anticipating Three 6 Mafia's hip-

hop hit, "It's Hard Out Here for a Pimp," by almost 90 years.) Medellín's malevos

listened to tango in the 1950s through the 1970s the way American gangsters listen to

"gangsta"-style hip-hop today; it was an integral part of the underworld culture.[16]

These Lunfardo-speaking bad-assess and their imitators were the public face of

Medellín's underworld up through the early 1970s, when the small-time trade in

contraband cigarettes and marijuana started to be transformed by the global expansion of

the marijuana trade. Before then, however, the malevo was not part of any roving gang of

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[15] Héctor Romay, *Diccionario de Lunfardo y Terminología Popular [Dictionary of Lunfardo and Folk Terminology]* (Buenos Aires: Bureau Editor, 2004).

[16] Fernell Ocampo Múnera, *Hablemos de Grandes Valores de Tango y Algo Más [Let's Talk about Tango's Greatest Figures and More]* (Manizales, Colombia: Editorial Manigraf, 2005), 256; Carolina Santamaría Delgado, "Bambuco, Tango and Bolero: Music, Identity, and Class Struggles in Medellín, Colombia, 1930-1953" (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2006), ch. 4.

young assassins (as he would be in the 1980s) but rather was a small-timer working alone or with the rest of his gallada, carrying out *ad hoc* criminal operations with other small-timers, or taking contracts from the heavyweights. The malevos made their money illegally and sometimes violently, and they showed off whatever wealth they had in style, but their control of vice and their participation in illegal smuggling "never took on the nature of the crime business or created social repercussions that would turn them into a problem of public order, and thus the city absorbed this colorful personage as part of the urban landscape."[17]

As Medellín approached the 1980s, however, the malevos were becoming an anachronism, mere predecessors to the real bad-asses who emerged during that violent decade: the assassin gangs, the drug dealers, the mafia enforcers. An influx of refugees from rural war zones brought to the hillside squatter settlements a typically rural and paisa way of speaking, which young people, forging new identities through their shared marginalization, mixed together with the malevos' tango-inspired Lunfardo. The result was a distinctly paisa urban slang that became known as Parlache, the language of Medellín's youth and gang culture in the 1980s. Parlache slang is what was spoken in popular books and films that portrayed Medellín's youth and the notorious violence of the era, facilitating the spread of Parlache, first to Medellín's universities and then out to the rest of the country. The film *Rodrigo D: No Future,* for example, accurately portrayed Medellín's "Generación No Futuro" (the No-Future Generation, people who were adolescents during the 1980s). It tells the story of a *punkero* (a punk-rocker) whose only ambition is to form a punk band he could play drums in. Filming on location, the director,

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[17] Ramiro Ceballos Melguizo, "The Evolution of Armed Conflict in Medellín."

a Medellín native, used young people from some of the city's most violent barrios in the north of the city, and the young actors more or less improvised the story in front of the camera, talking the way they normally talked, acting the way they normally acted, and dressing the way they normally dressed. The story was fictional but, to their generation, familiar: The guys in the neighborhood deal drugs and steal cars, are frequently on the run from somebody, sometimes get killed, and sometimes kill out of boredom. While he himself does not engage in such behavior, Rodrigo does hang out with the punk gangsters from time to time, but he has no real friends, nobody to really trust. He also has no job and can barely afford drumsticks, but he holds out hope of finding a used drum kit he might one day buy cheap. He can't sleep at night, and he wanders the streets during the day. He's bored and depressed, and in the end he takes his own future away. In real life, half of the movie's main actors didn't live past age 20 themselves.[18] But their foul-mouthed slang caught on in the country's popular culture, living on as Colombia's adopted slang.

In one of the peripheral barrios I visited, a young woman told me in an informal conversation that, some years ago, she was invited to somebody's 21st birthday party, which was being planned as a grand community affair. She said that, when she asked why the birthday was such a big deal, the person who had invited her looked at her funny and said, "Because we never get to celebrate a 21st birthday!": too few of the young men in the neighborhood had ever lived that long, so a 21st birthday was something to celebrate. This was surely an exaggeration, but not, perhaps, by much. In the 1980s, tens of thousands of people in Medellín died violent deaths, the majority of them young men

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[18] *Rodrigo D: No Futuro,* DVD, directed by Victor Manuel Gaviria (Medellín, Colombia: Liberty Multimedia, 1989).

from the overcrowded hillside barrios, especially in the north of the city, where social conditions were deteriorating rapidly, traditional authority was being replaced by a materialist culture, the formal economy was not providing adequate employment, and a lot of young people, bored, unemployed, and poor, turned to the jobs that were most readily available to those willing to take on the risks: selling drugs, stealing cars and motorcycles, robbing people at gunpoint, and even assassinating people for pay. Those who resisted the lure of the underground economy had few options: stay in the barrio, try to find a job or stay in school, keep your head low, avoid stray bullets, and hope you don't accidentally get on anyone's bad side (the wrong glance at the wrong person at the wrong time could get you killed); or save yourself by leaving the barrio and waiting things out (many families throughout the city sent their teenage boys and girls to live with relatives outside of Medellín). Many who stayed survived, but a lot of others died in the crossfire.

Drug use skyrocketed. Most commonly, people smoked marijuana. The few who could afford it snorted cocaine. The very poorest, however, smoked *bazuco,* cocaine paste that was an intermediate product during the production of cocaine; it was readily available, relatively cheap, and extremely addictive. It had a similar effect on Medellín's poorest neighborhoods in the 1980s as crack cocaine did in the United States. Many addicts would do almost anything (robbery, petty theft, prostitution) to get the money they needed for their next hit, and crime committed by bazuco addicts skyrocketed. (Bazuco addicts were sometimes called *chichipatos,* a term that was used to mean, more or less, "low-lifes" but that usually referred to people or gangs who committed crimes in their own neighborhoods, often as a result of drug addiction.) Another popular drug was

glue, sniffed (then and today) mostly by street children to numb the body and mind.

Another popular film in Colombia, *Vendadora de Roses (The Rose Seller),* by the same

man who directed *Rodrigo D* — who used the same method of hiring young people from

the barrios where the film was set — portrayed the life of glue-sniffing street children

(and, as with *Rodrigo D,* most of the film's child actors had fallen to the same fate as

much of the rest of their generation: they were dead or in prison within a few years of

filming). Chichipatos and glue-sniffing street children became common targets of

vigilante violence: they were at the top of the list of people who were considered

"disposable."

The blame for all of this social disruption cannot be lain at the feet of Medellín's

most famous criminal, Pablo Escobar. "El Patrón," "El Doctor," or "Don Pablo," as he

was variously known throughout his career, did not create the social and economic

conditions that made life so difficult for so many in Medellín's poorest barrios; in fact,

for some he provided the means — money, identity, respect — to escape those

conditions. His main contribution to his hometown and to his country, however, was to

vastly accelerate the social degeneration brought about by those conditions. His story is

worth telling in some detail, not only because his story was the story of the 1980s, but

also because it set the stage for all that was to follow in Medellín and because the

convergence of threats seen worldwide today — the use of insurgent and terrorist tactics

for economic rather than purely political purposes, the shifting of alliances between and

among different types of illicit actor (today a guerrilla, tomorrow a trafficker, the next

day a paramilitary), etc. — was anticipated, and in many cases created, by the

innovations of Escobar's Medellín Cartel.

2.1.3. Pablo Escobar Builds the Medellín Cartel

On 2 December 1993, Pablo Escobar Gaviria placed a telephone call to his son, Juan Pablo, who was in hiding with the rest of his family at a luxury apartment building in Bogotá. Sixteen months after his dramatic escape from his custom-built luxury prison, Escobar's family remained among the few loyalists the fugitive drug lord could trust unconditionally. Over the course of more than a year, in the most massive manhunt in Colombian history, a special unit composed of the National Police and the Colombian Army — along with rival cartel leaders and a shadowy death squad formed explicitly for the purpose — had succeeded in dismantling much of Escobar's narcoterrorist empire. At least a hundred of his closest associates had been killed, dozens of others captured or surrendered, his fortunes dwindling, much of his property destroyed by fire and bombs. Juan Pablo warned his father not to stay on the phone long enough for police to trace the call. But Escobar must have felt isolated, perhaps needing the comfort of a familial voice. Maybe he had gotten cocky, or lost his razor-sharp instinct for survival. Or maybe he was just tired of being alive. Whatever the reason, this much is clear: He stayed on the phone too long, and the call was traced to the house in an upscale neighborhood of Medellín where Escobar was hiding. At 3:15 p.m., 23 special police troops surrounded and entered the building. "I'm hanging up," were Escobar's last known words, "because something funny's going on here."[19]

Pablo Escobar Gaviria was born in 1949 in Rionegro, a mixed-income small town less than an hour's drive from downtown Medellín, to a farmer and a school teacher.

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[19] The account of Escobar's last day is based primarily on Gabriel García Márquez, *News of a Kidnapping,* trans. Edith Grossman (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 289; and Kevin Fedarko, "Pablo Escobar's Dead End," *Time Magazine,* 13 December 1993.

Known as an ambitious child in his youth, he was driven to overcome the poverty his

mother had always complained about, and some say he'd always dreamed of becoming

president of Colombia. Local lore suggests Escobar got his start in crime as a schoolboy

stealing gravestones, sand-blasting the names off of them, and selling the slabs to

Panamanian smugglers, although this claim has never been verified. Whatever the case,

he apparently made a name for himself in the early 1970s during the "Marlboro Wars"

among rival gangs trafficking in smuggled cigarettes. From cigarettes to marijuana, from

marijuana to cocaine: at each step in his ascent through the ranks of small-time criminal

gangs, he proved himself a worthy and ruthless adversary. In this sense, he was not all

that different from the other cocaine traffickers who were emerging in 1970s Colombia:

> Most leading cocaine capos, including Pablo Escobar, got their start in the late 1960s as underlings in networks of contraband imports of U.S. manufactured goods run by older contrabandistas. These networks linked Miami and Colón, Panama, to Turbo, Antioquia's Caribbean port in Urabá, as well as the string of towns in the Antioquian lowlands leading out to it. In keeping with regional tradition, Escobar and his generation were ambitious contraband entrepreneurs: Each had his own labor networks based on kinship and friendship, and collectively, they quickly displaced or killed the old men who had trained them.[20]

But Escobar was particularly ruthless in this regard. He made his name by specializing

more in protection and enforcement than in the development of production or distribution

systems. He threatened to kill anyone who got in his way or refused his demands. In

1976, he was arrested on drug charges, but the case documents were lost after a few years

and he was never prosecuted; the judges and prosecutors involved in the case had

reported receiving death threats; the arresting officer was killed years later. His threats

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[20] Forrest Hylton, "Medellín: The Peace of the Pacifiers."

were not idle; few dared to defy him, because they knew the consequences.[21] Mark

Bowden, who wrote a best-selling book about Escobar, has emphasized that "Pablo

Escobar didn't create the cocaine business."

> He had no entrepreneurial or management skills to speak of. It was just that everybody was afraid of him. If anybody discovered a trade route or a new way of doing things, Pablo would come knocking and say, "OK, you work for me now." You couldn't say no to him.[22]

Others have made the same point: "By the mid-1970s, [Escobar] had established a

monopoly on protection. … Others were better at exporting cocaine — purchasing coca

paste in Bolivia and Peru, flying it to Colombia, and refining it in clandestine laboratories

before shipping it to market — but they had to pay Escobar for each kilo they moved."[23]

By 1978, Escobar was wealthy enough to buy a country house and ranch on the

outskirts of Medellín and convert the property into an amusement park, a zoo for exotic

animals, and the headquarters of what would become known as the Medellín Cartel. A

cartel is a "consortium of independent organizations formed to limit competition by

controlling the production and distribution of a product or service,"[24] and the Medellín

Cartel, unlike later trafficking organizations that would be called by the same term, was

exactly that.

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[21] Margaret DiCanio, *Encyclopedia of Violence: Frequent, Commonplace, Unexpected* (New York: iUniverse, 2004); Douglas Cruickshank, "Death of a Drug Lord: In 'Killing Pablo,' Mark Bowden Details the 16-Month Game of Cat and Mouse That Finally Took Down Medellín Cartel Founder Pablo Escobar—With the Help of the U.S. Government," Salon, http://archive.salon.com/news/feature/2001 /05/24/bowden/print.html (accessed 13 April 2009).

[22] Ibid.

[23] Forrest Hylton, "Medellín: The Peace of the Pacifiers."

[24] "cartel," Dictionary.com, WordNet 3.0, Princeton University, http://dictionary.reference.com/ browse/cartel (accessed April 12, 2009).

Fabio Ochoa Restrepo was a horse breeder and successful businessman who ran a side business smuggling stolen home appliances and contraband whiskey.[25] In the mid-1970s, Escobar persuaded Ochoa's sons, Jorge Luis, Juan David, and Fabio Jr., to use their family's smuggling routes and contacts to start transporting cocaine into the United States. Jorge and his brothers took over the smuggling business from their father in 1976 and grew it into an international distribution system for cocaine. By 1981, however, the Ochoa system was at its limit; the Ochoas and Escobar needed a way to move their growing backlog of cocaine to market. That's where Carlos Enrique Lehder Rivas came in. Lehder got his start in crime supplying his family's used-car business in Medellín with stolen vehicles. After moving into the North American market in the mid-1970s, he found himself in a U.S. prison on a charge of car theft. There, he met George Jung, a marijuana trafficker whose key innovation had been to smuggle large amounts of pot into the United States from Mexico using small aircraft flying under-radar. After they were paroled, Lehder and Jung formed a small-time cocaine-smuggling partnership whose sole purpose was to raise enough money to buy a small airplane and a small island in the Bahamas so they could develop a big-time narcotics transport network. They succeeded. From Norman's Cay island, they began transporting to Miami ever-larger shipments of Colombian cocaine on behalf of Ochoa, Escobar, and others, including José Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, a former emerald smuggler who got hooked in to the cocaine business in Bogotá and met Escobar in 1976. In April 1981, Ochoa and Escobar called a meeting

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[25] Information for this and the next five paragraphs comes from Guy Gugliotta and Jeff Leen, *Kings of Cocaine: Inside the Medellín Cartel, an Astonishing True Story of Murder, Money, and International Corruption* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989); Patrick Clawson and Rensselaer W. Lee, *The Andean Cocaine Industry,* 1st ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Margaret DiCanio, *Encyclopedia of Violence: Frequent, Commonplace, Unexpected*; Forrest Hylton, "Medellín: The Peace of the Pacifiers"; and other sources as cited.

to clarify the business and financial relationships among the numerous organizations, and the cartel arrangement was formalized. Drugs flowed into Miami, cocaine prices plummeted there, and demand for the cartel's product soared. They were earning millions of dollars with each shipment. The cartel set up a system of "bundling" small-time suppliers' products into larger shipments for a fee, giving even mom-and-pop cocaine producers an easy way to sell as little as a kilo at a time wholesale. Escobar was the main enforcer of these deals, and he took upon himself as well the responsibility of maintaining a favorable political and legal climate in Medellín and Colombia as a whole.

To maintain that climate, Escobar used two things: *plata* and *plomo*. In Medellín, *plata,* or silver, is slang for "cash"; *plomo,* or lead, is, obviously, what the business end of a bullet is made of. To stay out of prison and keep his operations safe from law enforcement, his men offered "plata o plomo": a generous bribe if the judge, police officer, journalist, prosecutor, or politician were cooperative, a rain of bullets if they were not. The *plata* came from the drug trade — hundreds of millions of dollars per month by the mid-1980s — and the *plomo* came from the poor barrios of his home town, where small street gangs were contracted on an *ad hoc* basis to carry out select assassinations and other acts of violence. By the end of the decade, it was estimated that more than 3,000 young people in Medellín were working as hired assassins, members of one of the dozens of assassination gangs that had emerged.

Escobar could recruit from these barrios because he was loved and admired by many who lived there (a historical fact denied by many today). In addition to being a poor-kid-made-good to whom they could relate, Escobar was known as a wealthy businessman who was very generous with his *plata:* "Don Pablo" had funded a social-

works program called Medellín sin Tugurios (Medellín without Slums), and built soccer

fields and stadiums, churches, schools, and even entire barrios where poor people living

in shacks could be relocated into brick houses with electricity and running water. He

owned a newspaper, *Medellín Cívico,* and a television program, *Antioquia al Día,* to

publicize the good works that he and his fellow "businessmen" were undertaking (and to

contrast those good works with that of "corrupt" and "lazy" politicians). To launch his

political career, Escobar also founded a populist political movement, Civismo en Marcha

(Good Citizenship on the March). His goal at the time was to build his image as a paisa

Robin Hood. And he succeeded.

But that public image hid a much darker side, which was to be exposed only after

his disastrous entry into politics. That darker side involved recruiting teenagers from the

poor barrios where he was most popular, primarily in the Northeast zone, to become paid

killers. Their tactical innovation (later adopted worldwide) was the drive-by shooting,

which required four elements: a weapon, a motorcycle, a driver, and the *parrillero,* the

shooter, who would sit or stand on the *parrillo,* or grill, on the back of the motorcycle and

fire at the intended victim as they drove past without stopping. But that method was not

used exclusively: any method that could get somebody killed and get the killer some

money would end up being employed. In response to the enormous money-making

potential of joining a hired-assassin gang, many young people formed themselves into

groupings variously called *bandas, combos,* or *pandillas,* terms that all translate roughly

as "gang," or into small "business offices," called simply *oficinas* — a natural evolution

from the galladas, malevos, punks, pesados, and vigilantes of the earlier era.[26] The drive-

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[26] See discussion of these terms in the next section.

by shootings and other crude methods used by these young assassins for their contracts

from Escobar (and from others who wanted somebody dead) often resulted in the deaths

of innocent bystanders, which frequently began a cycle of revenge killings. As a result,

violence became commonplace in Medellín's peripheral barrios during the 1980s, and it

began to eat away at the social fabric, tear families apart, and shift power relations away

from those with authority (parents, priests) toward those with weapons, daring, and no

scruples. Gabriel García Márquez summarized the effect of easy money on Colombian

society. "The idea prospered," he wrote: "The law is the greatest obstacle to happiness; it

is a waste of time learning to read and write; you can live a better, more secure life as a

criminal than as a law-abiding citizen — in short, this was the social breakdown typical

of all undeclared wars."[27] The social breakdown and pervasive insecurity led many

people in the city's peripheral barrios either to join or support whatever gang could

protect them, or to form vigilante and self-defense groups, which opened the doors to the

entry of guerrilla-backed militias later in the decade (see next section).

Meanwhile, and despite the populist image Escobar and his colleagues had so

carefully cultivated, the cartel members' own "addiction to the use of violence for

political ends"[28] ensured that their peaceful image would eventually be shattered by the

reality of what their businesses entailed. Two sets of events prompted Escobar to declare

war, first against the leftist rebels fighting an insurgency against the Colombian state, and

later against the Colombian state itself. The consequences would publicly expose the dark

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[27] Gabriel García Márquez, *News of a Kidnapping*.

[28] Patrick Clawson and Rensselaer W. Lee, *The Andean Cocaine Industry*.

side of the Medellín Cartel and force Escobar out of public philanthropy and politics and into hiding for the rest of his life.

The first event was a kidnapping. By the 1980s, Colombia's leftist guerrillas had turned to kidnapping and extortion to finance their insurgency. In late 1981, a small urban insurgent group, the M-19 (Movimiento 19 de April, the April 19th Movement) — whose taking of the Palace of Justice several years later would, ironically, be partly funded by Escobar — made the mistake of getting on Escobar's bad side by kidnapping Martha Nieves Ochoa, the sister of the Ochoa brothers, and demanding a very high ransom for her release. The cartel refused to pay M-19 even a single peso. Instead, on 3 December 1981, they sent an airplane over a sports stadium during a high-profile soccer match to rain leaflets onto the crowd below. The leaflet announced the formation of a new organization called Muerte a Secuestadores (MAS), or Death to Kidnappers. It was signed by Escobar and more than two hundred of the country's other top "businessman" — drug traffickers, every one, although this was not yet publicly known — declaring their intention to put an end to kidnapping by Colombia's insurgents.

> Its stated objective was the public and immediate execution of all those involved in kidnappings, beginning from the date of the message. The statement offered 20 million pesos ([then about] $300,000) for information leading to the capture of a kidnapper and promised that the kidnappers would be hanged from a tree, shot and marked with the MAS's sign. Kidnappers in jail could expect to be murdered; if that was impossible, retribution would fall on friends in jail and on close family members.[29]

The Ochoa sister was released within three months, unharmed, and without the M-19 having received any ransom money. (Ironically, she would become a go-between in

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[29] Margaret DiCanio, *Encyclopedia of Violence: Frequent, Commonplace, Unexpected*, 308.

negotiations to release hostages kidnapped by Pablo Escobar later in the decade.[30]) But MAS continued its killing spree nevertheless, targeting insurgents, suspected insurgents, leftist sympathizers, and suspected sympathizers all over the country. Copycat groups emerged, and soon any number of homicides having nothing at all to do with kidnappers were being attributed to this new death squad, a convenient cover for personal grudges and professional vendettas. MAS enjoyed some degree of public support — few would shed tears over the death of a kidnapper — and Lehder, who used far too much of his own product for Escobar's comfort, publicly bragged about his links to the death squad and his contributions to the Liberal Party. MAS thus became the first death squad to mix narcotrafficking with paramilitary counterinsurgency and coercive propaganda against establishment politics, an early prototype for the paramilitary and mafia groups that would join forces some fifteen years later.

The second set of events leading to Escobar's fall from social grace was an election campaign. In June 1982 Escobar ran for and was elected to the Chamber of Deputies as an alternate for Liberal Party member Jairo Ortega Ramírez, boss of the political machine in a town just south of Medellín. As a public official who could stand in for Ortega when Ortega was unavailable, Escobar enjoyed both a legitimate public office and official immunity from prosecution for certain crimes. It was the highest — indeed the only — public office he would ever reach, and it was, at best, a consolation prize for Escobar. Powerful members of the Liberal Party considered the young drug traffickers (both Escobar and Lehder had entered politics) to be a danger not only to Colombia but likely to their own future careers in politics as well, given the great wealth and populist

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[30] Gabriel García Márquez, *News of a Kidnapping*, 87.

backing these "businessmen" enjoyed.[31] Among Escobar's strongest political critics was the charismatic and popular politician Luis Carlos Galán, a former minister of education and ambassador to Italy who had founded a dissident faction within the Liberal Party called Nuevo Liberalismo, or New Liberalism, in 1979. Escobar himself had tried to join the New Liberalism party in 1982, but Galán had learned about his secret involvement in the drug trade, exposed it to a crowd of 5,000 people in Medellín, and ejected Escobar from the party that same year.

For Escobar, whose identity had been wrapped up at least as much in politics as it was in trade, this was a devastating blow, a rejection of all the good works he had built his reputation upon, and he took it as a deep, personal insult. It was only after being kicked out of the New Liberalism party that Escobar ran for the Chamber of Deputies office as a Liberal Party candidate, "but he had not forgotten the insult and unleashed an all-out war against the state, and in particular against the New Liberalism."[32]

The source of the relentless increase in the homicide rates of Medellín and Colombia as a whole — which, within a decade, would place Colombia among the most violent countries in the world and Medellín in the company of cities such as Beirut — can be traced to the events of 1982 and 1983. After then-President Belisario Betancur appointed Senator Rodrigo Lara Bonilla as justice minister, as his government's New Liberalism representative, in August 1983, Ortega, in the Chamber of Deputies, tried to tarnish Lara Bonilla's reputation by claiming the justice minister had received large

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[31] Douglas Cruickshank, "Death of a Drug Lord: In 'Killing Pablo,' Mark Bowden Details the 16-Month Game of Cat and Mouse That Finally Took Down Medellín Cartel Founder Pablo Escobar — With the Help of the U.S. Government."

[32] Gabriel García Márquez, *News of a Kidnapping*, 21.

campaign contributions from drug dealers. "Lara Bonilla flung the accusation back at his accusers, and went on to raise questions about Pablo Escobar [Ortega's alternate] and the Death to Kidnappers movement."[33] The justice minister went on to issue indictments against Escobar, Lehder, and other members of the Medellín Cartel; the media started picking up stories about the drug lords and their influence in all aspects of polite society (politics, soccer, business, etc.); and the United States' requests for the extradition of Lehder and other Colombian traffickers under a treaty the two countries had recently signed was beginning to weigh heavily on the cartel leaders. Escobar withdrew from politics and went into hiding in January 1984. In March, a vast cocaine complex that the Ochoas had opened the previous year was busted in a dramatic operation run by a unit that reported to Lara Bonilla. On 30 April 1984, hit men from Los Quesitos, a Medellín hit squad, killed Lara Bonilla in Bogotá in a drive-by shooting, and the Betancur government began a massive crackdown on Escobar and other narcotraffickers in response; the president signed the outstanding extradition order for Lehder a week later. The response by the government was so strong that the leaders of the Medellín Cartel temporarily relocated to Panama, from where they sent a message to Betancur offering to close shop, forfeit all their assets to the state, surrender, and cooperate with crop-substitution and other government projects, in exchange for amnesty and a guarantee that they wouldn't be extradited to the United States. But political leaders balked at negotiating with criminals, the United States made it clear it opposed any such settlement, and the proposal was rejected.

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[33] Margaret DiCanio, *Encyclopedia of Violence: Frequent, Commonplace, Unexpected*, 310.

And so it went for the rest of the decade, a cat-and-mouse game in which the government was hit hard by the cartel, then hit the cartel hard in return, each side with proposals and counterproposals, kidnappings by the cartel, crackdowns by the government, back and forth. The cartel leaders took to referring to themselves publicly as The Extraditables, part of an effort to persuade the electorate that their political leaders were harming Colombian sovereignty by refusing to overturn the extradition treaty with the United States; in case persuasion didn't work, they applied "plata o plomo" to the same end. Judges and police were cowed, corrupted, or killed, especially after the Palace of Justice disaster in 1985, when the M-19 stormed the building that housed the Supreme Court, and the ensuing firefight with the Army left more than 100 hostages, including half of the 21 Supreme Court Justices, dead). The rule of law was soon almost completely broken, nowhere greater than in the city of Medellín. In September 1988, then-president Virgilio Barco made a speech that seemed to invite the traffickers to the bargaining table. Although they claimed the invitation was actually aimed at the emerging paramilitary groups, Barco administration officials nevertheless met with Medellín Cartel leaders several times over the next ten months to discuss a negotiated settlement — while at the same time preparing for Operation Primavera, a wide-ranging, and relatively successful, attack against the cartel's production facilities. The talks broke off on 18 August 1989, when Pablo Escobar collected on a political debt from the man who had ruined him politically seven years earlier. "Luis Carlos Galán, who was protected by eighteen well-armed bodyguards, was machine-gunned on the main square in the municipality of

Soacha, some ten kilometers from the presidential palace."[34] Galán had been running for

president in the 1990 election, and all indications seemed to suggest he would win.

After Galán's assassination, the bloodiest phase yet of Colombia's drug war

ensued: President Barco declared a state of emergency aimed at the narcotraffickers, and

the traffickers declared "absolute and total war against the government."[35] The rest of

1989 saw the Extraditables set off on a violent campaign of killing, bombing, and

kidnapping, while Barco created the Elite Corps, a squadron of 300 troops charged with

battling drug traffickers, which they did with enthusiasm and brutality. But during this

time of violence, the Extraditables also were in touch with a group of respected public

figures, known as the Notables, who passed an offer for settlement to the government. In

January 1990, the Extraditables, as a gesture, declared a truce, released some hostages,

handed laboratories and explosives over to the government, and offered, again, to end the

drug trade. During a two-month period of relative calm, official negotiations ensued —

but the administration was divided, the U.S. took a hard line, and, again, the negotiations

failed. The violence resumed.

In mid-1990, Galán's campaign manager, César Gaviria, won the presidential

election, took office on August 7, and beginning in September made serious efforts to

negotiate peace with the traffickers in terms acceptable to both sides. The main

achievement: surrender of the three Ochoa brothers (at the urging of their sisters),

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[34] Gabriel García Márquez, *News of a Kidnapping*, 22.

[35] The account of Escobar's surrender, imprisonment, and escape is drawn partly from an unpublished background paper the author wrote at the request of Amnesty Inernational in 1997, for which the author retained all rights. Sources for that paper incude: Alma Guillermoprieto, "Exit el Patrón," *The New Yorker* 69, no. 35 (1993): 72; Patrick Clawson and Rensselaer W. Lee, *The Andean Cocaine Industry*; Gabriel García Márquez, *News of a Kidnapping*; Guy Gugliotta and Jeff Leen, *Kings of Cocaine;* and Semana, "Yo Fui el Creador de los Pepes," ["I Was the Creator of the Pepes,"] 31 May 1994, 38.

between December 1990 and February 1991. They received immunity from extradition and relatively short jail terms.

The incarceration of the Ochoa brothers and other drug bosses did not result in an end to Colombia's violence, however — far from it. The decades-long civil war was still in full force. In the beginning of 1991, for example, guerrilla groups launched a coordinated offensive that Gabriel García Márquez called "the bloodiest escalation of guerrilla violence in the history of the country."[36] The army and the police responded in kind — with arbitrary arrests, torture, forced disappearances, executions, and massacres — targeting suspected guerrilla sympathizers, members of the left-wing Patriotic Union (UP: Unión Patriótica) political party and their families, and unarmed civilians living in areas where guerrillas were thought to be active. Paramilitary groups with ties to the security forces threatened and murdered journalists, teachers, students, judges, lawyers, union leaders, and the *desechables* ("disposable" people). Between the war of the narcotraffickers and the war of the guerrillas, combined with the everyday violence unleashed in cities such as Medellín by gangs of hired assassins and by regular citizens with guns and grudges, 1991 was the year when violence peaked in Colombia as a whole and Medellín in particular (that year, Medellín's violence was exceeded in the world only by that of Beirut, Lebanon).

Meanwhile, Pablo Escobar continued to pay young people from the slums of Medellín to murder police officers (during Escobar's career, at least 500 officers were assassinated in Medellín alone), and police officers and death squads continued to massacre young people from those same slums. Even after his cohorts from the cartel had

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[36] Gabriel García Márquez, *News of a Kidnapping*.

turned themselves in, Escobar continued to take and hold hostages, and he killed at least

one of them to improve his bargaining position. His car and truck bombs killed innocent

passersby in addition to his political targets. In March 1991, he threatened to dynamite

into rubble the historic district of Cartagena de Indias on Colombia's Caribbean coast if

police operations in Medellín did not cease by April. His violence was legendary — and

so was his personality. García Márquez wrote: "No Colombian in history ever possessed

or exercised a talent like his for shaping public opinion. And none had a greater power to

corrupt. The most unsettling and dangerous aspect of his personality was his total

inability to distinguish between good and evil."[37] Then-president Gaviria wanted Escobar

in prison. The security forces wanted him dead.

By this time, public opinion was firmly behind the movement to change the

constitution to forbid extradition — Escobar's pet project. He was willing to surrender to

the authorities, but only under certain circumstances, and throughout the months of

negotiations through intermediaries, passage of a constitutional ban on extradition

remained his one, absolutely inflexible demand. In June 1991, when Colombia passed its

first new Constitution in a hundred years, he got his wish: non-extradition was

incorporated as a fundamental right of citizens.

Gaviria, reasoning that it was not in the country's interest for Escobar to remain at

large and acknowledging that conventional law enforcement had otherwise failed,

granted some of Escobar's other wishes as well. The location of the prison was of

Escobar's own choosing: a former drug rehabilitation center in a remote area of

Envigado, the Medellín suburb where Escobar grew up and where the population was

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[37] Ibid.

almost completely loyal to him. It was said that Escobar had actually owned the center but sold it to Envigado's mayor specifically for use as his personal prison. Escobar also got to supervise the selection of the prison's security guards — he hired half, the mayor, a loyalist, hired the rest — and Colombia's security forces were not permitted on its grounds. Finally persuaded that his surrender would proceed as agreed, Escobar freed his remaining hostages and entered La Catedral (The Cathedral), as the prison came to be known, on 19 June 1991.

Over the next thirteen months, safe from his mortal enemies from the Cali cartel (as well as from the Colombian security forces and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration [DEA]), and hidden from the eyes of government and military officials, Escobar transformed his prison into a luxury residence, rivaled, some said, only by Colombia's best five-star hotels. Army engineers had already built him a professional, illuminated soccer field as part of the surrender deal, but Escobar went far beyond that. His people smuggled in the best construction materials available, and they built a high-tech communications system, a library, a gym, and a discotheque; he bought expensive art and planted a garden (of marijuana); the "cells" where he and a few other "incarcerated" cartel chiefs slept had amenities such as a large-screen television, a hot tub, and a water bed; Escobar hosted elaborate parties and was frequently visited by family, friends, colleagues, and prostitutes; and he possessed machine guns and other weapons. And when government intelligence sources discovered that the Cali bosses had bought bombs and were in the market for an attack plane, an air-raid bunker was added to the mix.

More significantly, however, Escobar continued to run his empire from prison, which is exactly why he wanted to be imprisoned in Colombia and not in the United States, where he would have been cut off from his organization. He continued to collect "taxes" from the Medellín traffickers who had remained free — a total of about $100 million per month. Those traffickers, and Escobar himself, viewed Escobar as the big boss — essentially a mafia 'godfather' — even though he was not necessarily the biggest trafficker within the Medellín syndicate. But he was the leading propagandist and negotiator in the battle over extradition, and for that the other traffickers paid him what amounted to a war tax. When he surrendered, he is said to have told them, "I am the price of peace," and demanded that the Medellín trafficking groups continue to pay him for his sacrifice.[38] Escobar's luxury accommodations became a minor scandal within Colombia and around the world when word got out about them. But the real scandal was "the unusually large number of tortured and mutilated corpses that had been turning up on the outskirts of town," according to Alma Guillermoprieto, writing in *The New Yorker* in October 1993. "The rumor was that the dead men were among Escobar's own lieutenants and most trusted business partners, that they had been kidnapped and taken to La Catedral, and that there, under the boss's supervision, at least a dozen of them had been accused of betrayal and then tortured and killed."[39]

In fact, it was the torture and murder of four such partners — Fernando "El Negro" Galeano, Mario Galeano, Gerardo "Kiko" Moncada, and William Julio Moncada, who had complained to Escobar about a stash of cash his men had stolen from them —

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[38] Ibid; Patrick Clawson and Rensselaer W. Lee, *The Andean Cocaine Industry*.

[39] Alma Guillermoprieto, "Exit el Patrón."

and the murder of a score of their associates in early July 1992, that sealed Escobar's fate. Word got to Colombia's chief prosecutor, Gustavo de Grieff, about the prison interrogations, and after an investigation de Grieff met with President Gaviria, who decided he could no longer justify keeping Escobar at La Catedral. They hastily made plans to transfer him to a government-controlled high-security prison in Bogotá.

Escobar learned of the plans on the evening news and took two hostages: Colombia's vice minister of justice and the national director of prisons, who for unknown reasons had gone to talk with Escobar that evening. On the night of 21 July 1992, Gaviria sent around 400 or 500 police and army troops to Envigado to surround the prison. Different accounts conflict, but early the next morning the troops apparently started shooting, and Escobar, wearing blue jeans and sneakers (not women's clothes, as some had reported), along with a handful of his fellow inmates, bribed some guards (some say with a plate of food, others say with money), shot their way out of the prison (accounts differ), and escaped into the mountains without their hostages.

Another humiliation for Colombia — and for Gaviria. Escobar had made a fool out of the president and Gaviria was no longer in the mood to negotiate. After the drug lord's dramatic escape, which made headlines around the world, the government of Colombia offered a $1.4 million reward (later increased to $5 million) for information leading to his arrest. The prosecutor general filed charges that could be used against Escobar — and stick — in the event he was captured. Gaviria sent uniformed police house-to-house in Envigado and formed a Search Bloc (Bloque de Búsqueda), made up of elite police and Army troops, to find the fugitive. Gaviria even ignored Escobar's initial offer to return to La Catedral as well as his later offers — made when it became

apparent that Gaviria wasn't impressed with the terms of his earlier incarceration — to surrender unconditionally and be confined in the "most humble and modest jail."

True to form, within a month of his escape, Escobar began to wage a new campaign of violence that would turn out to be even more deadly than the one he had undertaken in the months before his retirement to La Catedral. By April 1993, Escobar was blamed for eleven car-bomb explosions in Bogotá, Medellín, and other cities, which killed more than sixty people and injured hundreds. (The homicide rate was lower in Colombia and in Medellín during the year 1992 than in 1991 only because the unrelated guerrilla campaign, which had raised homicide to such high levels in 1991, had already ended; still, on a month-by-month basis, the homicide rate in Medellín in December 1992 was higher than that of any month in 1991, primarily due to Escobar's campaign against the state, which he waged from his various hideouts in the Aburrá Valley and possible elsewhere.)

In August 1992, Colombia had asked the United States to increase its role in the search for Escobar. The State Department immediately posted a $2 million reward for information leading to the drug lord's capture. The U.S. Justice Department indicted him on charges of bombing a 1989 Avianca flight over Colombia (among the victims were two Americans). The CIA and DEA sent additional agents to Bogotá. And U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) provided electronics experts and equipment, including airplanes for surveillance, to Colombia's government. It has been estimated that about 400 Americans participated in the search for Escobar.

But Escobar was nowhere to be found (though his lawyers continued to offer his surrender). One account suggests Escobar went to Brazil to hide, but most people

believed he was simply taking advantage of the extensive network of safe houses he had built among his supporters in and around Medellín over the years.

In November 1992, Gaviria declared a state of emergency that permitted his government to restrict civil liberties when deemed necessary. In January 1993, Escobar declared an all-out war against the government, and a car bomb in Bogotá that killed twenty-one people showed just how serious he was. Gaviria increased the reward for his capture to $6.7 million. The violence escalated. But the worst was yet to come.

On 31 January 1993, a powerful bomb exploded at a farm owned by Escobar's mother. Two days later, a group nobody had ever heard of took responsibility. They called themselves Perseguidos por Pablo Escobar (People Persecuted by Pablo Escobar), or the Pepes for short. At first, people believed the Pepes were a popular uprising against the man who had terrorized the country for over a decade. But the firepower this death squad unleashed over the next months made it clear that far more powerful forces were behind it. The DEA, in cables released in response to a Freedom of Information Act request by Amnesty International USA, documented some of the attacks carried out by the Pepes:

> 2 Feb [1993]. Pepes claimed responsibility for three Medellín area car bomb attacks on 31 Jan. against Escobar family residences. They vowed "to work towards his annihilation." The body of Luis Alberto Isaza Estrada was found shot numerous times in Las Palmas section of Medellín. A sign found on him read: "For working for the narcoterrorist and baby killer Pablo Escobar." …

> 10 Feb. An unidentified body, later found to be Gustavo Adolfo Posada Ortiz, was found in El Poblado section of Medellín. Posada was considered by the Pepes to be an accomplice to Escobar, and had been kidnapped. This killing was the second to be attributed to the Pepes.

> 11 Feb. In El Retiro barrio, seven young motorcyclists were assassinated by approximately twenty individuals in four vehicles. The Pepes were said

to be responsible because of the associations the victims had with members of the Medellín Cartel.[40]

Such attacks continued for the next ten months. In March 1993, the Pepes attempted to kill the mayor of Envigado and kidnapped and killed several of Escobar's lawyers before declaring a cease fire to give Escobar a chance to surrender. The cease fire didn't last long, and Escobar and the Pepes continued to wage their war. By summer, many of the Medellín Cartel's top bosses had been killed or had surrendered to the authorities. Escobar's children's school teacher was killed, as was his wife's brother. In all, more than 125 people associated with Escobar (some estimates are much higher) were dead by the end of the year.

If the Pepes were not a popular uprising against Escobar, as some claimed, who were they? In 1994, in an interview with the Colombian weekly *Semana*, Fidel Castaño Gil, a national paramilitary leader and former narcotrafficking associate of Escobar, revealed that he had organized the death squad. The friendship between Escobar and the virulent anti-guerrilla Castaño (whose alias was 'Rambo') had grown sour, he said, when Escobar helped the ELN guerrillas with a massive weapons shipment. According to Castaño, the two had had a serious argument over the shipment and never spoke to each other again. In 1992, Castaño declined Escobar's invitation to visit him at La Catedral with the Galeanos and Moncadas — and he thereby escaped their fate. Afterwards, Castaño said, "several people sought me out to ask me to lead a self-defense group

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[40] Unpublished briefing prepared by the author for Amnesty International USA, 1997 (author's private collection).

against Pablo Escobar. I came up with the name Perseguidos por Pablo Escobar." The group, he said, was funded by "industrialists, politicians, ranchers."[41]

Although Castaño wouldn't reveal who else participated in the Pepes' actions, it is clear he had help from a wide cross section of the population. The most obvious supporters were the leaders and foot soldiers of the Cali cartel, who in 1993 were already supplanting their Medellín rivals as the top traffickers in Colombia — but who were much more discreet in their activities and much less hierarchical in their organization. Less obvious, perhaps, to those outside Colombia were members of the police and the military, who moonlighted for the Pepes because they wanted Escobar dead and didn't want to go through the bureaucracy to achieve that end. Moreover, Clawson and Lee, citing a Bogotá television report, wrote: "Pepes was apparently linked to another anti-Escobar group, Colombia Libre (Free Colombia), that also emerged in early 1993. Colombia Libre, which was composed of former Escobar associates and assorted business men and industrialists, offered a reward of $5 million for Escobar's head."[42] The legal and criminal elements worked side by side in the hunt for Escobar:

> Escobar's enemies collaborated enthusiastically with the Colombian government. Colombia Libre claims to have provided intelligence to the authorities to support forty operations against Escobar's organization. Similarly, leading Cali traffickers maintained a network of informants in Medellín and — according to several accounts — also deployed high-tech tracking devices to intercept Escobar's communications. The information obtained from these channels was passed on to the police and to the DAS [the Department of Administration Security, Colombia's equivalent to the FBI]. … In sum, the government's successful liquidation of Escobar … owed much to the efforts of Colombia's cocaine establishment.[43]

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[41] Semana, "Yo Fui el Creador de los Pepes."

[42] Patrick Clawson and Rensselaer W. Lee, *The Andean Cocaine Industry*.

[43] Ibid.

That cocaine establishment did not go away with Escobar's death. On the contrary, it evolved into something more insidious, more subtle, and far more difficult to take down. But Escobar is the one who put all the elements in place. Before him, crime and violence in Medellín were small-time. Even the country's civil war did not bring anywhere near the level of violence that Escobar's drug war and assassin gangs brought to Medellín.

"I'm hanging up, because something funny's going on here." On the day after his 44th birthday, Escobar heard people entering the safehouse on the first floor: the Search Bloc. He escaped through a second-storey window to the roof, wearing nothing more than blue jeans rolled up at the ankles and a dark blue t-shirt with a maroon stripe at the sleeve. He didn't even have time to put his shoes on. He had been running from these men for 499 days, never staying in the same place for more than six hours at a time, never staying on the phone for more than two minutes at a time, until just moments ago while talking to his son. He had put a very high price on the head of each of the men who now were running up his stairs: $27,000 per Search Bloc member killed. Hundreds of their colleagues had already lost their lives making his young assassins rich, and on the roof, his one remaining bodyguard could no longer protect him from them. After it was over, someone took a picture: eight men with high-powered rifles, some in uniform, some in plain clothes, thumbs up and all smiles, surrounding a pale, fat corpse draped over the Spanish roof tiles, his arms unnaturally splayed about his head, as if to protect himself, too late, from the seven bullets that had pierced his face and neck.

During his rise to become one of the wealthiest people in the world, Pablo Escobar built entire barrios for marginalized people who had been living in shacks, ignored by the state and disdained by mainstream society. He provided income and social

recognition of sorts for thousands of young people who otherwise had faced poverty and obscurity. In some of those barrios, Don Pablo is still admired, still prayed for at Sunday Mass.[44] Many poor families entered the middle class, and some, the very upper classes, as a result of the opportunities he provided them. "Among the thousands of supporters who gathered last Friday afternoon hoping to glimpse Escobar's body before it was lowered into his grave, few remembered that more than 20 years ago, he had launched his ascension to head the world's most powerful drug organization by selling tombstones he had stolen," wrote *Time* magazine in December 2003, repeating the dubious legend. "Pablo Escobar's career was ending exactly where it began — in a Medellín graveyard."[45]

Much of the illicit wealth that entered Medellín during Escobar's reign was laundered and ultimately invested in legitimate businesses — restaurants, shopping malls, high-rise apartment buildings — that contributed to the city's development and continue to produce legitimate income and economic opportunities today, the way the Kennedy family's Prohibition-era bootleg profits were reinvested so that subsequent generations of Kennedys could enjoy wealth without stigma. In Medellín, few today will talk about where their families' wealth came from; few will acknowledge that some of the luxury office buildings and high-end shopping centers of the city's most prestigious neighborhoods were built with drug profits several times removed. Outside of the poor barrios where the state has only recently begun to pay them any attention — and even

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[44] ElTiempo.com, "Así se está viviendo la guerra entre bandas en las comunas del nororiente de Medellín," ["This is how the gang war is going in Medellín's northeastern wards,"] 9 April 2009, http://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/justicia/-asi-se-esta-viviendo-la-guerra-entre-bandas-en-las-comunas-del-nororiente-de-medellin_4956840-1 (accessed 12 April 2009).

[45] Kevin Fedarko, "Pablo Escobar's Dead End," *Time Magazine,* 13 December 1993.

among many who still live in those barrios — just about everybody, cab drivers, store owners, people of all stripes, consider Pablo Escobar to be a source of shame, not of wealth or development, because they know that the rest of the world associates the name of their city with Escobar's most notorious innovations: the mass-production and large-scale, global distribution of cocaine; the drive-by shootings of motorcycle assassins; and the urban terror and warfare against the state and society in the service, above all, of private economic gains rather than any broader political program. They want to erase his memory, break the word association between *Medellín* and *cartel,* and live in peace and with pride.

But what Pablo Escobar left behind in 1993 has not made it easy for them to do this. He left behind thousands of corpses, many of which have never been found, and tens of thousands of broken families. As such, he also left behind debts of blood, young boys, even some girls, vowing to avenge the deaths of their fathers and brothers and friends and colleagues. He left behind the lure of easy money, the opportunity to sell one's soul and take another's in exchange for just enough cash to buy a loud stereo system and a nice pair of shoes. He left behind a broken system of authority relations, in which neither one's family, nor one's community, nor one's church, nor one's government had the credibility needed to enforce norms of behavior that could enable peaceful coexistence and maintain social, familial, or personal stability. And perhaps most significantly, he left behind the fragments of a vast money-making system, a network of assassins, growers, distributors, producers, racketeers, launderers, trade routes, and a system for recruiting from a nearly endless supply of marginalized and often desperately poor people without the protection of the state or the respect of the society on whose periphery they were

scraping out a living. The blood had barely been washed away by the rain on the rooftop when his underlings and enemies began fighting a war for control over the remnants of this empire.

2.2. Caicedo La Sierra: A Tour through East Central Medellín

No two people in Medellín, given a map, would agree on exactly where "Caicedo La Sierra" is. That is because Caicedo and La Sierra are simultaneously two separate places, many different places, and exactly the same place, and their history and geography explain why is this is so. Caicedo La Sierra is in Zone 3, the East Central zone of the city that includes Comuna 8 (Villa Hermosa), Comuna 9 (Buenos Aires), and Comuna 10 (La Candelaria). Comuna 10 includes the city center, made up mostly of downtown businesses, and has long had among the highest murder and crime rates in the city (making all Zone 3 violence data useless as a proxy for violence in Comuna 8, since Comuna 10 dominates any data aggregated at the zone level); Comunas 8 and 9 are mostly hillside residential communities. Geographically, Zone 3 is the Quebrada Santa Elena (Santa Elena Creek) water basin: the Santa Elena collects rainwaters from the smaller creeks in the central mountains on the eastern side of the city and carries them down through the city center and into the Medellín River. Comunas 8 and 9 are the upper Santa Elena water basin, with the creek serving as the boundary between the two: Comuna 8 is the north bank, Comuna 9, the south bank. In Comuna 10, the downtown area, the creek runs beneath Calle 52, called Avenida La Playa (or Beach Avenue, so named — or so locals claim — because of its proximity to this particular body of water), which is one of the main axes of the city center. In fact, the Santa Elena creek has been

one of the more important landmarks in the city's history. It was originally named Aná, and the area where it drained into the Medellín river was one of the first areas settled, in the 17th century: the city's first church, La Candelaria, was built there, and the main plaza (now called Parque Berrío) was established nearby; the area then grew into what is today downtown Medellín.[46]

At the top of the mountains of the Santa Elena water basin lies the border between the city of Medellín and the *corregimiento* (rural subdivision) of Santa Elena, historically one of the main points of entry into the city. Santa Elena and the towns of Rionegro and Guarne are both east of the city, and some of the first roads into Medellín from these towns ran along the Santa Elena Creek. In the late 19th century, the road along the northern bank of the creek — today, the upper part of Calle 52–La Playa — had its first stop in Medellín at an area known as Las Estancias, long the site of the only church between the top of the mountain and La Candelaria downtown. At first unpaved, this steep and winding road was traversed mostly by mule. As the city started to become more populated, however, there was a need to get more and more products from the towns east of the city into the markets at the city center, and to get more and more people from the city center up to church on Sunday. The solution to that transportation problem gave this area, once known exclusively as Las Estancias, the name (perhaps, more accurately, the nickname) of Caicedo.

During the 1920s, a trolley system was built in downtown Medellín, but it reached only as far east as La Toma, the bridge over the Santa Elena Creek that connects the

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[46] Information from this and the next three paragraphs comes largely from Diego Ríos, personal communication (Interview No. 4), 13 March 2009; Juan Diego Alzate Giraldo, "Algún Día Recuperaremos la Noche"; Gloria Naranjo Giraldo, *Medellín en Zonas* (Medellín, Colombia: Corporación Región, 1992), 86; and common knowledge in Medellín.

winding road coming down the mountain (upper Calle 52–La Playa) to the road that goes directly downtown (lower Calle 52–La Playa). At La Toma is a barrio that city planners called "Caicedo." Being on the south bank of the Santa Elena creek, barrio Caicedo is in Comuna 9, not Comuna 8. Yet almost nobody in Medellín today calls that barrio "Caicedo"; to most people, it's just part of Buenos Aires: everyone "knows" that Caicedo is in Comuna 8, north of the creek. During the 1930s and 1940s, the city's population was growing quickly as the worldwide depression forced farmers off their lands. But the downtown trolley system had no service beyond La Toma, and there was a growing demand for mass transit to take traffic from downtown up to the hillside communities where the less-expensive housing was. Microbus companies emerged to meet that demand. At first the buses carried goods and passengers from the trolley stop at Caicedo, across La Toma bridge, and up just a few blocks on Calle 52–La Playa to a bus stop called La Planta (near Carrera 23), but later the routes were extended to another bus stop, Estrechura/Canelones (near Cra. 19), and so on through the middle of the century. A new bus stop was added every decade or so as the roads were paved and demand justified the cost of expansion: to Aguinaga (Cra. 16), then to San Antonio (Cra. 13), and finally to Tres Esquinas (Cra. 9), where the bus route split off into three directions to serve the growing peripheral barrios: one route went through barrio Villatina (and later into to what is now barrio San Antonio), one through barrio Villa Liliam to barrio Villa Turbay, and one through barrio Villa Liliam to barrio La Sierra. Because the brightly colored buses originated at the barrio by the bridge, they all had "CAICEDO" painted on the front in big white letters. Over time people started referring to the areas the bus routes served by the same name. Today, Caicedo, in the popular imagination, is no longer the area where

the bus routes start, but the area where the bus routes end: the destination has become the origin. (Later, as the bus routes became established, some bus owners started differentiating the three routes at the top by painting "LA SIERRA" or "VILLATINA" on their buses, although many still carry the name Caicedo.)

Caicedo, therefore, is not one place but, in a way, four: (1) the sector encompassing all or part of the six barrios in the upper reaches of Comuna 8 that serve as the destinations of the Caicedo bus routes: San Antonio, Las Estancias, La Sierra, Villa Liliam, Villa Turbay, and Villatina; (2) the corridor encompassing all or part of those six barrios plus all or part of the three barrios along the northern bank of the Santa Elena creek that Calle 52 runs through: El Pinal, La Libertad, and Sucre; (3) the Caicedo (sometimes spelled Caycedo) that is still an officially designated barrio in Comuna 9 in the city's maps and development plans; and (4) the Caicedo that designates the JAC (Junta de Acción Comunal, or Community Action Board) in Comuna 8 that is carved out of the southern end of barrio Sucre at La Toma bridge, just across the creek from the Comuna 9 Caycedo. For the purposes of this study, "Caicedo" is the first of the four: the six barrios of upper Comuna 8. Some in Medellín would agree with this usage; many others would object strenuously. But Caicedo is only half of the story: the case under study is Caicedo La Sierra. Where is La Sierra?

Like Caicedo, the name of the areas called "La Sierra" has a storied history as well, and it, too, refers to four overlapping places. A *sierra* is a mountain ridge, usually jagged like the teeth of a saw (the Spanish word *sierra* literally means "saw"), and the uppermost part of Comuna 8 is nothing if not steep and jagged. Officially, La Sierra is (1) the uppermost barrio of Comuna 8, according to the city maps, just next to Villa

Turbay; and it also is (2) the name of a JAC that actually is in barrio La Sierra but that does not encompass all of that barrio. In the popular imagination, things are a little different, depending on whether you live in the area or outside of it, and perhaps depending on how long you have lived in the area. Because it is so far from the city center, and so high in elevation, and because much of that section is hidden by Cerro Pan de Azucar (Sugarloaf Hill) at the top of the mountain, few people who do not live there have ever seen or visited it. To them, La Sierra is the place where the buses marked "LA SIERRA" go (under the same logic that drove the evolution of Caicedo's identity); and since most have never actually taken those buses, this means La Sierra is either (3) the same six barrios as Caicedo (as in the previous paragraph), or (4) all or part of the four barrios above Quebrada La Castro (Castro Creek, which runs down Pan de Azucar): Las Estancias, Villa Liliam, Villa Turbay, and, of course, barrio La Sierra. For the purposes of this study, "La Sierra" or "barrio La Sierra" will be the first of these four options, the uppermost barrio, while "Caicedo La Sierra" — the subject of this case study — will refer to the fourth option: the four barrios above La Castro. Unfortunately, while many in Medellín would have no strenuous objection to this usage, others certainly would, since for some people "Caicedo–La Sierra" refers specifically to barrio La Sierra in the sector they think of as Caicedo, just as "Caicedo–Las Estancias" would be barrio Las Estancias in the same area. Nevertheless, the area under study needs to be specified and named, and Caicedo La Sierra — the barrios Las Estancias, Villa Liliam, Villa Turbay, and La Sierra — is no worse a name than other available options.

Caicedo La Sierra was chosen as the sector through which to study the details of the dynamics of legitimacy in Medellín partly because it was one of the peripheral areas

whose history has been fairly typical in the city: ignored by the state, plagued by violence and gangs, taken over by militias, subjected to war by paramilitaries, taken over by organized crime, recognized and partly improved by the city, and finally faced with the fear of a return to worse times. It was chosen as well, however, because my research assistant had once worked there and so had good contacts within the barrio: it was a place I could operate in, and where I could be confident that residents and former residents would talk to me. (Unfortunately, midway through the list of interviews that had been planned, violence and fear spiked, and several people warned me that it had become too dangerous for my interview subjects to be seen with an outsider and too dangerous for outsiders to enter the barrio, so I was forced to terminate my field research there early and rely instead on the interviews that had been taken up to that point.) Each of the next five chapters has a subsection that looks specifically at Caicedo La Sierra, and these are based primarily on these interviews and on other primary sources that I was lucky enough to encounter, including a documentary film made about the sector, a book of memoirs written by local residents, and several interview transcripts by previous researchers.

The patterns of violence are substantially more difficult to identify in Caicedo La Sierra than in Medellín and Colombia, since most data are not disaggregated at the barrio level; in other words, Caicedo La Sierra has the same data problems as the two higher levels of analysis — data are not collected for some forms of violence, the quality of much of the data that are collected is questionable, much of the data have coverage only for recent years, and much of the data that have been collected are not made publicly available in a useable form by those who manage it — but with the additional challenge that the data are over-aggregated. Nevertheless, a combination of the quantitative data

that are available and the qualitative impressions of residents and experts provides

enough of a glimpse into the key patterns to proceed with the analyses in the chapters that

follow.

Chapter 3. Crime and the Emergence of Guerrilla Militias: 1984-1992

Flying from Medellín to most of Colombia's major cities takes less than an hour, but by bus you have the opportunity to stare out the window at gorgeous natural scenery for six, 10, or 15 hours straight. Outside of Medellín, rural Colombia offers stunning views of lush mountains, green valleys, dramatic cloud formations, and vast, undulating pastures. Today you can enjoy such trips with little concern for your safety: the Army has retaken control over most major highways, which until just a few years ago had been subject to frequent guerrilla or paramilitary checkpoints where driver and passenger alike were shaken down, their documents checked, their money and valuable goods stolen; sometimes the name on somebody's document would match a name on some list and the passenger would be taken off the bus to disappear forever.

The situation was worse away from the highways, and even worse the farther you got from the highways. The longest-running civil war in the Western Hemisphere, beginning in the 1960s, was being fought in Colombia, and most of the fighting was taking place in rural areas, far from regular attention and protection from the central government. The war began just a few years after the previous civil war, known today only as La Violencia — The Violence — ended in a settlement between the two main warring factions: the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. The settlement created the National Front, basically a power-sharing agreement between the two parties that excluded all other political parties from the political system. Dissident liberals and members of radical parties objected to the arrangement, and some of them took to

Colombia's remote mountains and thick jungles, formed themselves into military units, and, inspired by the Communist revolutions in the Soviet Union, China, or Cuba, launched an insurgency whose main approach was guerrilla warfare. Or rather, they launched several insurgencies, as the leftist groups did not all join together in solidarity — and sometimes hated one another with a passion exceeded only by their hatred of the National Front.

The National Army was sent out to fight them from time to time, not always very effectively, and to its forces were added the efforts of armed civilian militias. Over the course of several decades, none of the three categories of fighter — guerrilla, military, and paramilitary — could claim the moral high ground in terms of respect for international norms for human rights and the conduct of war: those were honored in word and occasionally in deed, but there was never any doubt that this was a dirty war, as La Violencia was before it. As a Colombian physician who has taken it upon himself to study his country's violence has observed:

> I think that noone in the country today has any doubt that Colombia is not just a violent country, it's a barbarous country; barbarity is not respecting the most minimal humanitarian [standards], barbarity is not recognizing anyone [who should enjoy] exclusion from the conflict, barbarity is [getting] a practically sadistic satisfaction from violent actions, which could be illustrated with multiple examples …. We are in a phase passing from a grand cycle of violence to a situation of barbarity ….[1]

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[1] "Pienso que nadie hoy en el país tiene duda de que Colombia ya no es solamente un país violento, es un país bárbaro; barbarie es el no respeto a ningún mínimo humanitario, barbarie es el no reconocimiento de cualquier exclusión en el conflicto, barbarie es la satisfacción prácticamente sádica en la acción violenta, la cual se puede ilustrar con múltiples ejemplos …. Estamos en una fase de paso de un gran ciclo de violencia a una situación de barbarie …." Saúl Franco Agudelo, "Comentarios a la Investigación 'Estado del Arte Sobre Violencia Urbana en Antioquia'," ["Comments on the Study 'State of the Art in Urban Violence in Antioquia',"] in *Balance de los Estudios Sobre Violencia en Antioquia*, ed. Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas (Medellín, Colombia: Municipio de Medellín y Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 2001), 185.

By the 1980s, villagers, farmers, and ranchers were regularly being attacked by guerrillas who wanted resources (goods, land, recruits, money) and threatened death and displacement to those who did not supply them. Then they were attacked by state security forces who accused them of supplying resources to guerrillas; then attacked by paramilitaries who accused them of *being* guerrillas; then attacked by the guerrillas again, who accused them of snitching to the authorities and to the paras. The attack could be anything from a threatening note, to the killing of their livestock, to a threat to leave or suffer the same fate as others have, to the selective killing and disembowelment of community leaders, to massacres of entire villages.

For many, just one attack, one threat, was enough to drive them from their homes: Colombia, even today, has long had some of the highest numbers of internally displaced populations (IDP) in the world. Amanda Uribe had heard a rumor that the leader of paramilitaries in her rural village — "they were the ones who governed the town, they were the authorities" — didn't like her son. "One fateful and bitter morning they knocked on the door of my house. It was a group of armed and hooded men."

> The boss of these cruel, heartless assassins headed for my son's room, where he was still sleeping and had no idea what was happening in our house. … 'Get up, man, let's go, we have to talk.'… For us, it was impossible to do anything to save him. … [I heard] two shots about two blocks from the house. My reaction was immediate. I remember I let out a piercing scream loaded with all the pain of my heart. … Barely two weeks had passed since Alex's death when we decided to move to Medellín.[2]

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[2] "… los paramilitaries eran los que gobernaban el pueblo, ellos eran la autoridad. … Una fatídica y amarga mañana tocaron a la puerta de mi casa. Era un grupo de hombres armados y encapuchados. … El jefe de esos impíos, desalmados, asesinos, se dirigió al cuarto de mi hijo que aún dormía y que no se había enterado de lo que eestaba sucediendo en nuestra casa. … 'Levántese hombre y salgamos que tenemos que conversar.' … Para nosotros era imposible hacer algo para salvarlo. … [Escuché] dos disparos como a dos cuadras de la casa. Mi reacción fue inmediata. Recuerdo que yo pegué un grito desgarrador cargado de dolor de mi corazón. … Habían pasado apenas quince días de la muerte de Alex cuando decidimos desplazarnos para Medellín." Amanda Uribe, "Tres Sucesos Amargos," ["Three Bitter Events,"] in *Jamás Olvidaré Tu Nombre*, ed. Patricia Nieto (Medellín, Colombia: Alcaldía de Medellín, 2006), 31.

Attacks, threats, massacres, vandalism, and fear in the countryside drove many families into the cities, where they hoped to find safety and jobs. Most, of course, found neither.

Instead, they settled in the periphery of places such as Medellín, which had few jobs and no land where they could settle legally. They were forced to become squatters on unoccupied lands on the mountainsides or near the city dump. They had to pirate electricity and water, since the city would not recognize the legality of their settlements or provide adequate development assistance, public or social services, or police protection. Many of these settlements were on hillsides that were at high risk of deadly mudslides (the family quoted above later lost their shack in Medellín in a mudslide). They were on their own. Worse still, many of these displaced families were considered outsiders, a threat, by those who were already living there on the city's periphery. Partly this was a reflection of the in-group versus out-group mentality that is very strong in Colombian culture, partly it was a reflection of economic realities: the old-timers were not necessarily poor, but they usually earned little more than a marginal living and did not appreciate having to compete with the newcomers for resources that already were too scarce. They certainly did not appreciate their ways, their customs, their differences.[3] Conditions were poor, tensions were high, and life was hard.

In the communities where the Medellín Cartel recruited its young assassins and dealers, not everyone was impressed by the lure of the mafia–gangster–assassin lifestyle. In fact, it is safe to say that most people in these marginalized communities strongly disapproved of what many of their young men and boys were being drawn into — and were drawing them into. Part of this was virtue, a belief that, however poor you are, you

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[3] Such sentiments were expressed to me by a resident of East Central Medellín: 'Cristiana,' personal communication (Interview No. 9), 20 March 2009.

do not kill, you do not threaten: *we are good people, and that is not what good people do.* Part of it was fear: once freed from the behavioral constraints of social norms against certain uses of violence, too many young people began acting in ways that were deeply harmful to their own communities, and most residents, afraid, wanted to maintain order. The older generation especially disapproved of the metal-heads, pot-heads, and punks who were hanging around on street corners playing loud music, setting a bad example for children.[4] The malevos, the bad-asses of the earlier era, who had carried knives but rarely used them, had become *pistoleros,* carrying around handguns and using them far too readily. The glue-sniffing street children never went away: however many were "cleansed," there were always more to replace them: more orphans, more boys fleeing abusive parents, more girls fleeing pedophile stepfathers, and too much misery and hunger to handle without a constant, mind-numbing glue high. The "low-life" *chichipatos* were still around as well, smoking their bazuco (cheap cocaine paste), stealing and whoring to score their next hit, desperate and violent as ever (see § 2.1.2). Crime was rising.

"They attacked you at six in the morning, at noon, at night, leaving the house. Catching the bus! They'd try to kill you for a hit of bazuco, they'd kill you out of spite," a construction worker told a reporter about life in the '20th of July' neighborhood in Comuna 13, in the west of the city, during the "invasions" of the early 1980s. He described life in a place that the city would not recognize as a legal settlement, where public services had to be stolen (more than a few people died trying to run pirated copper wires from the electric grid to their shacks), and where the nearest police station had too

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[4] 'Germán,' personal communication (Interview No. 16), 6 April 2009.

few officers for too many people with too many problems (and where responding to a call would sometimes require a climb of a hundred stairs or more):

> There were a lot of low-lifes with cheap pistols and a lot of thieves around here. … The soap disappeared from public restrooms and the clothes from the clotheslines. And they'd even come into people's houses and take the pots from the stove — still boiling! — and leave the poor people without lunch. … [The police] were worthless … four officers who never even went out on patrol. They holed themselves up in there, taking care of each other. … But most serious was the disunity. There were so many problems and people didn't work together. There was mistrust and resentment over problems that had happened: that this one guy stole this other guy's lot, that those people were throwing trash and shit into their neighbor's yard, that what's-his-name was corrupting some guy's daughter, … that that one woman's taking that other woman's husband, that a step-father's running off with his step-daughter, that some woman was carried off by the police for sticking a table knife into her man's leg. Those were the most common disputes.[5]

But such disputes often turned violent, if they hadn't been already, and anyone who tried to get involved or get the police involved to resolve a dispute could end up getting themselves killed.

In a way it's no wonder that so many young people joined gangs; that more did not speaks to the efforts of the many community leaders and common people who risked their lives to try to maintain some semblance of stability and community solidarity, of which there was very little at the time.

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[5] "A usted lo atracaban a las seis de la mañana, al mediodía, en la noche, saliendo de la casa. ¡Cogiendo el bus! Lo atracaban por un bazuco, y por una inquina lo mataban. … Había mucho chichipato con changón y mucho ladrón por ahí. … Los jabones desaparecían de los baños comunales y la ropa de los alambres. Y hasta se entraban a las casas a sacar las ollas de los fogones, ¡hirviendo todavía!, y dejaban a la pobre gente sin almuerzo. … [La policía] no servía para nada … cuatro agentes que ni siquiera salían a patrullar. Permanecían ahí encerrados, cuidándose los unos a los otros. … Pero lo más grave era la desunión. Tantos problemas que había, y la gente no trabajaba unida. Vivían con desconfianza y resentimientos por problemas que habian pasada; que el uno le robó el lote al otro, que aquel le está tirando la basura y la mierda al vecino, que fulano le perjudicó la hija a perano, … que aquella mujer le está quitando el marido a la otra, que un padrastro se largó con una hijastra, que a tal señora se la llevó la policía por clavarle a su marido un trinchete en una pierna. Esas eran las peleas más comunes." Ricardo Aricapa Ardila, *Comuna 13: Crónica de Una Guerra Urbana [Comuna 13: Chronicles of an Urban War]*, 2a ed. (Medellín: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 2005), 18.

The variety of small street crews and gangs and the variety of reasons for joining them were broad. Some gangs were microenterprises, something young people would join because they could make or steal money. The communities they lived in were poor, but they could make money by stealing from the wealthiest people in their own barrios or by stealing in the richer parts of town; by selling pot to teenagers, glue to street children, or bazuco to addicts in their own barrios, or pot and cocaine to wealthier consumers in wealthier barrios; or by operating a *plaza de vicio* where they sold drugs retail or prepared drugs wholesale (for example, by cutting pot leaves and packaging them into joints for retail sale, or cutting a kilogram of pure cocaine with nonreactive substances and packaging it for resale). Many entrepreneurial gangs made money by "selling" protection to the scores of corner stores, small businesses, and transportation services that operate in even the poorest barrios (a payment for such "services" is called a *vacuna,* or a "vaccine" against attack), which could earn them a few dollars per store or per bus every week; depending on how much territory they controlled, this could amount to a substantial sum of money in a place where the most common alternative job, street vendor, would earn them just a few dollars a week *in total.*

Some gangs were manifestations of long-standing family feuds and blood debts; one gang war in East Central Medellín began with an argument between children from different blocks: their older brothers got involved, someone died, and the revenge cycle began, the later political wars being little more than cover for existing hostilities.[6] Some gangs were groupings of people with similar interests, often perverse; one small gang in the Northeast was dedicated to raping a very specific demographic: men in their 40s and

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[6] 'Mama Luz' Edna García Copete, personal communication (Interview No. 11), 1 April 2009.

50s arriving home from work late at night.[7] Early on there was not much organization —

a thousand flowers bloomed. As time progressed, however, smaller crews would evolve

into criminal gangs, and specialized gangs — such as the notorious *sicarios* (assassins)

formed by the Medellín Cartel — would begin operating as independent contractors,

hired by narcotraffickers, politicians, businessmen, and common people alike to carry out

specific crimes, "resolve" conflicts, or take care of grudges. A small-time hitman could

earn a hundred dollars for a job, with more important targets bringing in hundreds and

sometimes thousands of dollars — and there was no shortage of customers and victims in

the city.

3.1. Medellín: The Insurgency Comes to the City

3.1.1. Peace Camps Train Future Warriors

The real growth in nonstate capacity for collective violence in Medellín can be

traced to a specific date of national significance: 24 August 1984. That was the date the

government of President Belisario Betancur signed a cease-fire with the Movimiento 19

de Abril (M-19) guerrillas to begin negotiations for peace. During the peace talks, M-19

set up "peace camps" (campamentos de paz) in Medellín and other major cities as a way

to build popular support for when they would become a political organization once the

peace agreements concluded. In Medellín such camps were set up in five barrios: Popular

and Zamora in Comuna 1 in the Northeast, Moravia and Castilla in Comunas 4 and 5 just

north of the city center, and Villatina in Comuna 8 in East Central Medellín. Young

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[7] Gilberto Medina Franco, "Una Historia de las Milicias de Medellín (Historia Sin Fin)," 23.

people would show up every day, more than 50 at a time at the camp in Popular, for example.[8] Many had otherwise been spending their days on street corners doing drugs; at the peace camps, by contrast, they were attending lectures and conferences on revolutionary politics, doing community theater, organizing *sancocho* block parties (sancocho is a type of stew often made communally during outdoor parties), and helping to distribute groceries to poor families. The camps were helping the communities maintain order.

In addition to propagandizing and providing social services, however, M-19's peace camp organizers were also hedging their bets in case the peace talks broke down. As one member explained, "we were secretly giving people military schooling: assembling and disassembling firearms, doing intelligence and recovery work."[9] Of the scores of young people attending the camps, they would select the ones who showed the most interest in politics and give them extra training on the side. But the camps were in place for less than a year. At the national level, the peace talks, which the army and most police departments never supported in the first place, broke down in January 1985, and the camps were shut down later in the year. "In like the middle of '85, the government put out a decree in which they outlawed the camps, because we were making more warriors and not thinking about peace. Then they let loose on us — they raided our headquarters, arrested our people, lowered our flag. Things got so rough we decided to

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[8] Alonso Salazar J., *No Nacimos Pa' Semilla*.

[9] "… por debajo de cuerda le dábamos escuela militar a la gente: armar y desarmar fierros, hacer inteligencia y recuperaciones." 'Ángel,' interview with Ibid., 77.

close the camps and head back to the mountains."[10] Some of the newly trained young

people went with them. Others, fleeing persecution, just disappeared from the barrios.

Others, however, stayed put. A lot of them continued doing social work and

community service, but some, realizing that they now had a very useful set of skills,

turned their community-organizing and military training to other uses. One was a young

man named Ignacio. Nacho, as everyone called him, was an active participant in the

peace camps, and after they were shut down he continued working with some of his camp

mates, and they recruited others. Back when the peace camps had "sponsored community

sancochos, retreats, or other activities to win the community's affection, they organized

commissions to solicit cash donations from the business community … [and these]

donations were made without major reservation, since the M-19's camps had offered

security and recreation to these forgotten sectors." But after the camps were dismantled,

what was once a community-organizing effort eventually became a protection racket:

"the donations that at first were given willingly became obligatory payments or *vacunas,*"

the word locals use (it means "vaccine") to refer to money extorted from local businesses

for "security" services.[11] M-19 found it necessary to warn Nacho to stop using their name

for such activities, and so his community group, now basically a gang, came to be known

as Los Nachos. After he was killed in a gun battle, Los Nachos lost what little political

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[10] "Como en la mitad del año 85 el gobierno sacó un decreto en el que prohibió los campamentos, porque estábamos preparando más guerrilleros y no pensando en la paz. Entonces se desató una persecución, nos allanaban la sede, detenían la gente, nos arriaban la bandera. La cosa se puso tan complicada que decidimos cerrar los campamentos y echarnos otra vez pal monte." 'Ángel,' interview with Ibid.

[11] "... cuando los campamentos realizaban un sancocho comunitario, una retreta y otra actividad para ganarse el afecto de la comunidad, organizaban comisiones para solicitar la colaboración en especie a los negocios del sector. ... El aporte del comercio se daba entonces sin mayores reparos pues los campamentos del M-19 habían ofrecido seguridad y recreación a estos sectores olvidados. Cuando los jefes del M-19 salieron de El Popular, los aportes que en principio eran de buena voluntad se convirtieron en cuota obligatoria o vacuna ...." Gilberto Medina Franco, "Una Historia de las Milicias de Medellín (Historia Sin Fin)," 24.

ideology their founder had once imposed upon them.[12] In 1986 they linked up with one of

Pablo Escobar's men to help recruit *jóvenes kamikases* (kamikaze kids), young assassins

who were paid to kill important public officials and who were not expected to survive the

attempt. The Nachos's "community service" got increasingly ugly. One day, some

members of Los Nachos set a small bus on fire, in full public view, because its owner had

not paid his *vacuna.* It turned out, however, that three teenagers who worked for the

owner were still inside. They could not escape the flames, and their "neighbors watched

in horror this Dantesque scene" of three screaming boys burning to death. Community

outrage forced the state to respond in 1987, but of the 25 members who were captured

only five were ultimately charged; the rest continued their outrages against the

community.[13]

Los Nachos were only one of many such groups. "Los Nachos, Los Calvos, Los

Montañeros, Los Pelusos, and other little gangs emerged," one resident of the northern

barrios told Alonso Salazar Jaramillo (elected Medellín's mayor in 2008) for a best-

selling book of interviews he published in 1990 about youth gangs in the city. The

resident continued:

> Those gangs were made up of two or three grown-ups and a bunch of little
> shits who grew into thugs, 13-, 14-, 15-year-old kids doing the work of the
> devil. They charged taxes, 2,000 pesos a week for shops and 5,000 for
> buses, demanding it right in the streets as if they were the law, robbing gas
> trucks. … The heyday was in 1986 and 1987, [when] the gangs controlled
> the whole barrio. Life changed completely, everyone holed themselves up

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[12] 'Ángel,' interview with Alonso Salazar J., *No Nacimos Pa' Semilla*, 76.

[13] "… los vecinos observaban horrorizados la dantesca escena." Gilberto Medina Franco, "Una Historia de las Milicias de Medellín (Historia Sin Fin)," 24.

their houses at six in the afternoon. They started killing each other, they fought over business affairs, retribution, turf disputes.[14]

While pervasive interpersonal-communal, collective-economic, and collective-social violence by criminals and small-time gangs in the early part of the decade was what opened the doors to the M-19 peace camps — since the guerrilla camps offered a means of social order to communities desperate for it — those peace camps had the ironic longer-term effect, beginning in 1984, of building the capacity of gangs to commit larger-scale acts of collective violence.[15] The following year, homicides in Medellín began to rise in earnest: the rate in 1985 was 109 murders per 100,000 inhabitants of the city, more than double the previous year's rate of 46 per 100,000; it hit 131 in 1986, 157 in 1987, 204 in 1988, and 258 in 1989 — a quintupling of the murder rate in just five years.[16] This increase was not due solely to the crime gangs that emerged from the peace camps. This was also the period in which Pablo Escobar was recruiting young people from the peripheral barrios, especially in the Northeastern zone, to form gangs specializing in assassinations. Once formed, these gangs took contracts (as well as rewards for killing police) not only from Medellín Cartel members but from anyone willing to pay their

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[14] "Surgieron Los Nachos, Los Calvos, Los Montañeros, Los Pelusos y otras banditas … Esas bandas eran formadas por dos o tres mayores y una manada de culicagados crecidos a matones, peladitos de 13, 14, 15 años haciendo las del diablo. Cobraban impuestos, de dos mil pesos semanales a las tiendas y cinco mil a los colectivos, requisaban en la calle como si fueran la ley, atracaban los carros surtidores. … En 1986 y 1987 fue el auge total, las bandas controlaban todo el barrio. La vida cambió completamente, todo el mundo se encerraba en las casas a las 6 de la tarde. Entre ellos empezaron matarse, se peliaban por enredos de negocios, de venganzas o disputándose el territorio." 'Ángel,' interview with Alonso Salazar J., *No Nacimos Pa' Semilla*, 86.

[15] In this study, communal violence is unorganized violence that takes place in public places by one or two individuals acting on their own, and collective violence is more organized violence perpetrated by members of a group for social, political, or economic reasons. See Appendix B.

[16] Data from Secretaría de Gobierno Municipal de Medellín, Subsecretaría de Orden Civil, Unidad de Convivencia Ciudadana; and Fiscalía General de la Nación, Unidad de Reacción Inmediata. Good data are scarce for other forms of violence in Medellín before 1990. See Chapter 8.

price. Assassination became both a commodity and a career path for young people who had no other job prospects; an Army study in the late 1980s found 120 assassin gangs with maybe 3,000 members whose average age was 16 years.[17] This was also the period in which a new leftist political party, the Patriotic Union (UP: Unión Patriótica), emerged on the national stage, and was nearly wiped out by hit men and death squads made up of, or hired by, state actors and paramilitaries. Many UP-affiliated students and professors at the University of Antioquia in Medellín, for example, were assassinated, and human-rights defenders and labor-union leaders suffered many losses at both the national and the local levels as well; it was common knowledge in the city that the security forces used the assassin gangs for such political purposes. In Medellín in 1990, there were 52 forced disappearances, 85 extrajudicial executions, and 17 massacres by unknown perpetrators; in 51 combat events, 180 people died, including 147 civilians, and 110 people were injured, 88 of them bystanders.[18] Still, these specific instances of political violence were a small portion of the 5,424 homicides registered in the city that same year.[19] Most, it is widely believed, were not instances or organized violence at all but rather a manifestation of pervasive violent crime amid a widespread breakdown in the rule of law and in the institutions of social order that had been challenged by an uncomfortable mixing of rural and urban cultures in the context of a population explosion, a mixing of political and criminal motives in the context of a national conflict, and a mixing of local and global markets in the context of a narcotrafficking explosion. Clearly the capacity for violence

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[17] Cited in Alonso Salazar J., *No Nacimos Pa' Semilla*, 187.

[18] Data from Centro de Recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos (CERAC) Base de Datos de Conflicto (CCDB-CERAC V.8.).

[19] Secretaría de Gobierno Municipal de Medellín.

— inter-personal communal, and collective-political, -social, and -economic — had all been greatly augmented, and the social barriers to its use, greatly diminished.

3.1.2. Militias Emerge to Defend against Crime

While the peace camps were one of the factors in the growth in this capacity for violence in the mid-1980s, they also were one of the two main sources of the communities' capacity to defend themselves against the power of violent gangs beginning in the late 1980s; the other source was the long tradition in Colombia of vigilante justice. Some of the political leftists who had emerged from the peace camps — in contrast to those who simply took advantage of the training without caring much about its political content — drew both on their peace-camp training and on this vigilante tradition to form community self-defense militias. Meanwhile, some of the vigilantes who "had formerly been anonymous 'entrepreneurs' of social cleansing in the barrios" in the previous era now "became the leaders of new militia groups" that were being formed to protect those communities. "The activities of the death squads and social-cleansing groups, frequent in Medellín during the 1970s, had also created an atmosphere favorable to the militia's *[sic]* approach of taking justice into one's own hands."

> The militia groups became widely known throughout the city during 1990 and 1991. Many people were surprised at the spectacle of armed and hooded young people who proclaimed themselves the armed power of the barrios, but they had been known for some time in a less public way for their readiness to exterminate criminals and drug addicts, especially bazuco dealers.[20]

The first communities where the gangs started to be confronted head-on by the groups that came to be known as militias were in the Northeastern zone, especially in

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[20] Ramiro Ceballos Melguizo, "The Evolution of Armed Conflict in Medellín" (references omitted).

Barrio Popular in Comuna 1. According to legend, it was 'Frederico,' a National

Liberation Army (ELN: Ejército de Liberación Nacional) guerrilla from the Bajo Cauca

region in northern Antioquia, who first showed up in 1987 to confront a gang that had

threatened his family. (ELN is a Colombian insurgent group that was founded in the

1960s by former members of a leftist political party excluded from the National Front

power-sharing agreement that ended the Colombian civil war, La Violencia, in 1958; like

other radicals, they took to the mountains and launched a guerrilla war.) But Frederico

didn't have the skills to organize the community beyond that initial confrontation.

Another ELN member did. 'Julio' showed up in the same area not long after Frederico. A

fellow militant later described Julio's goals and the early challenges the militias faced in

Medellín:

> Julio came from distant lands and he didn't just bring some automatic
> weapons, he also came armed with all kinds of ideas about how to
> confront the gangs, and he developed a proposal to carry out in Medellín a
> project identical to [one carried in the city of Barrancabermeja involving]
> workers militias. Nevertheless, Julio ran into a big obstacle: while the
> violence of Barranca *[sic]* involved a clearly political confrontation
> between guerrillas and social organizations on the one hand, and the
> armed forces and paramilitaries on the other, what there was in Medellín
> was this esoteric mix of political elements along with common violence.[21]

But Julio pressed on. In 1987, he made a dramatic, public gesture against four gangsters

who had been extorting some residents of barrio Popular. The gangsters had been

demanding weekly payments to "maintain the virginity" of the barrio's young women

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[21] "Julio se desplazó desde lejanas tierras y trajo no sólo algunas armas automáticas, sino que también vino armado con un montón de ideas de cómo enfrentar las bandas, elaboró la propuesta de construir en Medellín un proyecto a imagen y semejanza de lo que eran las milicias obreras … de Barrancabermeja. Sin embargo, Julio se chocó con un gran obstáculo: mientras en la violencia vivida en Barranca había una clara confrontación política entre guerrilla y organizaciones sociales de un lado, y fuerzas armadas y paramilitares en el otro, en Medellín lo que había era una mezcla enrarecida de elementos políticos, pero también de violencia lumpesca." Quoted in Gilberto Medina Franco, "Una Historia de las Milicias de Medellín (Historia Sin Fin)," 14.

and girls. Julio, "in the middle of the street and in front of the entire community," confronted the four extortionists: he executed two of them on the spot and gave the other two an opportunity to change their behavior (they fled the barrio instead). With this, "the militia's rules of the game were established: an execution as a letter of introduction [to the community,] … persuasion and dialog as a way to pacify the delinquents, and all of this, of course, to win the community's approval …."[22] For some of the smaller gangs, this demonstration and others like them were enough to encourage them to disband voluntarily; the rest, lacking the discipline and weapons of the militias, fell in battle. To build on this foundation, Julio pulled together ELN members, local social and community groups, young victims of gang violence, and former participants in the M-19's peace camps.

José Ricardo Barrero Tapias describes the militias as having evolved in three phases, each characterized by a representative militia. The first was represented by the Popular Militias of the People and for the People (MPPP: Las Milicias Populares del Pueblo y para el Pueblo), which emerged in 1988 in barrios Popular 1, Popular 2, La Isla, and Santo Domingo in the Northeast, as well as in several barrios of the Northwest. Founded by a former guerrilla named Pablo García, and joined both by other ex-guerrillas such as Julio and by members of the community, MPPP, like similar militias during this period, was dedicated to countering the gangs and common criminals that were threatening the security and tranquility of their communities, before turning to social work and community service, but they later overreached in their efforts to expand into a

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[22] "… se establecieron las reglas del juego de las milicias: el ajusticiamiento como carta de presentación …, la persuasión y el diálogo con la delincuencia como vía de pacificación, todo esto por supuesto buscando la aprobación de la comunidad …." Quoted in Ibid., 15.

broader political movement. The second phase was represented by he People's Militias of the Aburrá Valley (MPVA: Milicias Populares del Valle de Aburrá), which was founded in 1990 and operated in the Northeastern and East Central zones more as negotiators of peace with and between gangs than as enforcers like the MPPP. The MPVA were political organizations created specifically "with the intention of being a 'legitimate authority' in their area of influence, favoring broad and democratic forms of participation and social organization and trying to neutralize the criminal groups through dissuasive [rather than coercive] mechanisms," although they, too, later overreached, becoming first little more than a private security firm and over time more of an extortive criminal organization. The third phase was represented by the Milicias Bolivarianas (MB), which were imported into several barrios from outside of the city by people who had intended to protect communities not only from gangs but from right-wing death squads and state security forces as well, but they failed to gain any traction within the communities because their managers did not understand local conditions well enough to be effective.[23]

The early militias were successful because they acted, in the words of one of their founders, as "a state inside the state"[24] — what I call a statelet (see § A.1). Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Ana María Jaramillo attributed this initial success to the facts that the militias provided security to communities suffering from a severe breakdown in social order, that they achieved a great deal of social support as a result of this security and the

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[23] "… se crearon con la intención de ser una 'autoridad legítima' en el área de su influencia, propiciando formas amplias y democráticas de participación y organización social y tratando de neutralizar a los grupos delincuenciales mediante mecanismos disuasivos." José Ricardo Barrero Tapias, "Las Milicias Populares y el ELN Como Casos de Estudio: El Anclaje Cultural del Conflicto Político," ["People's Militias and the ELN as Case Studies: The Cultural Anchor of the Political Conflict,"] *Revista Javeriana* (2001): 213.

[24] Quoted in Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Ana María Jaramillo, "Crime, (Counter-)Insurgency and the Privatization of Security: The Case of Medellín, Colombia."

social work that followed, and that they were explicitly dedicated to encouraging and promoting the communities' own moral values — within the poor barrios they controlled. Outside those barrios, they did not even pretend to be a state within a state. One former militant explained the dichotomy: "[Y]ou have to steal, but only from the rich; you can be an assassin or an assailant, but outside of the barrio; the state is the enemy and you have to hit it hard. So a crook can be a militia member inside the barrio but a thief in another part of the city ...."[25]

Despite their behavior outside of their barrios, and despite the fact that the militias did act as statelets, they were not fully antagonistic to state actors, but rather were in a both "competitive and mutualistic" relationship with them:

> Indeed, the extreme levels of corruption of the authorities allowed the militias to link their revolutionary discourse to the concrete anti-criminal motives they operated on. At the same time, in their everyday activities, the militias relied on the state — and on the very celebrated bureaucratic efficacy of Medellín officials. As a militia member used to say, their struggle consisted of "military undertakings in the night" and "social work in the day time." And, to be efficacious, social work required a state presence.[26]

Many of the militias worked particularly well with the city's Community Action Boards (JACs: Juntas de Acción Comunal), which had been formed several decades earlier with the explicit purpose of acting as the city's most local link to the people and as the people's most direct means of access to the city. As such the JACs have tended to be the component of the state with the greatest legitimacy according to the people of the barrios

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[25] "… hay que robar pero a los ricos, usted puede ser un sicario, un asaltante pero fuera del barrio, el Estado es el enemigo y hay que darle duro. Así un pillo puede ser miliciano en el barrio y en otra parte de la ciudad un delincuente …." Gilberto Medina Franco, "Una Historia de las Milicias de Medellín (Historia Sin Fin)," 12.

[26] Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Ana María Jaramillo, "Crime, (Counter-)Insurgency and the Privatization of Security."

of the JACs' jurisdiction. The JACs also have tended to have the greatest flexibility of all the city's agencies with respect to the organizations they can work with, because they act exclusively within certain barrios with very little city supervision. Their support for the militias' social workers during the late 1980s, therefore, was little different from their support for non-militia social workers and community organizations. Pablo García, the leader of MPPP in barrio Popular in the city's Northeast, won the support not only of the community but of Popular's JAC as well, after "cleansing" the barrio of its most "disposable" elements.[27] Despite the presence of the JACs, it was the militias, and not the state, that were clearly in control of those barrios; returning to the definition of *control* introduced in Chapter 1 (and elaborated in Appendix A), the militias had the ability to prevent the state from governing in their barrios, but they nonetheless selectively allowed the state to govern certain functions, and indeed facilitated the delivery of certain state services when it helped them consolidate their support within those communities.

Still, in 1989, the state security forces began confronting the militias. What they found, however, was not what they expected: They had expected the militias to be as poorly armed and undisciplined as the gangs they had displaced. What they found instead were well armed, well trained, and disciplined military units that knew the streets and alleys of the barrios and had strong backing from the community. The police were no match. Within a few years, the state would be forced both to operate through the criminal gangs that the militias opposed and, in parallel, to negotiate peace with the militias (see § 4.1.2).

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[27] Ibid.

This study's top-level findings — that, in Medellín, territorial control has reduced violence, and illegitimacy is positively correlated with the costs of territorial control — are partly supported by the dynamic between the gangs and the militias during this first of the five study periods. As this section demonstrates, the second finding (illegitimacy) certainly is supported: The gangs who had controlled micro-territories had illegitimized themselves by their abuses against community members and their transgressions against the communities' conservative values, opening themselves to challenge by the militias, who legitimized themselves to those same communities by protecting community members and enforcing the communities' values. But the fact that the militias had undertaken an explicit strategy of legitimation to gain territorial control suggested that some of the alternative hypotheses — that legitimacy is either a cause or an antecedent condition for territorial control and subsequent reductions in violence — might be true. (See Chapter 9 for a complete analysis of the dynamics of legitimacy.)

A closer look at the dynamics at a finer level of analysis, however, would show that other groups were able to win and keep territorial control without an explicit strategy of legitimation, suggesting that legitimacy, while helpful, is neither necessary nor sufficient to territorial control. This might be explained in part by reference to the relative amount of resources available: the later gangs who successfully controlled statelets (as opposed to the earlier small-time gangs who had merely controlled micro-territories) were flush with cash from narcotrafficking and *sicariato* (hired assassination) — they had partnered or contracted with outside trafficking networks that were connected to the global cocaine trade — while the militias who successfully controlled statelets, even if they enjoyed modest support from rural guerrillas, had to depend mostly on local sources

of funding, such as protection rackets and small-time drug sales. This observation

strongly supports the second finding, because if illegitimacy is positively correlated with

the costs of territorial control, then one would expect a resource-poor organization to

succeed only if it engaged in a strategy of legitimation, whereas a resource-rich

organization could succeed with merely a strategy of illegitimacy-avoidance. This

dynamic can be seen by looking a little more closely at what happened with some of the

gangs and militias in Caicedo La Sierra.

3.2. Caicedo La Sierra: From Invasions to Statelets

3.2.1. The Invasions Bring Crime, Violence, and Gangs

Danilo's family moved to Villa Turbay, in the uppermost part of Comuna 8,

around 1984, when he was about 14 years old.[28] The area was still mostly unoccupied.

"The roads weren't paved, there was no running water, there was no sewage. … It was

like farmland. There were very few houses …."[29] Of the houses that were there, some had

been built illegally, in a process Colombians call an "invasion," in which people would

arrive from another part of the city or from outside of the city, find unoccupied land, and

build shacks or houses; sometimes the police would arrive (perhaps called in by annoyed

residents of nearby barrios) to chase away the squatters and raze their homes, and

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[28] 'Danilo' is not his real name. He and several other residents I interviewed consented to my using their real names for this study, since, they said, their backgrounds or their current views are already known in the community. Nonetheless, as a precaution, I have decided to uses aliases for those whose past participation in illicit activity or current position in community leadership might, in the future, put them in a vulnerable position with the armed actors who have recently returned to the area.

[29] "Las vías estaban sin pavimentar, no había acueducto, no había alcantarillado, … eso era como una finca. Eran muy pocas casas …." 'Danilo,' personal communication (Interview No. 10), 30 March 2009.

sometimes they wouldn't. If enough people invaded and managed to stay put, the "pirate

barrio" might eventually be recognized by the city as a legal barrio and get its own

Community Action Board (JAC, Junta de Acción Comunal) and city-budget money. But

before that point (and sometimes even after), the quality of life was usually poor, since in

most instances the city could not legally provide services to settlements it did not

officially recognize (although some leaders of the squatter communities have managed,

with hard work, to persuade someone in the government to help). Like many others in

Villa Turbay, Danilo's family, originally from Envigado just south of Medellín, had lived

in the coffee zone south of Antioquia before moving to Villa Turbay and buying a small

house that an earlier squatter had built.

Even though there were few public services in the area, at least there were no

violent gangs. "At the time, Medellín … was still very healthy. There was peace."[30] But

the population of this sector was growing rapidly, and 1984 was the year Pablo Escobar

went into hiding and declared war against the Colombian state — and the year before

Medellín's homicide rate would begin its relentless climb. The peace in Danilo's

neighborhood would not last long.

As more and more people invaded the uppermost sectors of Comuna 8, and the

resulting overcrowding began to put more and more social and economic pressures on

residents, small street gangs or crews started to form. Most started out as nothing more

than a group of young people hanging out with their neighbors, in harmless, loose

gatherings called *parches* in the local slang. But disputes with neighboring parches would

sometimes crystallize one group's identity and create incentives for more disciplined self-

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[30] "En ese momento Medellín … era muy sano. Había paz." 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10.

defense, and if a slightly more closed, more formalized grouping resulted, it would become a crew or street gang (described as a *gallada*, a *pandilla,* or a *combo,* depending on the speaker). Some of these grew, some of them merged together, and some of them (called either *combos* or *bandas,* again depending on the speaker) turned to crime. In Danilo's neighborhood, "there was a combo up here, there was another one down there. Sometimes it was block to block, [but] they were like organizing themselves. It was a phenomenon that grew very fast."[31] Danilo himself would soon become part of that phenomenon.

Danilo's arrival in Villa Turbay at the beginning of the study period coincided not only with the rapid population growth in Caicedo La Sierra, which encouraged the formation of crews and street gangs, and not only with the opportunities afforded by the rise of narcotrafficking citywide, which encouraged the formation of criminal gangs, but also with a new phase in peace negotiations between guerrillas and the national government, which within a few years would lead to the formation of guerrilla militias. As discussed earlier, it was during the peace talks in 1984 that the M-19 guerrillas set up their peace camps in several barrios throughout the city. One was near Caicedo La Sierra, in barrio Villatina, just on the other side of La Castro creek from Las Estancias and Villa Liliam. It was at the Villatina peace camp, which was shut down in 1985, that Danilo and others who would later become members of street gangs, crime rings, militias, and paramilitaries got the weapons and military training that, over the decade and a half that followed, not only helped them defend their families and neighbors against criminals and their turf against neighboring gangs, but also enabled them to turn minor disputes into

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[31] "[Aquí] había un combo, abajo había otro. A veces era entre cuadras, se fueron como organizando. Eso fue un fenómeno que creció muy rápido." 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10.

violent conflicts, and major conflicts into all-out war; in other words, the peace camps —

in combination with the growth of narcotrafficking and the urban population and in the

context of a formerly rural civil war beginning to affect the cities — were the primary

drivers of the change in Medellín from mostly interpersonal-communal violence to the

more high-profile collective violence (or, to be more precise, they enabled people to add

collective violence to the communal violence that was already present and that also

increased during the same period). By the late 1980s, people were getting killed over

disputes about territory, money, women, pride, drugs, slights, revenge, expensive shoes,

and control over drug houses and brothels. Sometimes it wasn't enough to kill a single

individual; sometimes the whole family would be killed. Frequent shootings led to many

deaths by stray bullets. Many families were forced to move away.

Like many other residents interviewed for this study, Danilo attributed the rise in

violence in Caicedo La Sierra to the formal economy's weak job market, the easy money

and high-prestige lifestyle afforded by the illicit economy, and, at the root of both, the

absence of the state:

> I'd say that maybe [it was] a matter of employment or, since a lot of
> people are from other places …, a lack of opportunities. Well, and also
> that, back then, it was the time of narcotrafficking … and [it was]
> becoming like a business, like a lifestyle. … This was happening because
> there was no state presence there ….[32]

In fact, the state did have a presence in Caicedo La Sierra, but as several longtime

residents pointed out, it was limited to schools, health clinics, the JACs, and the

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[32] "Digamos que la cuestión de pronto [es] de empleo, o como mucha gente son de otras partes … la falta
de oportunidades. Y también pues que en ese tiempo estaba lo del narcotráfico … y eso se va
convirtiendose como en un negocio, como una forma de vida." 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10.

occasional police post; it was otherwise absent.[33] Nevertheless, it would be more accurate to say that the state's absence was less a cause of the rise in violence than a failure to prevent that rise.

Around 1987, a retired police officer known as 'Desiderio' took advantage of this absence — he knew the police were focused far more on the illicit activity taking place in the northern part of the city — and got some people together to form a crime ring that operated in upper Caicedo La Sierra near the border with corregimiento Santa Elena. The Desiderio gang robbed buses — sometimes going as far as setting up checkpoints — and eventually became enough of a nuisance to people passing through the community to draw the attention and intervention of the police. Other small gangs began emerging around the same time: One in the Santa Lucía sector, along Santa Elena creek in Las Estancias. Another in an area just north of Santa Lucía called Las Mirlas. A man people called 'Gamuza' formed a gang in a part of Lower Villa Liliam called La Arenera. Jairo Alberto Ospina Olaya, who became known as 'Alberto Cañada,' created a gang that came to be known as La Cañada and ended up controlling most of Lower Villa Liliam, contesting parts of Las Estancias, and operating in other parts of the city. And a man named Hugo formed the November 6 and 7 Militia (M-6&7: Milicias 6 y 7 de Noviembre), which ended up controlling La Sierra, Villa Turbay, Upper Villa Liliam, and nearby areas in Comuna 8 at the border of corregimiento Santa Elena. Both the M-19 and the National Liberation Army (ELN: Ejército de Liberación Nacional) formed guerrilla militias in areas just outside of Caicedo La Sierra: M-19 in and around Villatina, ELN in Ocho de Marzo, the uppermost barrio of Comuna 9, across the creek from Las Estancias

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[33] César Mendoza González, personal communication (Interview No. 6), 17 March 2009; 'Mama Luz' Interview No. 11.

and near the barrio that Pablo Escobar had built during his "Medellín without Slums" political campaign (see § 2.1.3). The M-6&7 militia clearly had leftist sympathies: its name celebrated the date of the M-19's attack on the Palace of Justice in 1985, an event any Villatina peace camper surely would have known a lot about. But while it did have friendly relations with the guerrilla militias in the area, M-6&7 was not directly controlled by any of them. (It was M-6&7 that Danilo joined, but he did not go into much detail about his life as a militant.)[34]

These are only the groups that eventually rose to prominence in and around Caicedo La Sierra. Interspersed among them were dozens of other smaller crews, crime rings, assassins-for-hire, drug dealers, poseurs, and wanna-be's, many of whom were involved in turf battles and street fights, and many of whom were eventually defeated or absorbed by stronger adversaries who had either the backing of elements of the Medellín Cartel or the backing of the people of their community. The gangs that ended up dominating Caicedo La Sierra were La Cañada and M-6&7, and the story of their rise to dominance is instructive with respect to questions about violence, control, governance, and legitimacy.

3.2.2. The Rise of M-6&7

Of the two, the November 6 and 7 Militia (M-6&7) — referred to informally in the area as *los de arriba,* which translates as *those from above* or *those people up there,*

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[34] 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10; 'Mama Luz,' Interview No. 11; 'Comandante Fernando,' interview with Arleison Arcos Rivas, "Ciudadanía Armada: Aportes a la Interpretación de Procesos de Defensa y Aseguramiento Comunitario en Medellín: El Caso de las Milicias Populares" ["Armed Citizenry: Contributions to the Interpretation of Community Protection and Defense Processes in Medellín: The Case of the People's Militias"] (Master's thesis, Universidad de Antioquia, 2005).

referring to its location in the upper part of Caicedo La Sierra, and more recently referred

to, retrospectively, as the La Sierra gang (as a consequence of a documentary about them;

see § 5.2) — is generally considered to have been less of a gang and more of a *milicia*

popular, which is alternately translated as *popular militia* and *people's militia.*

Ideologically, the M-6&7 militia was aligned with the guerrillas, and many of its

members had participated in the peace camps (see § 3.1.1), where they were indoctrinated

in revolutionary ideology and antiestablishment propaganda. However, they also learned

how to do social work and community service, and helped set up neighborhood-watch

programs to protect against crime. As a result, the young peace campers had already won

the affection of many in their own communities, who were not generally bothered by the

peace campers' anti-state rhetoric (since the state was not doing much for them in any

event) but who were very much bothered by the drug use, the prostitution, the robberies,

the rapes, and the murders that were taking place near their homes. When some of the

peace campers later took up arms to take a more direct role in combating crime and gang

violence, the community was ready to welcome and support them. "They came in doing

social work. They also went in looking at how people could stop getting robbed," Danilo

said, adding that "the first ones who went in were people from the barrio itself."[35]

In a 1999 interview, Hugo, the founder of M-6&7, explained the guerrillas'

strategy. After the peace camps shut down, he said, "we started to look inside the

structure we had in our organization."

> In the organization there were groups of people who were sympathizers to
> the organization, who weren't militants but who could be channeled into
> doing it, into developing this kind of semiclandestine structure, into taking

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[35] "Ellos entraron haciendo trabajo social. Entraron también mirando como que la gente no se dejara robar
… Incluso … los primeros que entraron ahí, era gente misma del barrio." 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10.

advantage of that kind of semiclandestine structures *[sic]* to launch the November 6 and 7 Militia project. So the militia project is *[sic]* born with people who were operating in the whole sector, from Caicedo on up … but it was a group that was very limited, let's say, with ten or twelve people from each one of those barrios. And then the need arose to strengthen the relationship with those communities and expand the militias' base so that it wouldn't be such a select group, but that we would call for the people to participate as well. … We started out working basically with adults, centering on activities to solve the need for security that was very much felt by the community. Then [targeting] some drug markets, some criminal gangs. That wasn't what fundamentally brought us together. We also tried to link it to some actions, even if what was being done was a day of protest … the political side of the business was getting introduced to them.[36]

The militia went far beyond propaganda, social work, and neighborhood protection. It engaged in an active and extensive "social cleansing" campaign as well, targeting gangsters, robbers, rapists, child molesters, prostitutes, street-corner drug users, and others who were harming the community or offending its conservative sensibilities. At first the militias would warn the offenders to stop the offending activity; then they would threaten them, offering them the choice of stopping the activity or leaving the barrio; and then they would kill the offenders in a public enough way that the execution would serve as both punishment and warning. Even though they would later overreach in this regard — they would end up targeting unfaithful spouses, homosexuals, curfew

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[36] "… nosotros comenzamos a explorar dentro de la estructura que teníamos. En la organización había unos grupos de gente simpatizante de la organización que no eran militantes pero que se podían canalizar para hacer, desarrollar ese tipo de estructuras semiclandestinas *[sic]* y se aprovechan ese tipo de estructuras semiclandestinas para lanzar el proyecto de milicias 6 y 7 de noviembre. Entonces el proyecto de milicias nace *[sic]* con gente que operaba en todo el sector, desde Caicedo hasta arriba … pero era un grupo digamos muy reducido, eran diez o doce personas de cada uno de esos barrios. Y luego se planteó la necesidad de afianzar la relación con esas comunidades y ampliar la base de las milicias, que esto no sea un grupo como tan selecto sino que convoquemos la gente también a que participe. … Iniciamos, arrancamos trabajando con gente adulta fundamentalmente, y en torno a actividades a resolver necesidades de seguridad, muy sentidas de la comunidad. Entonces, unas plazas de vicio, unas bandas de delincuentes. No fundamentalmente era eso lo que nos convocaba. Y adicionalmente intentábamos articular algunas acciones siquiera que se hacían a las jornadas de protesta … se le iba introduciendo pues ese matiz político al asunto." Punctuation edited for clarity. 'Comandante Hugo,' interview with Arleison Arcos Rivas, "Ciudadanía Armada," 205.

breakers, street children, bad fathers, and other people who, according to the conservative standards of the community, were undesirable or "disposable" — the militia's social cleansing campaign was, for the first several years, broadly supported by those in the community who had been longing for a return to order. By 1990, the M-6&7 had managed to oust most of the groups and individuals who had been creating disorder, to establish territorial control, and to return some degree of social control to La Sierra (about 50 city blocks in size) and Villa Turbay (about 30 city blocks); it occasionally exercised control over Upper Villa Liliam (about 50 city blocks) as well. It had between 200 and 300 troops under its command.

        Not everybody was happy with M-6&7's control. Some had political objections to its leftist ideology, but I found only one reference to this being a factor in anyone's decision to leave the barrio (and in that case the interviewee seemed to suggest the ideological difference centered primarily on the use of drugs: several young men left M-6&7's territory and joined the La Cañada gang because of M-6&7's drug-use prohibitions).[37] Instead, what I found was that the militia's opponents were mainly the people who had been threatened by the militias and the families and friends of the victims. Many gang members (and their families) who were forced to leave the area controlled by *los de arriba* ended up settling not too far away, down in Las Estancias and Lower Villa Liliam, where some tried simply to blend in and stay out of the conflict and others (like the drug users just cited) actually joined or sought protection from *los de abajo,* the gang that controlled the areas below: La Cañada.

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[37] 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10.

3.2.3. The Rise of La Cañada

The Spanish word *cañada* [cahn-YAH-da] means "stream" and in Caicedo La Sierra locals use that word to refer to Castro Creek (Quebrada La Castro), which flows down Sugarloaf Hill (Cerro Pan de Azucar) from corregimiento Santa Elena and into Santa Elena Creek. Castro Creek serves as the lower boundary of Caicedo La Sierra (i.e. it separates Villa Liliam and Las Estancias above from Villatina and San Antonio below). La Cañada is also the nickname residents gave to the area near the stream (primarily in Lower Villa Liliam). Since that is the area where the gang founded by Jairo Alberto Ospina Olaya emerged, the gang picked it up as its own name and its founder picked its up as his alias, 'Alberto Cañada.'

Unlike M-6&7, Alberto and La Cañada did not have political aspirations. While they certainly engaged in a degree of community protection, they were primarily a criminal organization that controlled the local drug markets (called *plazas de vicio* in Spanish) and smuggling routes, did some contract work (such as assassinations and smuggling) for Medellín's narcotraffickers and other customers, and made enough money in the illicit economy to pay off the police and the army to just "let them work."[38] La Cañada later became a silent partner of the state in its fight against the militias. It ended up controlling, either directly or through proxy street crews, a number of neighborhoods in lower Caicedo La Sierra (plus others in surrounding areas), each about 20 city blocks in size: Lower Villa Liliam, including a section called La Arenera; Santa Lucía, in upper Las Estancias along the creek; and Las Mirlas in upper Las Estancias just north of Santa Lucía.

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[38] Ibid.

Up to around 1991 or 1992, M-6&7 and La Cañada consolidated a great deal of territorial control over Caicedo La Sierra, and each within its own borders tried to maintain a degree of community support: M-6&7 primarily through a strategy of legitimation, La Cañada primarily by virtue of the security and benefits it provided to friendly locals and the wealth and power it was able to accumulate through the illicit economy (and, later, the backing of the state). As long as both generally protected and respected members of the community — as long as they did not revert to the pervasively abusive and dangerous behavior of the previous generation of gangs and criminals — the community did not oppose them in any serious way (and those who tried, died, or were forced to leave). Many people even actively supported, rooted for, or verbally defended the side that controlled their own barrio, a reflection of the local culture's strong in-group mentality. Both would remain in control of their respective territories — with occasional disputes between them and against other, lesser gangs in the area — throughout the 1990s. By the end of that decade, however, La Cañada would enjoy the backing of state actors, narcotraffickers, and paramilitaries in opposition to M-6&7, enabling it to stay in control of its territory despite its failure to ever really legitimize itself to the community.

M-6&7 would be another story entirely: it would delegitimize and then illegitimize itself to the people in its own territory and lose their backing, while simultaneously fighting opposition from La Cañada, the state, the paramilitaries, the guerrillas — and its own members.

Chapter 4. Gangs and the Corruption of Guerrilla Militias: 1992-1998

In the last chapter, the poor hillside barrios on Medellín's periphery had started out as nearly "ungoverned" but relatively stable areas. There was violence and crime, but they were at a level that most residents could tolerate and address within existing social structures. Evidence suggests that their tolerance was due to the strength of community's social institutions — there were usually a church, some schools, reasonably strong families, and nosey neighbors — and those social institutions had the ability to maintain a respectable degree of social control, despite the scant presence of state institutions (such as police) or other armed actors willing and able to maintain order. In short, control was maintained by the community. But an influx of outsiders into those communities put pressure on their social institutions, and by the end of the 1980s, one might say that social control lost ground to territorial control under the law of the jungle: the criminals, crews, and gangs who emerged amid the overcrowding fought over micro-territories and local access to global illicit markets, and they clearly had the capability to prevent at least some forms of outside governance and self-governance. But as rulers of the barrio they were completely illegitimate in the eyes of the barrio communities: the insecurity that resulted from their methods of micro-territorial control created a demand for a return to social control.

In upper Caicedo La Sierra, that demand was met by the November 6 and 7 Militia (M-6&7), which, at least initially, enjoyed some support from most of the community based on a relationship of legitimacy. In the terminology of the framework

used in this study (see Appendix C), M-6&7 made their rules known (transparent), demonstrated their capability to enforce them (credible), became advocates for the communities' own moral values (justifiable, or even admirable), could be and often were approached by the community to have conflicts and disagreements resolved (accessible), and by all accounts treated most community members with dignity (respectful). (The barrio's low-status members — the so-called disposable people — certainly could said to have been treated inequitably, but I could find no information to support any claims about how equitably other members of the community felt the militants had treated them.)

In lower Caicedo La Sierra, the dynamic was different: no militia emerged to take control, either because they never tried to take control of some blocks or because where they tried they failed because the gangs that were there were too well armed. The most significant of these well armed gangs to emerge was La Cañada, whose strength derived from the economic resources it was able to bring to the fight. La Cañada did not emerge with any political or social program; rather, it grew based on its ability to win economic resources from the illicit economy, primarily through contracts from, and drug sales for, the Medellín Cartel. La Cañada did enjoy some degree of support from the community, which derived from the fact that they did protect favored residents against rival gangs and the militants from above, and took some other steps to keep the community happy. "If the people from the community are happy, you can manage things better," one resident said, since it gives people a reason to act as informants; plus, in a community where a lot of people have already suffered, he added, further harming them risked turning them into *sapos* (frogs), or informants, for La Cañada's rivals.[1] La Cañada's control, therefore,

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[1] "Si la gente de la comunidad está contenta usted maneja mejor las cosas." 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10.

derived primarily from its military strength (it could win acquiescence through coercion) and its economic strength (it could win support through barter), and only secondarily from any relationships of legitimacy: Its rules were generally known (transparent) and usually enforced (credible), and several residents mentioned that the gangsters were respectful and accessible (e.g. they could be asked to resolve conflicts in the community). And La Cañada did not explicitly work to embody or promote community values (for example, they permitted drug use, which most in the conservative communities could not approve of), nor did it enforce its own rules equitably (people they didn't like did not generally enjoy their protection). In short, rather than maintaining territorial control primarily through a strategy of legitimation (actively making oneself worthy of the community's support), they seemed implicitly to be engaging in a strategy of illegitimacy-avoidance (working merely to avoid triggering a moral obligation of opposition).

The fact that both groups could maintain control shows that, at least in the short term, having legitimacy according to the community is a useful, but neither a necessary nor a sufficient, condition to winning or maintaining territorial control, as long as the group in control stays within certain bounds of behavior with respect to that community. Legitimacy lowers the costs of territorial control, which is why the relatively resource-poor M-6&7 had to engage in a legitimation strategy, while the relatively resource-rich La Cañada could get away with weak legitimation efforts and focus mainly on illegitimacy-avoidance.

As the present chapter will demonstrate, the resource-poor militants in both Caicedo La Sierra and Medellín as a whole would end up not only failing in their

legitimation strategies but also actually illegitimizing themselves by failing to maintain stability in their territories and as a consequence would ultimately lose those territories.

4.1. Medellín: A War of All against All

4.1.1. The Militias Start to Lose Control

A man was outside in the street near his house in northern Medellín, so drunk that he was chattering, according to one witness, like a parrot. His relatives, giving up on trying to get him home by themselves, went to the local militia commander to ask for his help in getting him back inside the house. The commander tells the story:

> This man was a father in the family, an honorable person who got out of control only when he drank too much. As the commander of that zone, I remember having sent two young guys to help the family get the drunk man inside. After a few minutes, some blasts were heard: the guys killed the man in the coldest of blood right in the middle of the crying family. The explanation the guys gave was that the drunk had insulted them. Despite all the meetings we had with the neighborhood, the expulsion of the two young guys, we were never able to overcome the ill-will within the community on that street.[2]

The leftist militias that had taken control and brought order to some of Medellín's most violent barrios in the late 1980s and early 1990s — primarily in the Northeastern zone, but also in the Northwestern, downtown, East Central, and West Central areas — began experiencing the pain of governing once they had established a monopoly over the

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[2] "Este señor era un padre de familia, una persona honorable, que sólo cuando se tomaba unos tragos se descontrolaba. Como jefe de zona recuerdo haber enviado dos muchachos para ayudar a la familia a entrar al borrachito. A los pocos minutos se escucharon varias detonaciones: los muchachos mataron al borracho con la mayor de la sangre fría en medio del llanto de su familia; la explicación que dieron los muchachos fue que el borracho los insultó. A pesar de las reuniones que se hicieron con el vecindario, la expulsión de los muchachos de la organización, no se logró subsanar el malestar dentro de la comunidad de la cuadra." Gilberto Medina Franco, "Una Historia de las Milicias de Medellín (Historia Sin Fin)," 52.

use of force in their tiny statelets. Incidents such as that involving the drunk became

common enough to begin driving wedges between the militias and the communities that

had once welcomed them. Three things corrupted the militias' ability to realize their

original vision for the city: internal divisions, the lure of easy money, and overreaching.

First, as time went by and the militias grew in both size and local power, internal

disagreements grew into internal divisions, and soon the militias were generating splinter

groups that sometimes challenged their parent organizations violently. This was the case

with the Popular Militias of the People and for the People (MPPP: Las Milicias Populares

del Pueblo y para el Pueblo), which controlled and governed much of the city's Northeast

and was expanding westward and southward by 1991. The organization had been well

governed internally, with a central command coordinating and guiding decentralized

units, some governing areas as small as a city block, and the MPPP even opened a militia

school in January 1991 that taught urban warfare and political doctrine. According to one

first-person account, however, as MPPP's numbers grew, midlevel commanders began

> launching their own battles to win community recognition for themselves;
> they worked hard to score the greatest number of conquests over the
> chicks in the barrio. Personal friction with other leaders became frequent,
> each making a verbal display of their exploits, all of which was bringing
> about a tribal style of resolving internal differences. That's how MPPP got
> broken up into cliques and affinity groups that had less and less in
> common.[3]

In the face of these internal divisions and petty disputes, some of the most radical of the

MPPP's commanders took a hard line, both politically and territorially: they criticized as

traitors moderates and others on the left who would consider negotiating peace, violently

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[3] "Cada uno de esos jefes lideraba su propia batalla por ganarse el reconocimiento de las comunidades; se esforzaba en conquistar el mayor número de sardinas del barrio. Los roces personales con otros líderes se volvieron frecuentes, cada uno hacía un despliegue verbal de sus hazañas, todo lo cual fue imponiendo un estilo tribal para resolver las diferencias internas. Así quedaron fracturadas estas MPPP en grupos de afectos y simpatías que cada vez tenían menos en común." Ibid., 49.

attacked any mainstream politician who tried to campaign in or near their territory, and in the end had to turn to former gangsters who knew how to use weapons to help them keep control of the territory they still held. This hard-line response involved a great deal of violence, and as more and more residents of the territories they controlled were victimized — they or their families were affected directly by the disputes and indirecty by the disorder those disputes brought about — the MPPP increasingly alienated the communities they operated in. The alienation opened the door to splinter groups and challengers endeavoring to win the community support the MPPP had lost. The People's Militias of the Aburrá Valley (MPVA: Milicias Populares del Valle de Aburrá) emerged in the Northeast during this period and operated by working, as nonviolently as possible, with and through community groups that had been alienated by the MPPP. In the Northwestern zone, some midlevel MPPP commanders joined up with a group of Popular Liberation Army (EPL: Ejército Popular de Liberación) guerrillas to form a splinter group called the Workers Command (COB: Comandos Obreros). Other splinter groups emerged as well, and the battles for territory returned, barrio by barrio, just as during the militias' wars against crews and gangs.[4]

Second, the broader political vision that most of the militias originally had would have required more resources than were immediately available from voluntary community sources, and some militants responsible for raising resources began playing accounting tricks, seeking "voluntary" donations more coercively, or hiring their units

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[4] José Ricardo Barrero Tapias, "Las Milicias Populares y el ELN Como Casos de Estudio"; Gilberto Medina Franco, "Una Historia de las Milicias de Medellín (Historia Sin Fin)," 43.

out for private security services.[5] Moreover, according to Tomás Ernesto Concha Sanz, who got to know the militants during the later peace negotiations, "Although they had altruistic attitudes, such as defending the interests of the community and protecting them against attacks from crooks, it was obvious that the low level of culture [and] the almost nonexistent political education [of all but a few of their members] … was going to determine that they would progressively fall back into attitudes similar to those practiced by the criminals they said they were fighting."[6] In many cases, those attitudes included rationalizing their involvement in the drug trade and other illicit businesses as a way to finance their operations; with time, their visions of the greater good were lost amid the high-prestige lifestyle afforded them by such easy money. According to a former militia leader, it was this ambition to expand into a broader political movement that led to their downfall:

> The militias, at first, began to defend their barrio and gave their lives for their family and the barrio; in a second stage, some militants and directors began to manage high revenues and other kinds of businesses. Then, economic interests were set up around the militias. A lot of outsiders came in with business proposals for narcotrafficking, crime, … a barn, a supermarket, attracted by the security the militias offered; then the disintegration problem began: many of the decisions the militias were making were for economic interests. I remember cases of directors responsible for economic projects who pilfered piles of money. The corruption was huge.[7]

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[5] José Ricardo Barrero Tapias, "Las Milicias Populares y el ELN Como Casos de Estudio"; Tomás Ernesto Concha Sanz, "El Caso de la Milicias o Acuerdo de Santa Elena," ["The Case of the Militias, or the Santa Elena Accords,"] in *Experiencias de Intervención en el Conflicto Urbano*, ed. Ana Daza A. (Medellín, Colombia: Alcaldía de Medellín, 2001), 213.

[6] "Aunque tenían actitudes altruistas como la de defender los intereses de la comunidady protegerla de los ataques de los 'pillos', era obvio que su bajo nivel cultural, su casi nula formación política … iba a determinar que, progresivamente, cayeran en actitudes similares a loas que ejercían los delincuentes que decían combatir." Ibid.

[7] "Las milicias, en un primer momento, empezaron a defender su barrio y daban la vida por su familia y el barrio; en una segunda etapa algunos milicianos y dirigentes empezaron a manejar ingresos altos y otro tipo de negocios. Entonces, alrededor de las milicias se constituyeron intereses económicos. Mucha gente de

Moreover, during Pablo Escobar's war against the state, he began to use revolutionary and nationalistic rhetoric to win popular support for his campaign to outlaw the extradition of Colombian citizens. "This [rhetoric] blurred the militia/criminal dichotomy, as [Escobar] started to tolerate and even encourage the activity of the militias in some parts of the city, and to funnel arms and other resources to some of them."[8]

Finally, the militias' "social cleansing" campaigns started to grate on the communities. At first welcomed as the only available mechanism for maintaining social order, the killing of people for dangerous (and, later, merely disapproved-of) behaviors meant that, over time, more and more people in the communities were feeling the loss of a family member or friend to social cleansing. A corner drug dealer might not be somebody any community would necessarily welcome in the neighborhood, but the drug dealer is often a family member of someone in that very community and, if the community is poor, he might actually be that family's only source of income — so his death would sting twice. Over time, more and more families felt that double sting and wanted it to end. Combined with the lure of easy money from narcotraffickers, and the radicalization and fragmentation brought about by the militias' growing pains, this overreaching during what Arcos Rivas calls the "late period" of the militias resulted in a "greying of the lines between gangs and militias": "This period, between 1991 and 1994, was characterized by the resort to summary executions, arbitrary rule, the community's

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afuera venía a proponer negocios, el narcotráfico, la delincuencia, instalaban que un granero o un supermercado atraídos por la seguridad que brindaba la milicia, entonces, empezó el problema de descomposición, muchas de las decisiones que tomaban las milicias eran por intereses económicos; me tocó casos de dirigentes responsables de proyectos económicos que despilfarraban un montón de dinero. La corrupción era grande." Quoted in José Ricardo Barrero Tapias, "Las Milicias Populares y el ELN Como Casos de Estudio," 217.

[8] Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Ana María Jaramillo, "Crime, (Counter-)Insurgency and the Privatization of Security."

ignorance about civil and military decisions, [and] the resort to murder as a tool for resolving conflicts within the group."[9] Those behaviors called into question their legitimacy according to the very communities whose legitimacy they had explicitly solicited when they had first emerged.

Moreover, it was the most violent period in Medellín's history. It was in 1992 that Pablo Escobar escaped from prison and waged his final war against the Colombian state, enlisting many of his assassin gangs to kill police officers and other officials and funneling resources to the militias who were also in a war against the state. It was also the year his cartel associates started turning on him in response to the torture, murder, and mutilation of four of his most powerful business partners in July 1992 (the surviving associates would form the anti-Escobar death squad, the Pepes, in February 1993). With multiple wars being fought simultaneously, plus the general lawlessness that usually accompanies urban war, December 1992 was the deadliest month in Medellín's history: the city's Secretaría de Gobierno reported 647 homicides in the city that month — an average of nearly 21 per day. The year as a whole also experienced peaks in: suicides (105 self-inflicted deaths, which would not be exceeded again until 1998), combat between and among all kinds of armed actors (57 separate events, which would not be exceeded again until 2002), forced disappearances (64 people, which would only be

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[9] "Me refiero concretamente al periodo tardío de las Milicias Populares, que coincide con el engrisamiento de las bandas y milicias. Este periodo, entre 1991-1994, se caracteriza por el recurso a las ejecuciones sumarias, la arbitrariedad, el desconocimiento de la comunidad para la toma de decisiones militares y cívicas, el recurso al homicidio como instrumento de resolución de conflictos al interior del grupo." Arleison Arcos Rivas, "Ciudadanía Armada," 108.

surpassed in 1996), and massacres by paramilitary groups (5 separate events, which

would not be surpassed until 2001).[10]

4.1.2. Coosercom and the Peace Talks that Brought War

It was during this extremely violent period that some of the militants, including

MPPP founder Pablo García and other relatively moderate leaders, decided it was time to

negotiate a disarmament. Even though they were in control of entire barrios, even entire

zones of the city, these leaders made a calculation that, given the resources available to

the state, and given the constant battles with the police, gangs, and rival militias, it was

ultimately in their own and their communities' best interests to negotiate a settlement.

"Irregular war is not sustainable," even less so in an urban environment where the state

has all the resources, explained César Mendoza González, a human rights activist who

has followed the demobilization. "Day after day, they were getting worn out. That's why

they laid down their arms."[11] State actors likewise had recognized that at least part of the

problem could be resolved by reincorporating at least the most moderate members of the

militias into civilian life. In 1991, national- and department-level state actors made secret

contacts with certain militia leaders to test the possibility of a negotiated agreement, then

started creating the legal framework that would be needed to begin talks in public. If the

militias were not, technically, armed political actors but were instead crews formed to

protect themselves against criminals, or gangs formed to engage in crime (and different

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[10] Suicide data from Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE), "Estadísticas Vitales," http://www.dane.gov.co (accessed 2 August 2009); combat events and massacres by paramilitaries from Centro de Recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos (CERAC), Bogotá, Colombia; and forced disappearances from Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC), Medellín, Colombia.

[11] César Mendoza González, Interview No. 6.

militias had characteristics of both), then there was no legal framework for negotiating

with them: when the country's Constitution was revised in 1991, it included clauses that

were intended to help negotiate peace with political armed groups that were challenging

the state. That problem was solved by administrative fiat: the state declared the militias to

be political actors, and negotiations began in February 1994 in Santa Elena, a town on the

rural outskirts of the city.[12] Homicides dropped 23 percent that month from a month

before.[13]

      Present at the negotiations were representatives of MPPP and MPVA on one side

and representatives of the national, departmental, and local governments on the other,

assisted by the good offices of the Catholic Church and a number of non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) such as Corporación Region and Pastoral Social de Medellín. But

the negotiations themselves were a disaster: the state representatives ended up spending

most of their energy protecting the militia representatives from each other. Soon after the

negotiations began, accusations of treason led to internecine killings among the militias;

those at the negotiating table at Santa Elena were targeted both by other militia

representatives also at Santa Elena and by the non-negotiating purists who considered all

the negotiators to be traitors to the cause. "Even worse, the negotiation process weakened

the broad social support for the militias. As soon as they abandoned their military

activities, they forfeited the power that allowed them both to control the gangs and to

promote their cherished moral order."[14] After the drop in February, when the negotiations

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[12] Tomás Ernesto Concha Sanz, "El Caso de la Milicias o Acuerdo de Santa Elena."

[13] Secretaría de Gobierno Municipal de Medellín, Subsecretaría de Orden Civil, Unidad de Convivencia Ciudadana.

[14] Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Ana María Jaramillo, "Crime, (Counter-)Insurgency and the Privatization of Security."

began, homicides jumped 47 percent in March.[15] Nonetheless, the negotiations were successfully concluded after four months and the terms of what became known as the Santa Elena Accords were announced on 26 May 1994. But the exclusion of community representatives from the talks themselves, and the violence that accompanied the negotiations, made it inevitable that those terms would not be considered acceptable by the common people who lived in the barrios who were the supposed beneficiaries; at the very least, the agreement would not enjoy the benefit of the doubt.

The agreement did provide for a number of small improvements in the quality of life in the barrios the militias had controlled: infrastructure and other projects that generated a little bit of employment, health and educational investments, recreational programs, help in improving and getting legal title to housing, and so on. But these efforts were underfunded and poorly managed.

The most visible product of the negotiations, therefore, was the Community Services and Security Cooperative, known as Coosercom (La Cooperativa de Seguridad y Servicios a la Comunidad), an organization made up of several hundred demobilized militants who were to be paid by the state to maintain order in the barrios under their jurisdiction and provide intelligence to the police regarding crime in those barrios. Coosercom, in other words, was an organization of demobilized militants that was funded and legitimized by the state to continue doing what the militants had already been doing for several years (maintaining order), only now as a *de facto* appendage to the state security forces. In return for their demobilization, the cooperative members were given

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[15] Secretaría de Gobierno Municipal de Medellín, Subsecretaría de Orden Civil, Unidad de Convivencia Ciudadana.

amnesty for all crimes, political or not, and received a monthly salary and five buildings to use as headquarters for their work in 32 barrios.[16]

With the ill-will generated (during the negotiations) between and among the militants who were negotiating, between them and the non-negotiating militants, and between all of the militants and many of the community members that had once supported them, there was no way this agreement would succeed. It hardly lasted two months: the internecine killings that accompanied the accusations of treason continued as they had during the negotiations, and almost as soon as the agreement was announced the government began receiving credible accusations of involvement in crimes and abuses by Coosercom members, who now had greater military capacity and state support, but very little real oversight.

And then, in July 1994, Pablo García, the founder of MPPP and one of the lead negotiators of the Santa Elena Accords, was assassinated. The leader of the MPVA was arrested for the crime. A new militia-on-militia war broke out, and by the time Coosercom was formally dissolved a few years later, all of its leaders and hundreds of its members had been killed, and the organization was nothing more than a failed experiment: the amnesties agreed to during the negotiations had been declared illegal within the judicial system, and the legitimate political movement that the militants had hoped they would be able to develop and lead never got off the ground. Their political candidates did very poorly at election time, even within the communities they had once protected: they simply "did not recognize the enormous gap between their imagined constituency, the manual workers, with their complex political culture, and their own

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[16] Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Ana María Jaramillo, "Crime, (Counter-)Insurgency and the Privatization of Security"; Tomás Ernesto Concha Sanz, "El Caso de la Milicias o Acuerdo de Santa Elena."

rather obscure, revolutionary insider frame of reference."[17] What remained of the militants by mid-decade were relatively isolated vestiges of the "political" militias, dedicated to their original vision, who never demobilized, some of whom continued to operate more or less as originally envisioned and managed to maintain control over certain barrios and even to expand their territory, others of whom tried to stick with their original vision but overreached and failed as a result. These were surrounded by the "criminal" (or "narco") militias who were militants in name only, corrupted by the lure of easy money from narcotrafficking and other criminal activities and little different from the crews and gangs whose abuses they had originally been formed to oppose. The last vestiges of Coosercom were dismantled in November 1996.[18]

4.1.3. Gangs Learn a Lesson from the Militia Experience

Meanwhile, there continued to be many barrios that the militias never took control over, those barrios remaining instead in the hands of crews, crews confederated with larger gangs, or those larger gangs themselves, usually with funding from narcotrafficking or assassination contracts. A lot of those gangs were inconsiderate or abusive to their neighbors, able to maintain control of their barrios mainly by virtue of their economic and military power (i.e. they were able to buy off, displace, or kill any significant source of opposition). But many others took a lesson from the golden era of

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[17] Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Ana María Jaramillo, "Crime, (Counter-)Insurgency and the Privatization of Security."

[18] Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas, Héctor Gallo, and Blanca Inés Jiménez Zuluaga, *Dinámicas de Guerra y Construcción de Paz*, 46.

the militias (pre-1991) — that legitimacy lowers the costs of territorial control — and

"were vigorously promoting communitarian causes to win the support of the population":

> They learnt self-discipline and started to impose some basic regulations on
> criminal activity (you shall not steal in your own barrio, etc.). Other
> groups — opposed to both the gangs and the militias — appeared, but they
> too seemed to have learned that to maintain territorial control they had to
> offer security, some kind of self-discipline, and a constructive,
> communitarian set of activities.[19]

Still, violence was rampant, and whatever the behavior of the gangs toward

members of their own barrios, they were undeniably abusive both to other gangs and to

people from other barrios. Henry Holguín (ohl-KGEEN), for example, came of age

during the gang wars of the late 1980s. He joined his local crew, La Banda de Lebrón,

and by the early 1990s had moved up in the ranks to become its leader. Operating in the

Northwestern zone, Holguín grew Lebrón into a gang of 180 members who, among other

things, took contracts for narcotraffickers. After Escobar's death in December 1993, they

began absorbing smaller gangs and crews, and during the gang-militia wars of the early

1990s went on the offensive against the Milicias Bolivarianas, whose social cleansing

campaigns were being carried out clumsily and never resulted in the community backing

that the other militias had enjoyed, thereby opening the door to challengers such as the

Lebrón gang. After defeating that militia in the Northeastern zone, Lebrón's war against

other, non-militia gangs continued.

As with most gangs who controlled territory, the people who lived in Lebrón's

territory could not venture into streets controlled by other gangs, and people from outside

of its territory were not allowed to enter, upon penalty of death. These gangs fought to

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[19] Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Ana María Jaramillo, "Crime, (Counter-)Insurgency and the Privatization of Security."

win, with draconian border-control policies meant to help them keep definitive control over their own little statelets: "Those territories became forbidden zones for the rest of the community. Crossing their borders could cost you your life." Holguín's story, or variations on it, was one of many that played out in scores of barrios throughout the city during the 1990s. By 1995, it was estimated that there were 156 separate gangs operating in the city — a number that surely was approximate (it came from a gangster-sponsored informal census) and that certainly changed frequently.[20] By the end of the decade there were an estimated 8,000 people, most between the ages of 15 and 25, who were members of somewhere between 180 and 220 different gangs, crews, militias, and other types of armed groupings involved in "criminal activities such as assassination-for-hire, kidnapping, extortion, bank robbery, vehicle theft, etc., whether on their own initiative or under contract to criminal, guerrilla, or self-defense organizations."[21]

While those figures might have been smaller in the 1990s than in the 1980s, and while each year after 1991 had fewer homicides than the previous, most accounts of the 1990s nevertheless suggest that, in peoples' subjective judgments, the problem of violence was not getting any better from where it had been during the earlier, deadlier years: the fear remained constant, and possibly grew, the longer the gang-militia, gang-

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[20] "Esos territorios se convirtieron en zonas vedadas para el resto de la comunidad. Traspasar sus fronteras podía costar la vida." Semana, "Paz de verdad," ["Real peace,"] 8 May 2000.

[21] "… actividades criminales como el sicariato, el secuestro, la extorsión, el asalto a bancos, el robo de vehículos, etc., bien por su iniciativa o bien porque son contratados por organizaciones criminales, guerrilla y autodefensas." Luis Fernando Duque, *Antecedentes y Evolución del Programa de Convivencia Ciudadana de Medellín [Antecedents and Evolution of the Citizens Coexistence Program of Medellín]* (Medellín, Colombia: Alcaldía de Medellín, 2000), 20.

gang, and militia-militia wars continued.[22] By the mid-1990s people were tired of violence and ready for peace — even the gangs (some of them, at least) were ready for a change.

4.1.4. The City Responds to the Violence

Peace negotiations between pairs of warring factions began taking place from community to community, some led by local parishes, others by determined community leaders, still others by jailed former gangsters — such as Holguín, who after defeating the Bolivarianas was arrested and sent to Medellín's toughest prison, Bellavista, where he had a change of heart and, with a couple dozen other former gangsters, succeeded in negotiating cease fires and non-aggression micro-pacts between gangs still on the outside.[23] But because there were scores, perhaps hundreds, of different armed actors fighting each other in ever-shifting alliances in Medellín, there were probably a hundred micro-wars taking place at any given moment. While pairwise negotiations could help calm things down for a few blocks or half a barrio, stabilizing the city as a whole, or at least large sectors of the city at a time, would require a much more systematic effort. In addition to the Santa Elena Accords with the militias, many other efforts were attempted by the public, private, and voluntary sectors, sometimes working independently, sometimes working together, beginning in the late 1980s and picking up speed in the mid-1990s. These efforts included

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[22] Marta Inés Villa Martínez, Luz Amparo Sánchez Medina, and Ana María Jaramillo Arbeláez, *Rostros del Miedo: Una Investigación Sobre los Miedos Sociales Urbanos [Faces of Fear: A Study of Urban Social Fears]* (Medellín, Colombia: Corporación Región, 2003).

[23] CIDEAL, *La Violencia en Medellín y Colombia: Iniciativas Para la Solución del Conflicto (1980-2004) [Violence in Medellín and Colombia: Initiatives for Solving the Conflict (1980-2004)]* (Medellín, Colombia: CIDEAL–Pastoral Social–AECI, 2005); Semana, "Paz de verdad."

reinsertion processes for amnestied members of different political groups; peace pacts between young gang and militia members and their reinsertion into social life; processes to educate communicators in the management of violence issues with the support of various universities; support for the justice [system], especially modernizing administration and management for judges; rapprochement between communities and the police; strengthening of family dynamics; and education campaigns for peace and coexistence in schools and communities.[24]

One of the first citywide efforts to address violence took place due to a change that had taken place nationally: mayors, for the first time in Colombia's history, were elected by popular vote beginning in 1989, a change that forced candidates for office to be more responsive to — or at least give lip service to — the concerns of citizens. The winner of Medellín's first popular mayoral election, Juan Gómez Martínez, had visited many of the city's barrios during the campaign to hear what the concerns were, and overwhelmingly the concern was over violence. During his two-year term, therefore, Gómez tried to involve the Juntas de Acción Comunal (JAC, Community Action Boards) in conflict resolution in the most violent or at-risk barrios, but law enforcement was the primary focus of his administration's approach to countering violence, which mainly involved increasing the number of Comandos de Atención Inmediata (CAI, which are police units stationed in the barrios) and investing in more police barracks throughout the city.

But policy makers at the local and national levels recognized that a stronger police presence would not be sufficient, either in the short or the long term, to seriously

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[24] "… procesos de reinserción de amnistiados de diferentes grupos políticos, los pactos de paz entre jóvenes integrantes de bandas y milicias populares y su reinserción a la vida social, los procesos de educación a comunicadores en el manejo de temas de violencia con apoyo de varias universidades, el apoyo a la justicia, en especial la modernización en la administración y gestión de los juzgados, el acercamiento entre la comunidad y la Policía, el fortalecimiento de la dinámica familiar, y campañas de educación para la paz y la convivencia en las escuelas y en al ámbito comunitario." Luis Fernando Duque, *Antecedentes y Evolución del Programa de Convivencia Ciudadana de Medellín*, 21.

counter violence, and in many ways could actually increase it in the short term. Luis

Fernando Duque, who designed the city's most successful peace program in the late

1990s, uses a public-health analogy to explain why. Using law enforcement as the main

strategy for countering violence, he told me, is a reactive strategy, like beginning to treat

a disease only after it has begun to spread. In public health, reactive strategies — such as

disease management and rehabilitation — are a form of *tertiary prevention:* the disease

has already struck, so efforts are put into mitigating its effects and preventing its further

spread. Law enforcement and criminal rehabilitation are the analogues to public policies

for countering violence. *Secondary prevention* treats the disease upon infection but before

the onset of symptoms (disease screening and preventive treatment are examples),

analogous to efforts to convert gangsters into citizens before they commit crimes, for

example. *Primary prevention* focuses on general environmental conditions and human

behaviors to avoid infection in the first place (such as making clean water and vaccines

available, or advocating hand-washing or condom use), analogous to efforts to prevent

youths from joining gangs or committing crimes in the first place.[25] What Medellín

needed, Duque told city officials, were more secondary and primary interventions so the

city could get ahead of the problem.[26] And in fact, during the 1990s, the trend in policy

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[25] Luis Fernando Duque, personal communication (Interview No. 19), 13 May 2009; citing Hugh Rodman
Leavell and E. Gurney Clark, *Preventive Medicine for the Doctor in His Community: An Epidemiologic
Approach,* 2nd ed. (New York: Blakiston Division, 1958).

[26] The recommendations of his research team have been published in Luis Fernando Duque, ed., *La
Violencia en el Valle de Aburrá: Su Magnitud y Programa Para Reducirla [Violence in the Aburrá Valley:
Its Magnitude and a Program to Reduce It]* (Medellín, Colombia: Previva–Prevención de la Violencia y
Otras Conductas de Riesgo, Universidad de Antioquia, and Area Metropolitana del Valle de Aburrá, 2005);
Luis Fernando Duque, ed., *Política Pública Para la Promoción de la Convivencia y la Prevención de la
Violencia en el Valle de Aburrá: 2007-2015 [Public Policy for the Promotion of Peaceful Coexistence and
the Prevention of Violence in the Aburrá Valley: 2007-2015]*, 2a ed. (Medellín, Colombia: Previva–
Prevención de la Violencia y Otras Conductas de Riesgo, Universidad de Antioquia, and Area
Metropolitana del Valle de Aburrá, 2007); Luis Fernando Duque, ed., *La Violencia en el Valle de Aburrá:
Caminos Para la Superación [Violence in the Aburrá Valley: Ways to Overcome It]*, 2a ed. (Medellín,

responses was toward more secondary interventions, with serious primary interventions finally being put into place during the latter part of the decade.

Perhaps the most important antecedent to that later progress took place beginning in 1991, the year a National Constituent Assembly developed a new Constitution to replace the country's Constitution of 1886. The Assembly was headed by representatives from both major political parties (the Liberal and the Conservative) and from the M-19 Democratic Alliance (Alianza Democrática M-19), a political party founded in November 1989 by demobilized April 19 Movement (M-19: Movimiento 19 de Abril) insurgents. The constitution that was passed on 16 July 1991 more explicitly spelled out the subsidiarity relationship (see Appendix A) between the central government and the regional governments, abolished presidential appointment of governors and gubernatorial appointment of mayors in favor of direct election (which some cities such as Medellín had already put in place), reformed the judicial system, established a Constitutional Court separate from the Supreme Court, created a legal framework for the negotiation of demobilization agreements with political groups challenging the state's authority, and banned the extradition of Colombian citizens. This latter clause had been advocated violently by Pablo Escobar and the Extraditables (see § 2.1.3) and agreed to reluctantly by the political establishment as a way to end the war of the narcotraffickers; the war did not end immediately upon passage, but it did spell the beginning of the end of the Medellín Cartel and anticipated the end of the Cali Cartel. In 1996, a year after the Cali Cartel's leaders were arrested, the non-extradition clause of the 1991 constitution was repealed, opening the way for the extradition of scores of narcotraffickers to the United

Colombia: Previva–Prevención de la Violencia y Otras Conductas de Riesgo, Universidad de Antioquia, and Area Metropolitana del Valle de Aburrá, 2009).

States over the following twelve years, a series of acts that had mixed results in the short term but that have shown early indications of having potentially some positive results in the long term. The remaining constitutional reforms of 1991, especially the establishment of the Constitutional Court and a legal framework for peace negotiations, would have important implications for the state's ability to address issues related to violence and legitimacy later in the country's history.

Other antecedents to the progress against violence that gained real traction in the mid-2000s took place during the 1990s as well. On 22 May 1991, the administration of Colombian President César Gaviria Trujillo released its National Anti-Violence Strategy, whose objectives were "to guarantee that the monopoly on the use of force be in the hands of the state's armed institutions, to recover the justice [system's] capacity to punish crime and counter impunity, and finally to extend the state's institutional reach into all parts of the national territory."[27] Medellín was the first city to benefit from this national strategy, with the creation of a Metropolitan Security Council headed jointly by the governor of Antioquia and the mayor of Medellín, who worked in collaboration with Colombia's National Security Council, a department-level advisory commission, and civil-society organizations to develop and implement a policy called the Promotion of Peaceful Coexistence in Medellín and its Metropolitan Area (Promoción de la Convivencia Pacífica en Medellín y su Área Metropolitana). This policy created Citizen Participation and Reconciliation Boards (Juntas de Participación y Conciliación Ciudadana) to involve communities in antiviolence programs and processes, sponsored

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[27] "Garantizar que el monopolio del uso de la fuerza esté en manos de las instituciones armadas estatales, recuperar la capacidad de la justicia para sancionar el delito y combatir la impunidad y, finalmente, ampliar el cubrimiento institucional del Estado en todo el territorio nacional." Quoted in Luis Fernando Duque, *Antecedentes y Evolución del Programa de Convivencia Ciudadana de Medellín*, 23.

youth programs, established a special complaints commission, expanded local and departmental police forces and criminal-investigation capacity, established small-arms control measures, reformed the way the justice system dealt with minors, and strengthened the barrio-level JACs and the comuna-level Local Administration Boards (JAL, Juntas Administradores Locales).[28] Although these efforts were more reactive than proactive, these were the first policies targeted specifically at violence that attempted to account for local conditions; all later policies and programs in Medellín evolved from or were modeled after them.

The most significant of these later efforts were the establishment of the office of the Peace and Coexistence Adviser (Asesoría de Paz y Convivencia) in 1993, and the first city-sponsored anti-violence strategy, the Strategic Security Plan for Medellín and its Metropolitan Area (Plan Estratégico de Seguridad para Medellín y su Área Metropolitana), during the administration of mayor Luis Alfredo Ramos Botero (1992-1994). The office of the Peace and Coexistence Adviser was established as the city's representative to negotiate the failed demobilization, disarmament, and reinsertion (DDR) agreement with the militias in 1994 discussed at the beginning of this section. The Strategic Security Plan, published by the city under the name *Medellín at Peace,* was intended to improve the quality of life in the poorest and most violent barrios by expanding citizen access to democratic processes, countering corruption, and improving social services and basic security. The Peace and Coexistence Adviser and Medellín at Peace together established both the precedent and the institutional means for security

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[28] Hermman Eduardo Noreña Betancur, "Los Paramilitares en Medellín: La Desmovilización del Bloque Cacique Nutibara: Un Estudio de Caso" ["Paramilitaries in Medellín: The Demobilization of the Cacique Nutibara Bloc: A Case Study"] (Master's thesis, Universidad de Antioquia, 2007), 67; Luis Fernando Duque, *Antecedentes y Evolución del Programa de Convivencia Ciudadana de Medellín*, 25.

planning in Medellín, even if their direct effects were disastrous in the case of the DDR

program and limited with respect to the degree to which they reduced violence in the city

over the short term. The administration of Sergio Gabriel Naranjo Pérez (1996-1997), for

example, incorporated many of the elements of his predecessor's policies in his own

security and development plans, which were partially funded by a $15 million loan from

the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB).[29] The successful policies of subsequent

administrations drew on these programs and institutions as well.

Despite setbacks, these and many smaller efforts by the public, private, and

voluntary sectors did pay off in many small ways throughout the city. At worst, they

demonstrated that there were a lot of people in Medellín and throughout the country

sincerely dedicated to peace and the nonviolent resolution of conflicts. At best, they

succeeded in converting some uncounted number of gangsters and militants into citizens,

and preventing some uncountable number of young people from becoming gangsters,

militants, and criminals in the first place. This surely influenced the levels of violence in

the city during the mid-1990s, which by most measures were declining or fluctuating

from 1991 through 1998; the only figures available that showed a clear, overall rising

trend during this period were for suicides, extrajudicial executions, and one of the two

available measures of forced disappearances.[30] But lawlessness was still the rule in many

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[29] CIDEAL, *La Violencia en Medellín y Colombia: Iniciativas Para la Solución del Conflicto (1980-2004)*; *Medellín en Paz: Plan Estratégico de Seguridad para Medellín y su Área Metropolitana [Medellín at Peace: Strategic Security Plan for Medellín and its Metropolitan Area]* (Medellín, Colombia: Alcaldía de Medellín, 1994), cited in Luis Fernando Duque, *Antecedentes y Evolución del Programa de Convivencia Ciudadana de Medellín*, 26; *Plan de Desarrollo para la Ciudad: 1993-1995 [Development Plan for the City: 1993-1995]* (Medellín, Colombia: Alcaldía de Medellín, 1992), and *Plan de Desarrollo de Medellín: 1995-1997 [Development Plan for Medellín: 1995-1997]* (Medellín, Colombia: Alcaldía de Medellín, 1995), both cited in Hermman Eduardo Noreña Betancur, "Los Paramilitares en Medellín," 70.

[30] Suicide data from Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE); extrajudicial executions, from Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (CINEP); and forced disappearances, from

of the city's peripheral barrios and the city center, and in 1998 the arrival of paramilitaries in the city would usher in a new era of violence.

What was happening in Caicedo La Sierra during the 1990s, when the militias in much of the rest of the city were being corrupted by the seduction of easy money and their own power, when militias were fighting militias and gangs, when gangs were fighting militias and other gangs, when gangs and crews were shifting allegiances with other gangs and crews in response to threats and opportunities as they arose, and when a wide range of state and nonstate actors were desperately trying to bring peace to the city? The following section takes a look.

4.2. Caicedo La Sierra: Unlocking the Doors to More Violence

4.2.1. Two Children Fight, and the Result Is War

The exact dates are hard to pin down; different people have different memories of the initial dispute. But sometime during the mid-1990s, probably around 1996, a boy from a section of Las Estancias called Santa Lucía got into a fight and punched a boy from Lower Villa Liliam. Or so says a resident of Lower Villa Liliam; it's likely that those from Santa Lucía would remember it the other way around, that the boy from Lower Villa Liliam started the fight, and that everything that followed was instigated from that barrio as well. In any event, "the next day, the brothers of the Santa Lucía boy

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Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC). CINEP provides data on forced disappearances as well (showing wide fluctuations year to year), but its figures and IPC's seem to have nothing to do with each other: for example, CINEP reports that disappearances fell from 13 to 3 between 1991 and 1992, while IPC reports that they more than doubled, from 29 to 64 in the same period. Neither organization's standards for determining disappearances are transparent.

came to take it out on the brother [of the boy] from here, and from there the fight was on." It started as a fight between two boys, and "now it was a fight between adults, because now, to defend their little brothers, the older brothers got involved, then one from there killed one from here."[31]

Whoever was to blame for the initial fight and the needless escalation, the consequences were bad for everyone in both barrios: Each side pulled together a crew, the crews took revenge for each killing, the bigger gangs (already with a history of hostilities against each other) took sides and brought bigger weapons, and the blood feud entered a vicious cycle that escalated into war. Residents of Lower Villa Liliam could not enter or pass through Santa Lucía, nor vice versa, without risking death at the hands of the local gangsters.[32] Thus began the third gang war that Caicedo La Sierra had suffered since the 1980s.

The first gang war had peaked in 1990, as the crews and gangs in the area fought over territory, with five main gangs eventually consolidating control over micro-territories, some as small as 20 or 30 city blocks (see § 3.2): M-6&7 (led by Hugo) in La Sierra, Villa Turbay, and Upper Villa Liliam; La Cañada (led by Alberto) in Lower Villa Liliam; La Arenera (led by Gamuza) in Lower Villa Liliam, closer to Las Estancias; a gang in Santa Lucía, in upper Las Estancias along the creek; and a gang in the Las Mirlas neighborhood of upper Las Estancias just north of Santa Lucía. The second gang war had peaked in 1994 for reasons few residents in the area seem to remember but almost

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[31] "Entonces al día siguiente, los hermanos del niño en Santa Lucia le vinieron a reclamar al hermano de acá, y desde ahí se fue formando la pelea. … Ya fue entre adultos, porque ya por defender a su hermanitos, ya entraron fue los grandes, entonces ya uno de allá mato uno de acá." 'Mama Luz,' Interview No. 11.

[32] Ibid.

certainly had to do with militia wars that took place during the Santa Elena Accords (see § 4.1.2) as well as ongoing disputes over territory. Most of those interviewed for this study, however, date the "beginning" of the gang wars to the third war, the fight between the children, which started in late 1995 or probably sometime in 1996, since that's the year homicides began to increase to their peaks in 1999-2000. The fourth gang war started when the paramilitaries entered the city and intervened in existing conflicts as a strategy to displace the guerrillas (and rival narcotraffickers) beginning in 1998 and 1999 (see § 5.2). After the third war, however, the gang wars all start blending together in locals' memories, a series of battles and grudges and deaths and shootouts between barrios, the most significant (with respect to the story of Medellín's violence, if not necessarily locally) taking place between the people who lived lower on the hillside and the people who lived higher up, with those in between — in Upper Villa Liliam — suffering the worst of it.

4.2.2. Life in an Urban War Zone

Cristiana has lived in Upper Villa Liliam for 50 years.[33] At the time the area was a rural property owned by a gentleman for his country home. When she first arrived she lived in a cane-and-mud house, a traditional style of construction called *bareque* (ba-RAY-kay), but she was able to buy a small plot of land for 100 pesos and, with money she earned by selling creamed soups (cremas), built the house she lives in today. You would never know it was once a country house: surrounded on all sides today by brick houses with Spanish-tile roofs, crammed together row after row, abutting the jagged

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[33] 'Cristiana' is not her real name; she requested anonymity out of concern for her safety.

concrete sidewalks with their high and uneven curbs, lining the asphalt streets buzzing

with life, mostly young people walking by, groups of schoolchildren in uniform shouting

or giggling as they pass, buses crawling up the steep hill spewing black smoke, thumping

reggaeton music blasting from the speakers of old cars, trucks overloaded with whatever

needed to be delivered, entire families riding on one motorcycle, and street vendors

ringing bells and shouting "¡aguacate! ¡aguacate!" ("avocados! avocados!"). At the time

there was no war, no conflict, she told me. Or rather, she told my research assistant,

Janeth, who helped me understand Cristiana's strongly accented paisa argot (and helped

Cristiana understand my baffling gringo Spanish). We were sitting in her tiny living room

just off to the side of her tiny convenience store, as people popped in and interrupted,

asked for some item she didn't have, then left again just as quickly.

> We used to live in peace. There have always been thieves [in the community] … [but things] went bad only about 15 or 16 years ago [i.e. early 1990s] because [now they] were coming from other places to rob us. … [The displaced people from up there] caused us more problems because they came from other places, with other customs, and they started gangs."[34]

Cristiana worked as a volunteer for the neighborhood Civic Center, the

predecessors to the Community Action Boards (JACs, Juntas de Acción Comunal), and

then continued serving the community once the JACs were founded, though she never

held an official title. Today she is 70 years old and works at a nearby school, where most

of the students come from broken, displaced, or extremely poor families, and where the

school has frequently found itself at the front lines of the gang wars. Living and working

right at the border between M-6&7 territory and La Cañada territory, Cristiana was very

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[34] "… vivíamos en paz. Ladrones siempre los ha habido … [pero esto] se vino a dañar hace solo 15 a 16 años porque vienen a robar de otras partes. … [Los desplazados de arriba] causaron más problemas porque llegaban de otras partes, con otras costumbres y se forman las bandas." 'Cristiana,' Interview No. 9.

careful not to criticize any of the combatants. "They said [the conflict] was about defending land, but nobody really knew what it was about."[35] Many others have expressed the same ignorance.

In her telling, both sides in the war were careful to avoid civilian casualties. "They really took care of people. The war was between them, not with us. They didn't touch one's family nor one's children," she said, using *uno* (one) — the paisa equivalent of the "royal we" — to refer to herself. Moreover, the gangs alerted her when a confrontation was about to take place, and she in turn alerted her neighbors and the school. They did this "thanks to the authority and the respect I had in the barrio."

> My son spoke with the ones from above [M-6&7] and the ones from below [La Cañada]. He talked to them about peace, he organized soccer championships for them, [and] they always took care of him. … Me, they respected me, because they never did anything to me, or to my kids, either. They never threatened me, I didn't have to leave. I used to manage a community restaurant, and some of them had eaten there.[36]

She realized that they were looking out for her, she said, when she was leaving her restaurant one day and realized a man with a weapon was following her. He told her to go directly home and made sure she arrived safely. And even though she knew most of them, she said that if, during the day, she were to pass a gangster from, say, M-6&7, he would greet her only as a stranger, "as if we didn't know each other" so that, if someone from La Cañada were to see it, it wouldn't prejudice them against her and put her in danger. (And yet she also said that nobody really knew who in the community was a

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[35] "[El conflicto se dio] que por defender terreno, pero en realidad nadie sabía por qué." 'Cristiana,' Interview No. 9.

[36] "… gracias a la autoridad y respeto que tenía en el barrio. … Mi hijo hablaba con los de arriba y con los de abajo. Les hablaba de paz, les hacía campeonatos de fútbol, [y] siempre lo cuidaban. … A mi me respetaban porque no me hacían nada y tampoco a mis hijos. No me amenazaron, no me tuve que ir. Yo manejaba el restaurante comunitario y algunos de ellos habían comido allí." 'Cristiana,' Interview No. 9.

gangster and who was not a gangster until one did something in public that indicated a

gang affiliation. To this comment, however, she immediately added: "At that time, one

had to stay neutral" — suggesting that perhaps this professed ignorance about who was in

what gang was more strategic than anything else.[37])

During the wars of the 1990s, especially late in the decade (see next chapter), a lot

of the students at the neighborhood school had to move out of the barrio because of

threats against their families. When a lot of students stopped showing up for class, the

school's administrator, Alicia, told me, that's when "one realizes that things are

happening."[38] Alicia said the gangs generally kept the school as a sort of neutral zone,

however; if nothing else, at least nobody was ever killed on school grounds. She

attributes this to the school's very careful diplomacy with all sides in the war. "One has

to be very impartial, very stealthy, cautious about … what you say. Some things just can't

be said to everyone." She was referring to how she and her staff interacted with the

gangsters, demonstrating to them what they taught their own students: "Respect generates

respect …. If you can serve as a good role model, you'll earn the authority."[39]

As a result, Cristiana said in her living room, the gangs "never did anything to the

teaching staff," nor to the students, at least not on school grounds.[40] But the school could

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[37] "Uno no sabe que alguien está en una banda hasta que no se unta en la pomada. Uno no sabía quién es quién, hasta que sabía que estaba untado. En ese tiempo había que ser neutro." 'Cristiana,' Interview No. 9.

[38] "… se da cuenta de que pasan cosas." 'Alicia,' personal communication (Interview No. 7), 19 March 2009. 'Alicia' is not her real name; she, too, requested anonymity to protect the students and staff at the school.

[39] "Uno tiene que ser muy imparcial, muy sigiloso, cauteloso … en lo que dice. A todas las personas no puede decírseles todo." "El respeto genera respeto. … Si usted presta una buena función, gana autoridad." 'Alicia,' Interview No. 7.

[40] "A los docentes no les hacían nada." 'Cristiana,' Interview No. 9.

not control what happened when their students got home. Not only did the school lose many students when their families were forced to leave their homes, but the lure of the gangster lifestyle in the barrio was something that was very seductive, especially to the boys. When asked what they wanted to be when they grew up, their answers reflected what they saw around them, and if they had family who were members of gangs — and many of them did — the answer was often: "I'm going to be like my cousin. I'm going to be like my brother," Cristiana said.[41] Schoolyard problems often led to taunts and threats by one student to sic his or her gangster brother after another.

Midway through our conversation, a stocky, middle-aged man walked into her living room and politely but confidently interrupted, introducing himself as a community leader in the barrio. We had not arrived to Villa Liliam more than 30 minutes before, and word had already gotten to him that a couple of strangers were in the barrio, interviewing Cristiana in her living room. Speaking with a smile and the polite but suspicious air of a politician, he asked us who we were and what we were doing in the barrio, and expressed surprise and disappointment that we hadn't gone to see him first. This interview was taking place in early 2009, during a time when it had become clear that many of the demobilized paramilitaries had renewed their mafia ties and were in the process of threatening, corrupting, and even killing community leaders throughout the city, including in Comuna 8, as a way of winning access to city contracts (see § 7.2). I didn't have any idea whether this man was one of them. Janeth, my research assistant, didn't know either, but she told me afterwards that she suspected he was just a guy with the personality of a politician. At the time, however, I found it jarring to discover just how

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[41] "Yo voy a ser como mi primo. Yo voy a ser como mi hermano." Ibid.

closely the communities kept tabs on visitors and just how quickly this community leader

had responded to what seemed to be an informal community intelligence network. I was

immediately reminded that there had been a time in this part of the city, not too long ago,

when a passing stranger risked being killed just for showing up unannounced, and a

resident could be killed just for being seen with an outsider. (Within two months I would

be advised that those times had returned and that I could best protect my research

subjects — and myself — by not visiting the barrio any more.) Janeth answered his

questions thoughtfully and smoothed things over quickly. By the time he left we had an

interview scheduled with him for two weeks later.

During our interview with him, Ernesto turned out not to be a para, just as Janeth

had predicted. Moreover, he had no patience for any of the armed actors, and at our

interview he painted a much darker picture of their effect on the community than

Cristiana or Alicia had. "In fact, we had problems during the course of the conflict," he

said, losing his politician's air as he spoke. He had lived with his wife in a house on a

street that was the site of some of the most intense fighting of the militia-gang wars and

the later militia-para and para-para wars (see next chapter), right at the border between

the gangs from above and the gangs from below. "We had a fast-food business right there

in front of the house," Ernesto told us in the storeroom of one the other small businesses

he manages. His wife used to run the store while he worked on other projects. "We think

that it was their target, from its being in a lot of people's eyes, because it was like a

meeting place. Because when one side wasn't here tying things up, the others were. The

fact of the matter," he paused, "is that she died by the force of arms in the conflict. They

killed her while she was working."[42] He didn't say whether his wife had been targeted for assassination or had simply died in the crossfire.

It was 2001 when Ernesto lost his wife, many months after *los de arriba* (the gangsters from the upper barrios) had ceased being militias and had switched sides, and a time when the fourth gang war was already under way.[43] It was an extremely difficult period, the one that began in the mid-1990s, with the worst of it starting around turn of the millennium. "At that time there were a minimum of three confrontations a week," Ernesto said. A lot of the battles took place right on his street, and the only time the police showed up to do anything about it, he said, was the next morning when they would come up to recover the bodies. "No, the law never intervened, because there were strong forces here, and all over the city. The problem was too big."[44] Everyone knew who the gangsters were, he said, but everybody was afraid to report them to the police, because the gangsters would find out who snitched and have them killed. (And as he himself had demonstrated to me just a couple of weeks earlier, news spreads quickly in this area.)

Just below Upper Villa Liliam, in Lower Villa Liliam, and above it, in Villa Turbay and La Sierra, the communities there had what was practically a luxury in

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[42] "Pero de hecho tuvimos problemas en el proceso del conflicto. … Nosotros teníamos un negocio de comidas rápidas ahí, al frente de la casa. Nosotros pensamos que esto fue objeto, de estar en los ojos de muchos, porque como era un punto de encuentro. Porque cuando no estaban los unos ahí mecateando, estaban los otros. Lo cierto del caso es que ella falleció bajo el efecto de arma del conflicto. A ella la asesinaron, trabajando." 'Ernesto,' personal communication (Interview No. 14), 1 April 2009. Even though 'Ernesto' consented to my using his real name for this study, I am using an alias to protect his identity from the armed actors who have returned to the area.

[43] The next chapter details the politics behind the third and fourth gang wars. Here I am going slightly beyond the present chapter's nominal timeframe of 1992-1998 to discuss the communities' experiences of those wars, since the battles most in the communities remember most powerfully began during the latter part of this period and continued, in their minds practically unabated, until the truce of 2003.

[44] "En ese entonces a la semana eran, mínimo, tres enfrentamientos. … No, la ley no intervenía, porque había una fuerza grande aquí y en toda la ciudad, la problemática era grande." 'Ernesto,' Interview No. 14.

comparison to the situation in Upper Villa Liliam: a gang that almost fully controlled

their barrio. With reasonably secure territorial control, there were *muchachos* or *mandos*

— guys or commanders (i.e. gangsters or gang leaders) — whom they could go to for

protection, or to resolve disputes, or to report neighbors who were spies for the other side

or had been seen with enemy gangsters. The muchachos from above would take care of

the people who lived in the upper barrios (though not always equitably) and the ones

from below would take care of those in the lower barrios (also not equitably). In between,

in Upper Villa Liliam, some people — like Cristiana or Alicia — did have enough

authority or prestige within the community that they could usually count on the

muchachos from either side to look out for them and make sure they knew when to stay

out of the way, and family members and friends of the gangsters could usually count on

someone to protect them or avenge them as needed. But everyone else in Upper Villa

Liliam was on their own; since control over their barrio was contested fairly evenly, they

were never secure enough to be able to depend on either side for protection.

A lot of people were killed having nothing to do with the conflict, innocent

bystanders who didn't hide or protect themselves when the bullets came flying. Plus,

"there was another kind of victim in the conflict, and they were the ones who were

attacked out of revenge, or because they didn't share the ideology. They'd blacklist one

family member, but then they'd go and finish off the entire family." Businesses, such as

his, were also targeted:

> It was common for 10, 30, 40 youths to show up, even women, hooded
> and everything. The men would turn out the lights, everyone outside …
> and they'd line up 150 suspects and search them, and they'd pick out one
> or two and walk them 10 meters, or right there at the corner, and kill them.
> So that happened at a bunch of the businesses in this zone. In other words,

it was a system of, you know, intimidation, to demonstrate power, and with weapons of all sizes.[45]

Snitching to the police was useless and dangerous, and snitching to either gang was just dangerous. So most in the community, stuck in the middle, tried to stay quiet and tried to stay out of the way.

Leady (pronounced "lady") was born in La Sierra around the time M-6&7 was "cleaning up" the barrio of its "thieves, rapists, and drug addicts." "When I was born, the situation had already changed a little with respect to [the earlier violence]. But another type of violence began," she wrote, the new violence associated less with common crime (i.e. interpersonal-communal) and more with territorial control (i.e. collective). She told her diary a story she'd been told when she was seven years old, probably around 1997. Her father and her uncle, both living in La Sierra (M-6&7 territory), needed to get downtown for their jobs, and one day they walked down to the bus stop at Tres Esquinas (La Cañada territory, in Lower Villa Liliam):

> there was a bus with passengers ready to leave, when a man went up to the driver and said that he thought he had told him not to work, and the driver responded to this guy that, yes, he was going to work anyway. This guy pulled out a gun, put it to [the driver's] head, and fired. The bus like took off and crashed into an electric pole.[46]

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[45] "Había otro tipo de victimas del conflicto y eran los que atacaban por venganzas o por que no compartían la ideología. Se le vetaban a una familia e iban acabar con toda la familia. … [Era] común que llegaran diez o llegaran treinta o llegaban cuarenta jóvenes, hasta mujeres, tapados y todo. Señores apaguen la luz, todos afuera filados. … y filaban ciento cincuenta sospechosos y los requisaban, y seleccionaban uno o dos, [y] los caminaban diez metros o ahí a la vueltesita [y] los mataban. Entonces eso pasaba en distintos negocios de aquí de la zona. O sea era un sistema pues de acción para intimidar, para demostrar el poder, y con armas de todos los alcances." Ibid.

[46] "… había un bus con pasajeros listo para salir. Cuando un hombre se le acercó al conductor del bus y le dijo que si no le habían dicho que no trabajara y él le respondió al tipo que sí iba a trabajar. Éste sacó un arma, se la puso en la cabeza y le disparó. El bus, como iba a arrancar, se fue contra un poste de energía." Leady Jhoana Reyes, "Mi Diario," ["My Diary,"] in *Jamás Olvidaré Tu Nombre*, ed. Patricia Nieto (Medellín, Colombia: Alcaldía de Medellín, 2006), 52.

They had to walk the rest of the way to their jobs, and in the afternoon they tried to return by taxi. But it wasn't easy:

> when they got to the place where the driver was killed before, [the gangsters] made them get out and told the taxi driver to get lost. My father and his brother, very scared, got out, and they were asked where they were going. Really afraid, they said they were going up above, without saying that they were going [all the way] to La Sierra, because if they had said that, they would have gotten killed.[47]

He made it home, but her father decided that day to leave the barrio, because it was too dangerous for him to keep trying to commute from the barrio "above," La Sierra, to the city center, since that required passing through the barrio "below," and the gangs were now enforcing an extremely strict border-control policy. "I also remember that during that really hard crisis the barrio had then, we went without food for two weeks, because the muchachos weren't letting any cars go in or out, since they thought they might get infiltrated."[48] Another resident of La Sierra remembered those two weeks as well: even the church got shot-up. "You can still see for yourself the bullet holes in all the houses."[49] A resident of Villa Turbay, who had been a combatant in that conflict, gave me a tour of the war zone: and indeed, I could see for myself the bullet holes in the houses.[50] That whole period was a time when communities were deeply divided and isolated. Residents of one barrio were assumed to be enemies of the gangsters in control of the other.

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[47] "… Regresaron en taxi y cuando iban llegando donde antes habían matado al conductor, los hicieron bajar y le dijeron al taxista que se perdiera. Mi papá y su hermano muy asustados se bajaron y les preguntaron que para dónde iban, ellos asustadísimos dijeron que para arriba, sin decir que para La Sierra, porque si lo decían los mataban." Ibid.

[48] "También me acuerdo que en esa crisis tan dura que tuvo el barrio nos quedamos sin comida durante quince días porque los muchachos no dejaban entrar ni salir ningún carro, pues pensaban que podían ser infiltrados." Ibid.

[49] "Todavía puede verse los huecos de balas a las casas." 'Boris,' personal communication (Interview No. 8), 20 March 2009.

[50] 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10.

One day at elementary school, Leady was taking her afternoon classes when some hooded gangsters showed up and said that nobody was allowed to leave the school until they said so. "I remember we had a very Catholic teacher and she had us all praying over the next two hours."

> Then they took all of the students out onto the patio and we stayed there until like six thirty in the evening. When we were to leave, some muchachos with hoods and guns divided us into two groups: those who were going above [to La Sierra] and those who were going below. Those of us who were going up, like six of these guys accompanied us, and they took some [students] all the way home.[51]

The contrast between the concern the gangsters and militants of the era showed to the schools and what seemed to be an utter disregard for casualties elsewhere, especially in Upper Villa Liliam, is sometimes jarring in these stories. What is clear is that M-6&7 and La Cañada were not monolithic organizations; La Cañada, for example, had evolved from a single neighborhood gang into more of a rough alliance of crews and gangs in Lower Villa Liliam and the surrounding areas; it was not really a hierarchical criminal organization, although discipline was still enforced by its founding members, but more of a network manager. Some of its members were assassins, others robbed banks, others sold drugs, and others were just unemployed neighborhood kids looking for something interesting to do and an easier way to make money.[52] With such diversity, there would clearly be some members with a big heart and others with no soul. The same could be said for M-6&7; it had been founded by idealists who legitimized themselves to the local

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[51] "Me acuerdo que teníamos una profesora muy católica y nos puso a rezar durante dos horas seguidas. Después nos bajaron a todos los alumnos al patio y nos quedamos allí como hasta las seis y media de la tarde. Cuando íbamos a salir unos muchachos encapuchados y armados nos dividieron en dos grupos: los que iban para arriba y los que iban para abajo. A los que subíamos no acompañaron como seis de esos tipos, a algunos los llevaban a sus casas." Leady Jhoana Reyes, "Mi Diario."

[52] 'Germán,' Interview No. 16.

communities, but over time it was increasingly joined by people who were more like

gangsters than leftist militants. And as the decade wore on, both loosened their standards

of recruitment. "How did the groups grow?" Ernesto asked aloud:

> Both groups: so as they suffered more casualties and deaths, the group
> would [recruit] relatives of the dead, for revenge. So they kept growing the
> group: "Well, they went and killed my brother? Then *bam,* I've gotta start
> being part of that group." [They grew also] with the *vacuna* system
> [protection rackets], because at the root of the conflict, that was what they
> used, like their scam — "man, we need to buy weapons, we need to boost
> our troop strength" — so they went around getting cash from the
> communities. So anyone who doesn't give it to them, then *poof.*[53]

> Over time, living in a place where shootings could break out at any moment,

coping mechanisms became part of daily life. Ernesto described how people ended up

being affected by the sound of small bombs exploding:

> They were atrocious, both in their direct effects and in their intimidation
> of the community. With the slightest sound, people got really scared and
> worried, in such a way that, when some confrontation was about to
> happen, at the slightest sound, at the slightest hint that they were getting
> closer, everyone suddenly closed their doors, their windows, and looked
> for a protected spot.[54]

Sounds had to be interpreted for what they foretold. "Almost always there are, like,

preludes," a young man told an anthropology student in 2002, talking about the wars that

began in the 1990s.

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[53] "¿Cómo crecían los grupos? Ambos grupos. Entonces a medida que iban presentando bajas o muertes, entonces se volcaba el grupo con los familiares del muerto, por las venganzas. Entonces se iba creciendo el grupo: '¿Ha que me mataron mi hermanito? Entonces *taque,* hay empezaba a ser parte del grupo.' … Con el sistema de vacunas, considero que si cualquiera, porque a raíz del conflicto era lo que ellos utilizaban como artimañas —"hombre, necesitamos comprar armas, necesitamos aumentar el pie de fuerza"—, entonces pasaban recogiendo plata a las comunidades. Entonces el que no diera, entonces, *ya.*" 'Ernesto,' Interview No. 14.

[54] "Eran atroces en la acción y en la intimidación de la comunidad. Con el mero ruido, la gente el temor y el miedo abundaban, de tal manera que cuando iba a ocurrir un enfrentamiento, al menor ruido, o al menor termino de ver que se estaban acercando, todo el mundo ya cerraba sus puertas, sus ventanas y buscaba los puntos de protección." Ibid.

> One day a guy hears that they're shooting, like *bang!,* one shot: "That was a gunshot, right?" The other guy says, "Now those people, now there's going to be, now there's going to be a shootout." There are times when there's no response. Then it's, "Oh, for chrissakes, why haven't they responded!" Like that, something's hatching out there, and you just know, it's coming. … There are things that are provoked, right? They're usually provoked. I don't know about now, [but] before, it was very, very common. There was like a dialog before the shooting began. So you'd hear, you'd hear a word, that things are being shouted, they're being whistled, they're being whistled, so now they know they have to get out their toys because they're gonna start. They go shouting …, "Come on up, you fuckers!" *Bam!* It's on! And so there are like these preludes [that] appear to be like a war ritual.[55]

The sounds got interpreted beforehand, as people found a way to predict what was about to happen and when, so they could take cover when needed, and gossip circulated afterwards as people sought an explanation, or perhaps tried to put a spin on what they had heard to make it easier to bear. "The people who circulate these messages, the way that they do it, even the place where [the messages] originate, all contribute to people's perception of what the source of the threat is, which determines whether the message is accepted somehow as 'legitimate' and so therefore should be paid attention to, and appropriate measures taken," wrote Juan Diego Alzate Giraldo, the anthropology student, who for his undergraduate thesis interviewed people in Caicedo about fear amid conflict.[56] Colombia is not a country where solidarity and social capital have ever been

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[55] "Casi siempre hay, hay como los anuncios. ... Entonces uno escucha un día, que disparan como ¡tran!, un tiro. "¿Eso fue un tiro, cierto?" Otro: "Ya está gente ya, ahorita va a haber, ahora va a haber balacera." Hay veces que no responden, entonces uno: "¡Eh, juemadre! ¡Porque no habrán respondido!" Eso, ahí se va como incubando algo y uno sabe que viene. … Hay cosas se provocan, ¿cierto? Se provocan, usualmente. Yo no sé ahora, antes era muy, muy común. Había cómo un diálogo antes de disparar. Entonces se escuchaba, se escuchaba una palabra, que se gritan cosas, se silban, se silban, entonces ya saben que tienen que ir sacando sus juetes, porque van a empezar. Se van a gritar … "¡Súbase pirovo!" *[sic] Ta!* Y empiezan. Y ahí hay como esos preámbulos, aparece como un ritual de la guerra." Punctuation edited for clarity. Quoted in Juan Diego Alzate Giraldo, "Algún Día Recuperaremos la Noche," 38.

[56] "Desde quienes emiten dichos mensajes y la manera cómo lo hacen, hasta los lugares de origen de los mismos, responden a esa percepción de la fuente de amenaza, que hace que el mensaje sea, en cierta forma, asumido como 'legitimo' y por lo tanto se le preste atención y se tomen medidas al respecto." Ibid., 39.

strong, Medellín least among its cities in that respect.[57] But Alzate Giraldo found in

Caicedo a "tacit solidarity," an "emotional community" built around fear, that had

emerged as a way to solve the practical problem of what to do when you missed the

subtle warnings and you suddenly found yourself in the middle of gangsters shooting all

around you. He quoted one resident:

> At any house, at any neighbor's house, we'd stay there. If not, we'd stay at
> a store, at a grocery, then. And always — I know, we're not very talkative,
> we don't talk to anybody at the house, we wouldn't even greet them. But
> when these things would happen, you at least greeted them as you went
> inside, like, their house. And then the small-talk started.[58]

It's difficult to be "talkative" in a place where saying the wrong thing could so easily get

to the wrong ears and so easily get you killed, where misplaced gossip could cause

needless fear or foment a needless battle, where phrasing something wrong to the wrong

person on the street could be interpreted as a sign of disrespect and get you killed, where

conflicts were so often resolved by resort to arms, and not only by gangsters. Talking can

be scary when talking can get you killed.

But despite their suffering, the people in Caicedo La Sierra found a way to live, to

play, to dance, to have block parties, to hang out in the streets, to interact with their

neighbors, even when they knew the police would not resolve any conflicts that might

arise, even though security often had to be provided by criminals and sometimes

negotiated with warring gangs. "Young people here have energy," Alicia, the school

administrator told us at the school one day, "and we're trying to channel that energy. We

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[57] Francisco E. Thoumi, "The Colombian Competitive Advantage in Illegal Drugs."

[58] "En alguna casa, en alguna casa de vecinos, nos quedábamos. Si no, nos quedábamos en una tienda, en una revueltería, pues. Y siempre —uno conoce, nosotras somos muy calladas y no hablamos con nadie por la casa ni saludábamos a nadie. Pero cuando pasaban esas cosas al que menos usted saludaba se le metía, pues, a la casa. Y entonces empezaron los comentarios." Punctuation edited for clarity. Quoted in Juan Diego Alzate Giraldo, "Algún Día Recuperaremos la Noche," 41.

tell people that we're rich in energy, rich in our desire to make progress. I never use the word *poverty*. We don't have a lot of cash, but we consider ourselves wealthy."[59]

4.2.3. 'Mama Luz' and the Community Peace Talks

Just about everyone in Caicedo La Sierra knows the story of Mama Luz, so she dismissively rejected my offer to conceal her identity in print, as I had done for other interview subjects. There would be no point: she is a legend in Caicedo La Sierra. A single black woman from the coast, Luz Edna García Copete arrived in Medellín in 1958, moved to the city center, and worked for different charities and for the city until moving to the United States to work with the humanitarian organization CARE for five years. When she returned to Colombia, she worked in community health until a change in management forced her out of her job. Looking to live near family, she bought a two-storey house in Lower Villa Liliam in 1973 and moved in. "This barrio was shocking," she said, sitting in the living room of that same house, cluttered with books and pictures, including some of herself as a visibly confident young woman (who never married, she said, because "I didn't want any man telling me what to do"). "The first few months I was here it gave me seizures, because I'd never had to live in a place like this before." It was a place where most people were very, very poor, so much so that, even with the modest means she had, she was considered the rich woman of the barrio.[60]

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[59] 'Alicia,' Interview No. 7.

[60] "Este barrio era impresionante, a mi me daban convulsiones los primeros meses que viví aquí, porque nunca me había tocado vivir en un lugar como este." Information and quotes in this section are from 'Mama Luz,' Interview No. 11, and personal communication (Interview No. 17), 7 April 2009, unless otherwise noted. The basic outlines of her story have been verified through other sources, including Ramiro Alberto Vélez Rivera, et al., *Governabilidad Local en Medellín: Configuración de Territorialidades, Conflictos y Ciudad [Local Governance in Medellín: The Configuration of Territorialities, Conflicts, and the City]* (Medellín, Colombia: Escuela Superior de Administración Pública–ESAP, 2004); Mauricio Ortiz,

Having worked with charities and community-health services for most of her life, she was able to recognize that the barrio needed help, and enough people in the local government recognized her that she was able to be a conduit for city services. But she started small. With the assistance of some nieces, she drew up some signs and hung one on the door of her house: "Free injections, telephone at your service, movies for children at your service." "Well, the movie was that I had a big television, and around here nobody had a television, or a telephone, or anything, so I started to provide that service to the community for free," she said. Eight months later, she decided the community needed a preschool to better prepare the children for elementary school, so she went to the city's secretary of education, got some training and resources, and started telling the mothers she would charge a nominal fee for the service. "So the first month I opened it with 10 children, the first year 10 children, the second there were already 22, the third 36, and then in the fifth year there were 50-something, and after that it never went below 60- or 50-something."[61]

The year after opening the preschool she saw some men arrive at the empty lot across the street from her house one day and asked them what they were doing. They told her they were from the community and they wanted to build a health center there, since there hadn't been one in the barrio. She offered to help in any way she could, and with the help of volunteers and donated materials, her contacts in the city government, plus

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personal communication (Interview No. 12), 1 April 2009; and informal conversations with other barrio residents.

[61] "… inyectologia gratis, teléfono a la orden y cine para los niños a la orden. Entonces el cine era que yo tenía un televisor grande; y por aquí nadie tenia televisor, ni teléfono, ni nada. Entonces yo empecé a prestarle el servicio a la comunidad gratuitamente. … [Abrí el preescolar] el primer mes con diez niños, el primer año 10 niños, el segundo ya fueron 22, el tercero 36, y ya el cuarto fueron 50 y pico. Y ya desde ahí no bajaba de 60 y 50 y pico." 'Mama Luz,' Interview No. 11.

money they raised making and selling snacks, a community building was beginning to rise from the ground. But they had failed to check whether anyone had actually owned that ground, and in fact one day a man showed up and asked them what it was that they thought they were building on his property, on which he had intended to build a house. After Mama Luz invited him for coffee and spoke with him a few times, he ended up donating part of the lot for the community building, and Mama Luz helped him sell the rest. She and the others who had led the effort then went to the city and asked that a Community Action Board (JAC, Junta de Acción Comunal) be formed for their barrio as a conduit for city services and resources. With that achieved, she became the first Vice President of the JAC for Lower Villa Liliam and ended up working with the JAC for the next 26 years. The board continues to be housed in the same building across the street from her house.

During the 1980s, as violence was growing in the barrio, she took it upon herself to call the police and report delinquent activity. The JAC worked hard to get the city to install a police station there, and although the city finally relented, it required that the community itself furnish it with desks, beds, and office supplies, since the city was not going to budget enough to keep it running. So the community donated what it could and the police began making rounds in the barrio. But then something strange happened: they closed the doors and left one day, abandoning the barrios to the violent gangs that were still active. When Mama Luz went downtown to ask what had happened, a city official showed her the stack of letters he had received from people in the community complaining about the police presence. She believes the campaign had been organized by

the barrio's criminal elements, because the police were getting in the way of their profits. The community was left to face the first and second gang wars on its own.

Mama Luz earned her nickname during the third gang war of Caicedo La Sierra, the one that started out as a fight between children around 1996 and grew into a war so violent that people from one barrio couldn't visit people in the next barrio over if it was controlled by a different gang (§ 4.2.1). "You couldn't go down one side, you couldn't go down the other side, nor could other people come up the other, and it was just shocking."

> But I had an advantage, and this is what they said in the administration, that since I had the preschool, almost everyone all around me knew me through their children. … So some were the children's relatives, others had been students of mine, others respected me because I had helped them out and served them and had worked so hard [on community-infrastructure projects]. So I had the advantage that many of the young people involved in this violence had a little bit of respect for me, yeah. So when this violence broke out, they would send someone to warn me to go inside with the kids because they were going to start shooting. Then I'd go down and go where they were and talk to them. I'd tell them to think about their lives, and I started to talk to them, to the muchachos in the gangs. … "I'm not God to judge you," I told them. "I'm a friend to give advice, to nag you. I'm like a mom, I'm taking the place of your moms because they don't have time to be with you because they have to work." … Then they said to me, "So you're Mamá Luz, our nag." And since that day, it was a Sunday, … everybody everywhere calls me Mama Luz.[62]

She again tried to enlist the city's help, warning them that another gang war was breaking out, but the people she talked to, even though they had known her for so many years,

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[62] "… no podían bajar de un lado, no podían bajar al otro lado, ni los otros subir al otro lado, y eso fue impresionante. Pero yo tenia una ventaja, y eso lo dicen allá en la administración, de que como tenía el preescolar, casi toda esta gente alrededor me conocía por los niños. … Entonces unos eran familia de los niños, otros habían sido alumnos míos, otros me estimaban por lo que les colaboraba y les servía y porque estaba trabajando muy fuerte [en los proyectos] …. Entonces tenía muchas ventajas que muchos jóvenes que estaban en esa violencia tuvieran un poco de respeto hacia mí, si. Entonces cuando ya se recrudeció la violencia, entonces ya ellos mandaban a decir que me encerrara con los niños porque iban a empezar a disparar. Entonces yo, ya bajaba y me iba hacia donde estaban ellos y hablaba con ellos, le decía que, que pensaran ellos de la vida, y empezaba a hablar con ellos, con los muchachos de las bandas. 'Yo no soy Dios para juzgarlos,' les decía, 'soy una amiga para darles consejos, para regañarlos, soy como una mamá, que yo les reemplazo a ustedes la mamá, porque no tienen tiempo de estar con ustedes por estar trabajando.' … Entonces allí me dijeron, "Entonces eres Mamá Luz la regañona, para nosotros." Y desde ese día, fue un domingo, entonces ya me pusieron … todos Mamá Luz por todas partes.' 'Mama Luz,' Interview No. 11.

dismissed her warnings as overblown fears and refused to send extra help. So she decided to invite them up for lunch: since it's such a safe place, why not come up for a visit?

It was a big deal: two members of the mayor's cabinet came with their wives, along with other officials and guests, about 25 people in total. Mama Luz and others in the community had set up tables outside and had prepared lots of food. But then, just before one o'clock, just as they were about to serve the food, the lunch was interrupted. "Then this idle boy … when he saw this small number of cars here and these few people … what a sin, this boy fired a shot from over there. And after this boy fired from over there, the boys from over here fired back":

> And then all those people who were here from over at [city hall] didn't know what to do, they didn't know where to take cover, and right there, calling and calling [to see if they could get] the army and the police. So right there they learned first hand that, yes, it was true what I had been telling them, yeah.

So Mama Luz took a young man who had been working in the community and they went toward where the first shot had been fired. They asked the "idle boy" what the hell he thought he was doing. "So he said to me, 'But Mama Luz, why you didn't tell me you having that meeting? I thought it was people coming to attack you there.' And I told him, 'Because I didn't have any reason to ask your permission. This is going to cost you dearly, because look what you've done, you did bad.'"[63] She went back to the tables — somebody mentioned something about "bullets for lunch" — and finished serving the

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[63] "Entonces un niño ocioso … cuando vio ese poco de carros aquí y ese poco de gente … el niño, que pecado, hizo un disparo de allá. A lo que hizo el disparo de allá, los de acá le respondieron. Y entonces toda esa gente que estaba aquí de allá de la Alpujarra no sabía que hacer, no sabían donde se metían, y allí mismo a llamar y a llamar y que si en un momentico estuvo esto lleno de ejercito y de policía. Entonces ahí se dieron cuenta en carne propia, que si era verdad lo que yo estaba diciendo, si. … Entonces me dijo, 'Pero Mamá Luz, porque no me dijites que tenías esa reunión. Yo creí que era gente venía atacarte ahí a vos.' Y le dije, 'Es que yo no tenia porque pedirle permiso a usted, y esto te va a salir caro a vos porque mira lo que hiciste y estuvo mal hecho.'" Ibid.

food, which everyone ate politely but quickly before high-tailing it out of there. Very

soon thereafter, the chief of police inspectors for the department of Antioquia told Mama

Luz that a police inspector was being assigned to the area to take citizen complaints, keep

the peace, and enforce the law — basically, the job that until then had been the domain of

the "muchachos" who controlled the area. It wasn't a police station like they'd had

before, but it was something.

But the city also began training 35 people from the area as "peace managers"

(gerentes de paz). The peace managers, Mama Luz among them, spent six months

studying laws and methods for working in violent communities. Members of the

community, with some support from the city and non-governmental organizations

(NGOs), began reaching out to the gangsters to try to get them, eventually, to agree to a

cease fire and some rules of engagement to protect the community. At the time, the city

was offering communities resources and training, through a program it had initiated with

the help of the Catholic Church, to mediate "peaceful coexistence pacts" (pactos de

convivencia) between gangs. These micro-pacts were "not written down, but rather were

based on the word of one gang to another":

> Within the internal laws of the gangs, the respect for the spoken word has
> a special value. *"La palabra de hombre,* the word of a man, that is what it
> is about." The effect of the first *pactos de convivencia* was an immediate
> decrease in the number of violent deaths, especially among youth. For this
> reason the municipal authorities decided to back the initiative through an
> Oficina de Paz y Convivencia (Office for Peace and Coexistence) that
> took part in the negotiations and provided some financial support. … [It]
> is believed that the pacts saved many lives of youth in the
> neighbourhoods.[64]

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[64] Ralph Rozema, "Urban DDR-Processes" (references omitted).

With renewed support, Mama Luz doubled her own efforts, approaching the gangsters, as she had in the past, as their favorite nag. She worked with those from La Cañada (led by Alberto), which controlled the territory where she lived and worked; M-6&7 (led by Hugo), which controlled a large territory above; and La Arenera (led by Gamuza) and Las Mirlas (led by someone whose name she could not recall), both in territory adjoining that of La Cañada. She had no contact with the gang at Santa Lucía, possibly because, in her telling (those in Santa Lucía would probably tell it differently), the third gang war had been started when a child in Santa Lucía hit a child in her neighborhood; she said all she knew about them was that they came out to fire their guns then went back, and that some of them had once been students of hers.

Still, the JAC she worked with was throwing monthly block parties, with live music and dancing, food and drink, and they always invited people from the surrounding barrios to attend as a way to improve trust and dialog. "But before doing this, I went out to where those four groups were. … I'd go out one or two days beforehand, [to tell them]: 'I want to have a party and all of you are invited, with one condition: that nobody tokes up on me, that nobody starts any trouble on me, because you know I'll bring in the police, and I won't even defend you.' So now that I had these groups' consent, I'd go and put the party together."[65] At one of these parties, on 15 December 1997, people were dancing and enjoying themselves when some guys from La Cañada started walking over to where some guys from La Arenera were standing. Everyone at the party nearly panicked,

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[65] "Pero antes de yo hacer eso, me iba para donde los cuatro grupos, porque yo trabajaba con cuatro grupos, me iba uno o dos días antes: quiero hacer una fiesta y allá están invitados ustedes, con una condición: que nadie me fuma un cacho, ni nadie me forma un desorden, porque ustedes sabes que les traigo la policía y no los defiendo. Entonces ya con ese consentimiento de los cuatro grupos, yo hacia esa fiesta." 'Mama Luz,' Interview No. 11.

thinking there was about to be a confrontation. So Mama Luz, hearing some commotion, ran over to where the gangsters were heading toward each other, put herself physically in between them, and demanded to know what was going on. But one of them told her not to worry: they just wanted to make peace. Seeing that there wasn't going to be any trouble, Mama Luz told everyone that everything was fine, they could keep dancing. But they didn't make peace that day.

Four days later, however, at the end of the day, after she had just crawled in bed, she heard someone calling her name: "'¡Mama Luz, Mama Luz!' I said, 'God, what's happening now!' [They shouted,] 'Come out, Gamuza is asking for you, he needs you, it's urgent.'" At the time, two police officers were renting out the upstairs rooms in her house and asked her what was going on. She responded: "'Nothing, Gamuza's calling for me.' 'Be safe,' [the policemen said.] We're right here.' I got ready and left." She continued the story:

> I said to [the people waiting outside], "What's going on now?"
>
> "It's just that the muchachos want to make peace, so let's see. What are you going to do? Because we have a few former gangsters who left Hugo's group and are now with Alberto's. So what's going to happen to their families, or to mine?" Gamuza told me.
>
> "Let's see what we can do," I said. We headed up to where there's a park, … found two kids, and told them to go get Hugo, who was at La Ramada, this place where all of them from up here hang out [in Upper Villa Liliam]. … "I need him, it's urgent." And he comes down with five men.
>
> "What's up, Mama Luz? What's going on?"
>
> "Come on, let's talk. The guys from La Arenera want to make peace."[66]

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[66] "'¡Mamá Luz, Mamá Luz!' Dije, '¡Dios! ¿Qué pasó ahora?' 'Que vaya que Gamuza la llama que la necesita urgente!' Entonces me dijeron los agentes de policía, '¿Qué pasó Mama Luz?' 'No, que Gamuza me mandó a llamar.' 'Vaya tranquila, que aquí estamos nosotros.' Arranque y fui. Y les dije, '¿Qué pasó ahora?' 'No, es que los muchachos quieren hacer la paz, entonces a ver. ¿Qué va a hacer usted? Porque aquí hay unos reinsertados que se salieron de donde Hugo y están donde Alberto, entonces ¿qué va a pasar

They talked on the second floor of a dark house, with Hugo's men standing guard out front and two old women saying the rosary, praying for Mama Luz's safety. Hugo told her to go talk to Alberto and said that he'd talk to his own men, so that everybody could then sit down together. She left Hugo and Gamuza and in the dark of night went back down to her own neighborhood looking for Alberto, asking people on the street where he was, and finally found him.

> So he came out himself and he says to me, "Mama Luz, what are you doing out here at this hour? What do you need?"
>
> "I'm just coming here to talk with you, because the guys from La Arenera and Hugo's guys want to make peace. Hugo told me he doesn't want even a single shot to be fired anymore, and he wants you to come so he can talk to you."
>
> He said to me, "OK, Mama Luz, that's what we want, peace, peace in the barrio. So go [and tell him] I'm going to talk with all the guys."[67]

It's pretty clear that Mama Luz has idealized and dramatized much of the dialog. But she's rightfully proud of her accomplishment: she helped get most of the gang and militia leaders in Caicedo La Sierra together in the middle of the night and managed to mediate talks that led to a cease-fire and non-aggression pact. The agreement among the gangs was that they would not do drugs where children and members of the community could see them; they would respect each other's territory as sovereign; they would keep children out of the war; they would not allow personal conflicts to devolve into gang

ahora con su familia y la mía?' me dijo el Gamuza. 'Vamos a ver que hacemos,' le dije. Arrancamos hacia arriba que hay un parque, que yo les construí a los muchachos, busque a dos pelados y le dije vaya llámeme a Hugo que esta en La Ramada, un sitio donde se reunían todos ellos los de arriba. lo necesito urgente.' Y hay mismo el bajo con cinco hombres. 'A ver, Mamá Luz. ¿Qué pasó?.' 'Venga, vamos a hablar que los muchachos de la Arenera quieren la paz.'" Ibid.

[67] "Entonces hay mismo salió él y me dice, 'Mamá Luz, ¿qué hace por aquí ha estas horas? ¿Qué quiere?' 'Es que vengo hablar con usted, porque los muchacho de la Arenera y los muchachos de Hugo quieren la paz, y Hugo me dijo que no quiere que disparen un solo tiro, y que viniera a hablar con usted.' Me dijo, 'Listo, Mamá Luz, eso es lo que queremos, la paz, la paz en el barrio. Entonces vaya usted, que está metida en todo esto, arranque que yo voy a hablar con todo los muchachos.' Ibid.

wars; and they would attend training programs hosted by the mayor's office. To protect the communities, they agreed to hold their fire on all public holidays and allow free movement by civilians through the barrios.[68]

With the agreement in place that night, the gangs all decided to celebrate together. Alberto and his men got in their cars and rounded up some people to party; Hugo got some people to come down from La Sierra to join them. Mama Luz woke the neighbors to borrow music and speakers and tables and chairs and plates and spoons, and people started dancing and drinking even before they started cooking. Mama Luz grabbed a couple of young women and asked them to stop dancing and help the neighbors prepare *sancocho,* a type of stew traditionally made at community gatherings, and they all went and found some shopkeepers to supply the makings for it. "At three in the morning we had three kettles of sancocho ready," Mama Luz said proudly, adding that even though she had recently had surgery, she was so happy that night that she felt no pain. If anybody got too drunk, Alberto had his men with cars ready to drive them home safely. The party was heard throughout Caicedo La Sierra, and soon people from all over the sector started showing up — even some from Santa Lucía joined the celebration, and others from across the creek in Villatina. Somebody called the television news stations to tell them about this miracle that was happening around them, but none ever sent a crew: they didn't dare enter the war zone in the middle of the night. The police inspector asked what was going on, but he didn't stop the party, nor did he join in. In fact, nobody from outside of the warring communities was there, and the only authorities who ever showed up that

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[68] Ramiro Alberto Vélez Rivera, et al., *Governabilidad Local en Medellín: Configuración de Territorialidades, Conflictos y Ciudad*, 158.

night, Mama Luz said, were "God, who was helping me; and the [gang] leaders, who were there with their muchachos; and the muchachos, who wanted peace."[69]

I wish I didn't have to write the next paragraph, but anyone who has read this far can probably see what's coming. The midnight peace talks, the unexpected truce, the spontaneous all-night party that brought divided communities and warring gangs together for one night of extravagantly unjustified hope, took place on 19 December 1997. With even the most cursory look at the time series for homicides (the only violence data available for the sector), anyone could see that the third gang war was only just beginning, the worst of its violence still to come. And the seeds for the fourth war were, in a way, being planted that very night: some of the gangs from "below" — La Cañada, La Arenera, Las Mirlas, and Santa Lucía — would end up not just sticking to various non-aggression pacts (broken a few times along the way) but within two years would actually join forces in an even higher-stakes war against the militia from "above": M-6&7.[70]

Despite the efforts of Mama Luz and many other community leaders, peace managers, and outsiders, the cease-fires, truces, and micro-pacts they negotiated never led to lasting peace there. Throughout the city, in fact, the peaceful coexistence pacts sponsored by the city, the Church, and the peace managers had limited effects; they

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[69] "Eso quiere decir que a las tres de mañana ya teníamos tres ollas de sancocho listas. … Solamente lo estaba enfrentando Dios, que me estaba ayudando; y los líderes que estaban con los muchachos; y los muchachos que querían la paz." 'Mama Luz,' Interview No. 11.

[70] There is some question about the exact date of the peace agreement in Caicedo La Sierra. Mama Luz said her party took place on 19 December 1997, but local media were reporting that another party — celebrating a peace pact between M-6&7 and La Cañada — took place three months later, on 22 March 1998. It is possible Mama Luz got her dates wrong; it is equally possible, however, that Mama Luz's party was a spontaneous celebration of an informal agreement that was then formalized, and celebrated again, a few months later. Whatever the case, the exact timing of the parties does not change the analysis: the pact or pacts did not last very long and the wars continued in 1998. See El Tiempo, "Fiesta por la Paz en Barrio de Medellín," 23 March 1998.

certainly saved a lot of lives, but the pacts themselves never lasted more than few

months, and the city suspected the program in 1998. Ralph Rozema has noted the

program's shortcomings:

> A fundamental problem for the local government was that it was
> negotiating with criminal groups without a political or legal framework
> within which to do so. Many of the gang members had committed crimes
> that were not prosecuted and were even able to continue criminal
> activities, although no longer within their own neighbourhood. Moreover,
> they still possessed their weapons, as the pacts did not involve
> disarmament of the groups. … Without written commitments the process
> remained particularly vulnerable. … [To address] the lack of opportunities
> for youth … the pacts [had] included strategies for education and the
> establishment of micro-businesses … but the initiatives were few due to a
> lack of funds.[71]

The micro-pacts had been short-term solutions to long-term problems. As the

millennium came to a close, the problems were only going to get worse: not just the

behavior of the militants and gangsters toward the communities they lived in, not just the

intervention of the paras that was alternately welcomed and feared, and not just the

growing involvement of the security forces in the battles against the guerrillas and

militants, but all of it, the violence, the fear, the stigmatization and marginalization of the

periphery, the displaced families, the broken lives, the casualties of the wars that seemed

like they'd never end: all would only get worse before they would get better.

And then they would get worse again.

4.2.4. The Illegitimation of the Militias

It was the day after the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and Elizabeth was

crouched in front of her house scraping the candle wax off the ground from her vigil the

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[71] Ralph Rozema, "Urban DDR-Processes" (references omitted).

night before. She had just sent her children around the corner to fetch some groceries when she heard gunfire directly in front of her house. She looked up. Three men were in the street. One was on the ground, another kneeling over him. The one on the ground was bleeding. The one who was kneeling stood up and, seeing Elizabeth watching them, walked over to her and stuck his pistol to her head. The third man came over and shouted at him: "We deal with what's important. You're not going to kill her." The one with the pistol looked at her hard. "I remember he had a very ugly scar on his face. … He threw me into the house, and I don't even know how I closed the door. He left me smeared with blood. I just about went crazy." She heard two more shots — the man on the ground was certainly dead now — and soon her children returned, hysterical, to find their mother covered in blood, herself half crazy. They thought she'd been shot.

Some days, maybe weeks, later, the third man, the one who had saved her from the man with the scar, knocked on Elizabeth's door. "Ma'am, it's best that you leave," he told her. "That man's waiting to kill you. He's got himself in the coffee field keeping a lookout for you. I suggest you get out." She refused to leave her house, her barrio: *this is my home.* But he returned a week later. "Today's the day they're going to kill you. Get out of here." Afraid, she left that night, taking her kids with her to their father's house in Itagüí, south of the city. She found out later that six men had shown up at her house, kicked in the door, and shot the place up. A week later they moved in, and as the gang wars heated up in the next months and over the next years, Elizabeth kept hearing through neighbors that they were turning her house to uses that horrified her: "They raped there, they hid weapons, they brought in people tied up."[72]

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[72] "… 'nos metemos en la grande, no la vas a matar.' … Recuerdo que tenía una cicatriz muy fea en la cara. El tipo me tiró para adentro de la casa y no se cómo cerré la puerta. Me dejó untada de sangre. Yo me puse

It was January 1998. The men who took over Elizabeth's home in barrio La Sierra were from M-6&7, the ones who used to be the good guys, who had cleaned up the barrio, shut down the gangs and drug dealers, did social work, moved the drug use off the corner so children wouldn't see it, and most of all protected the community from people like the men who displaced Elizabeth from her home. They had changed, become what they'd once opposed. An M-6&7 commander named Fernando told Arleison Arcos Rivas in 1998 that the social cleansing campaigns had been a mistake:

> I think that for us it was a mistake for us to dispose of other people's lives. Our dispute wasn't really with those kids. You have to give them a goddamned chance, everybody, a chance to live. One problem, there's no jobs, there's no upbringing, there's no motivation.[73]

Hugo, the founder of M-6&7, expressed less regret to the same interviewer, suggesting that the state and the paramilitaries were doing the same thing. But even with that he recognized that social cleansing was not sustainable. "I think that, as an armed project and as a political structure, we can't keep doing that sort of work, but we also can't just let anyone do whatever they want to the communities day in and day out."[74] Yet by the mid-1990s, their victims were including homosexuals, drunks, drug addicts, bad fathers — people who were sons and daughters and cousins of families who lived in the

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para enloquecerme. … [El otro hombre la dijo:] 'Señora, es mejor que se vaya. El hombre ese la está esperando para matarla, él se mantiene metido en el cafetal vigilándola. Yo le aconsejo que se vaya. … Hoy es el día que la van a matar. Váyase.' … Allá [en la casa] violaban, escondían armas, llevaban gente amarrada." Elizabeth Pérez, "Dos Muertos Que Marcaron Mi Vida," ["Two Deaths that Marked Me for Life,"] in *Jamás Olvidaré Tu Nombre*, ed. Patricia Nieto (Medellín, Colombia: Alcaldía de Medellín, 2006), 20.

[73] "Ah, yo creo que eso para nosotros es un error que nosotros dispongamos de la vida de otros. La pelea no es contra esos pelaos. Hay que darle la hijo de puta oportunidad, a todo el mundo le dieron la oportunidad de vivir. Un problema, no hay empleo, no hay educación, no hay motivación." Punctuation edited for clarity. Quoted in Arleison Arcos Rivas, "Ciudadanía Armada," 203.

[74] "Yo pienso que nosotros, como proyectos armados y como estructura política, no podemos seguir haciendo ese tipo de trabajos. Pero tampoco podemos dejar a las comunidades hoy por hoy a que cualquiera haga con ellos lo que quiera." Punctuation edited for clarity. Quoted in Ibid., 208.

communities. It's not that people approved of or even really wanted to tolerate the behavior or the lifestyles of the social-cleansing victims, but they were family, and nobody wanted a family member killed just because she was a lesbian, or a prostitute, or just because he was a drunk, or a drug dealer: among the potential responses to social disapproval, there were alternatives to the death penalty. Moreover, for some of the militants, as Elizabeth's experience demonstrates, the power had simply gone to their heads. They were out of control. The militias were doing practically whatever they wanted to anyone they wanted — in Hugo's words: "day in and day out."

By the end of the 1990s, the people who lived in M-6&7's territory had had enough. The militias had overreached. They had abused their power and transgressed the boundaries of what was tolerable and acceptable to the communities that had once embraced them as local heroes. The militants — as well as the community — would end up paying a high price for their illegitimacy: By doing what they did, by becoming what they had become, they had inadvertently unlocked the doors to the barrio just as the paras were about to come knocking.

Chapter 5. Mafias and the Emergence of Paramilitaries: 1998-2002

Diego Fernando Murillo Bejarano had a job to do. A group of about 30 dissident student radicals had recently broken away from the insurgent group the People's Liberation Army[1] (EPL: Ejército Popular de Liberación) to form their own group, which they named Red Star (Estrella Roja). The first thing they needed was money to finance their organization, and so one of their first acts was to rob a supermarket in Itagüí. The operation was a success: they got their money. But the students apparently hadn't done their homework. If they had, they probably would not have chosen that particular business to rob, not if they had known what was good for them. The supermarket was owned by Fernando and Mario Galeano. The Galeano brothers, along with the Moncada brothers, Gerardo and William Julio, operated a powerful drug-trafficking organization headquartered just south of Medellín that was part of Pablo Escobar's Medellín Cartel. Diego Murillo ["Moo-REE-jhoe"] worked for Fernando Galeano as a driver and bodyguard, and he was given the job of finding the students and making sure they would never be able to take money from the Galeano family again.[2]

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[1] Sometimes translated as the Popular Liberation Army.

[2] Biographical information about Diego Murillo comes from: El Tiempo, "¿Quién Es 'Don Berna' o 'Adolfo Paz,' Inspector General de las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia?" ["Who Is 'Don Berna' or 'Adolfo Paz,' Inspector General of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia?"] 20 September 2003; Semana, "Los Secretos de 'Don Berna'," ["The Secrets of 'Don Berna',"] 14 Julio 2007, http://www.semana.com/wf_InfoArticulo.aspx?IdArt=104961 (accessed 13 April 2009); VerdadAbierta.com, "'Don Berna,' Diego Fernando Murillo Bejarano," Paramilitares y Conflicto Armado en Colombia [Paramilitaries and Armed Conflict in Colombia], published electronically by Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP) and Semana, http://www.verdadabierta.com/web3/victimarios/los-jefes (accessed 13 April 2009); common knowledge in Medellín; and other sources as cited.

It was 1984, and Murillo was already familiar with the students' outlook: he himself had joined the EPL as a teenager in the department of Valle del Cauca, in the west of Colombia, in the late 1970s. He was a member for only a few years before everyone else in his unit was killed by narcotraffickers out of revenge for their having kidnapped a colleague. He should have been killed, too, but he escaped their fate and moved to Medellín instead. There, he met Galeano, earned his trust, and got the security job. He was smart and relentless, and soon the Red Star students knew he was after them. They decided on a preemptive attack. They sent a few of their members to set up an ambush and, with orders to make sure Murillo would not survive, the gunmen opened fire. Within seconds, Murillo was lying on the ground, blood pouring out of the holes bored into his body by 17 bullets. He was a dead man as far as his killers knew: who could survive 17 bullets? It turns out that Diego Murillo could. He lost a leg, but he kept his life, cheating death for a second time. The Red Stars were not so lucky: by the time the Galeanos were done with them, there was nothing left of the organization. The dissident group's leader was riddled with bullets at a University of Antioquia cafeteria before being dragged into the street and publicly mutilated under the tires of a Galeano vehicle. At least 12 others were likewise assassinated by the end of 1985; some reports suggest every Red Star member was hunted down and that none survived. A rising star in the Galeano-Moncada organization, Murillo recovered, his own survival, and the loss of his leg, only enhancing his reputation as a man to be feared.

Murillo's bosses were assassinated by Pablo Escobar during the drug lord's time at the Cathedral (his luxury prison) in a dispute over money (see § 2.1.3). Escobar had been the Medellín Cartel's enforcer, and all member organizations paid him a "war tax"

to, among other things, maintain a favorable political and legal climate in Colombia. In his view, he had sacrificed his freedom to get Colombia's political establishment to outlaw extraditions to the United States, to the benefit of all cartel members, and Escobar wanted more money from the cartel in return. The Galeanos and Moncadas agreed to increase their monthly payments from $200,000 to $1 million. But Escobar wanted even more and ordered his men to steal about $20 million he knew the two families had in storage. When the brothers complained, Escobar had them tortured, killed, and mutilated.[3] Fernando Galeano and Gerardo Moncada were executed when they went to the Cathedral; their brothers were kidnapped and killed later. As Fernando's bodyguard, Diego Murillo should have gone to the Cathedral with him; if he had, he, too, surely would have been killed. But Fernando had asked him to look after Mrs. Galeano that day (legend has it that he was asked to take her to the beauty salon). And so, for the third time in his life, Murillo had cheated death.

When Escobar escaped from prison in July 1992, Murillo, feeling unsafe in Medellín, returned to his roots in the department of Valle del Cauca, where he had been born in 1961, to see if he could find work with drug traffickers in that region, maybe the cartel that operated out of the city of Cali in the southern part of the department, or the North Valley Cartel that operated in the Norte del Valle region up north. There he met the paramilitary leader Fidel Castaño — a former friend of Escobar's who also had been invited to go to the Cathedral on that fateful day, but had wisely declined the invitation — and with Castaño and some members of the Cali Cartel, Murillo co-founded the Pepes, the death squad that liquidated Escobar's organizations, associates, possessions, and life.

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[3] Patrick Clawson and Rensselaer W. Lee, *The Andean Cocaine Industry.*

To maintain confidentiality while communicating with underworld figures and the government's Search Bloc, members of the Pepes adopted aliases. Murillo chose 'Berna' as his *nom de guerre,* probably a phonetic variation of his middle name, Fernando. As Berna's power rose in Medellín, people referred to him with the Spanish honorific *don* and despite his later efforts to get people to call him 'Adolfo Paz' (Adolph Peacemaker) he always was, and still is, popularly known as 'Don Berna.'

After Escobar's death on the rooftop in December 1993, 'Don Berna' Murillo began rebuilding the empire that Escobar had left behind, and within a few years he would succeed — and then join forces with the surviving Castaño brothers in a grand narco-paramilitary alliance. Fidel Castaño died sometime in 1994 under sketchy circumstances; his brother Carlos claims he was killed in a battle against guerrillas in January of that year, yet in May the Colombian newsweekly *Semana* published an interview with Fidel that it said had been taken "a few days ago."[4] Two other accounts, more conspiratorial in tone, are that Carlos killed his brother so he could take control of the paramilitaries himself, or that Fidel faked his own death and even today is living abroad somewhere. In any event, Fidel disappeared, and Carlos took over leadership of the family's paramilitary empire, known as La Casa Castaño (the Castaño House). As Carlos Castaño expanded the reach of that empire in the countryside, 'Don Berna' Murillo began building his own empire.

He began by returning to Medellín and, symbolically, setting up shop in Envigado, Escobar's home town just south of the city and just across the river from the town of Itagüí, where the Galeano-Moncada organization had been based. He wasted no

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[4] Semana, "Yo Fui el Creador de los Pepes," ["I Was the Creator of the Pepes,"] 31 May 1994, 38.

time approaching the remnants of Escobar's best enforcement organizations and

trafficking networks and informing them that they now worked for him. He did not

operate appreciably differently from Escobar in this regard, except that he kept a much

lower profile (he did not get involved in politics or social work, for example) and he

structured his organization more loosely than the Medellín Cartel, as what locals referred

to as an *oficina* (business office) structure, operating as a clearinghouse for the

Colombian underworld by connecting customers to contractors and taking a cut of the

revenue. This was considered a necessary change from the way the cartels had operated.

After Escobar's death, "groups involved in the illicit trade in drugs became atomized, but

in a move typical of businesses that can't sustain themselves as a microenterprises, they

coordinated themselves in less hierarchical and less visible networks whose purpose was

to guarantee the effectiveness of their operations, whether commercial or violent." In the

mid-1990s, in other words, the underworld reorganized itself into a network of

independent nodes, albeit with some nodes having greater influence than others:

> Now these gangs are no longer mere appendages to mafia structures, but
> begin to operate as armed microenterprises with the capacity to sell their
> services to the highest bidder. [Alongside them] are the large organized
> crime structures with the capacity to operate as intermediaries between the
> world of the oficinas and the world of the gangs. The Terrace Gang, La
> Cañada, the Triana Gang, Frank's Gang, and hit squads like the Chiquis
> are the most significant examples.[5]

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[5] "... los grupos dedicados al negocio ilegal de las drogas se atomizaron pero, en una acción propia de un negocio que no puede sostenerse con formas microempresariales, también se coordinaron en redes menos jerárquicas y visibles que tenían como finalidad garantizar la eficacia de la acción comercial y violenta. ... Éstas [bandas] ya no figuran más como apéndices de las estructuras mafiosas, sino que comienzan a operar como microempresas armadas con capacidad de vender sus servicios al mejor postor. El segundo aspecto es la aparición de grandes estructuras del crimen organizado con capacidad de operar como intermediarios entre el mundo de las oficinas y el mundo de las bandas. La Terraza, La Cañada, la banda de los Triana, la banda de Frank y grupos de sicarios, como los Chiquis, constituyen los ejemplos más significativos de este tipo de estructuras armadas." Manuel A. Alonso Espinal, Jorge Giraldo Ramírez, and Diego Jorge Sierra, "Medellín: El Complejo Camino de la Competencia Armada," ["Medellín: The Complex Course of Armed Competition,"] in *Parapolítica: La Ruta de la Expansión Paramilitar y los Acuerdos Políticos*, ed. Mauricio Romero (Bogotá: Intermedio/Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris, 2007), 121.

Murillo's organization became known as the Envigado Office (Oficina de Envigado) and

everyone knew Murillo was positioning it as the successor to the Medellín Cartel. Most

of the contractors he worked with — growers, producers, transporters, hit squads, bank

robbers, protection racketeers, etc. — were those independently owned and operated

microenterprises, but Murillo exercised great influence over their activities nonetheless,

nowhere more so than in Medellín: one report claimed, with clear exaggeration, that "not

one assault, robbery, mugging, or murder was committed in Medellín without his

consent."[6] Anyone who got on his wrong side — who failed to fulfill their contractual

obligations, pay him his cut of their criminal proceeds, or comply with his extortionist

demands — risked death at the hands of one of the most powerful organized crime

groups in the city, whom he used as his main enforcers: the Terrace Gang (La Terraza).

The Terrace Gang, headed by a man named Elkin Sánchez Mena (known as 'El

Negro Elkin'),[7] was an extremely skilled and disciplined criminal organization that got its

start as a gang in barrio Manrique, in Medellín's tough Northeastern zone. It got its name

from an ice-cream shop where a massacre had taken place, worked for Pablo Escobar in

the late 1980s and then against him in the early 1990s, and by 1997 had grown into one

of the most feared organized crime structures in the country.[8] With about 200 members,

they carried out high-profile assassinations, kidnappings, car bombings, and bank and

armored-truck robberies, not only in Medellín but in Bogotá and elsewhere, and not only

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[6] "… ningún asalto, robo, atraco, o asesinato se cometía en Medellín sin su consentimiento." Quoted in Semana, "Contra la oficina del terror," ["Against the Office of Terror,"] 11 June 2005.

[7] His name is sometimes published as Luis Sánchez Mena, but I have been unable to find a definitive source for his birth name, so the most common version is used here.

[8] César Mendoza González, Interview No. 6; Marta Inés Villa Martínez, Luz Amparo Sánchez Medina, and Ana María Jaramillo Arbeláez, *Rostros del Miedo: Una Investigación Sobre los Miedos Sociales Urbanos*, 33.

for Murillo but for other customers such as Carlos Castaño (of course, Murillo got a cut). It also kept Medellín's smaller crime gangs in line. "Nothing moved without its authorization," a former militant with underworld contacts told me, recording the conversation to make sure I would not misquote him. He was exaggerating, but he made his point: Terrace was a tough gang, and 'El Negro Elkin' was a powerful mob boss.[9]

Even with the Terrace Gang on his side, however, 'Don Berna' Murillo did not yet have the monopoly over Medellín's underworld that he wanted, not by a long shot. The leftist militias, and the gangs that kept pretending to be leftist militias, were still in control of many of the city's peripheral barrios throughout most of the 1990s, and the big criminal organizations — Frank's Gang, the Triana Gang, La Cañada — and the small neighborhood gangs continued to maintain their independence. The criminal groups were of some concern to Murillo, as they represented an opportunity for competing trafficking networks to make inroads into his territory. There continued to be gang wars over micro-territories and illicit markets, and Murillo intervened in many of them, backing one side or another to be sure his influence would continue to grow.

Of greater concern to Castaño, however, was the continued presence of the leftist groups in Medellín: his grudge against guerrillas held, and he wanted to eliminate them wherever he could. His friendship with Murillo and the militias' own illegitimation within the communities they controlled provided him the perfect opportunity to try to eject them from the city. In 1998, he would make his move by taking advantage of a structure he had created as part of his family's grand strategy to defeat insurgent guerrillas throughout the country (see next section).

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[9] Luis Fernando Quijano Moreno, Interview No. 5.

Little is known about the early life of the Castaño brothers — Fidel, Carlos, and

Vicente — except that they grew up in northern Antioquia in an area near the Gulf of

Urabá that was under the control of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

(FARC: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarios de Colombia). By the late 1970s, Fidel, the

eldest brother, who had traveled the world, had become a wealthy landowner in the

departments of Antioquia and Córdoba and a trafficker in stolen art and narcotics, at

times working closely with Escobar and the Medellín Cartel. But he became the country's

leading anti-guerrilla after the FARC kidnapped his father in 1979 and killed him in 1980

despite having received part of the ransom payment from the hostage's family. Together

with some friends, farmhands, and off-duty soldiers, the Castaño brothers took their

vengeance on the local guerrillas they believed had been responsible, then set their sights

on a broader anti-guerrilla program.[10] Their group became known as Los Tangueros (The

Tango Dancers, a play on the name of the Castaños' ranch, Las Tangas). When they

expanded and formalized this paramilitary group in 1987, they named it the Peasant Self-

Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU: Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y

Urabá), after the department of Córdoba and the Gulf of Urabá, the regions where they

operated. The ACCU was notoriously brutal as a death squad that targeted guerrillas,

leftist sympathizers, and innocent people with the misfortune of having lived where

guerrillas had operated (Fidel Castaño picked up the alias 'Rambo' during this period). Its

signature tactic was the massacre, after which bodies were often left behind that had been

beheaded or disemboweled as a warning to survivors that they should consider

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[10] VerdadAbierta.com, "'Rambo,' Fidel Castaño Gil," Paramilitares y Conflicto Armado en Colombia [Paramilitaries and Armed Conflict in Colombia], published electronically by Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP) and Semana, http://www.verdadabierta.com/web3/victimarios/los-jefes (accessed 30 July 2009).

abandoning their land. In truth, while much of the ACCU's work was truly anti-subversive, many such attacks had nothing at all to do with guerrillas: the politics was often used as an excuse for a coercive land grab or to settle old scores, a common occurrence in irregular wars throughout history.[11]

The ACCU was neither the only nor the first paramilitary group to operate in Colombia. While its most direct ancestors were the MAS death squad founded by Escobar in the early 1980s and the Pepes death squad that hunted Escobar in the early 1990s (see Chapter 2), self-defense groups and paramilitaries have had a long history in the country. During the 1960s, when the guerrilla war began, the Colombian military realized that it did not have the personnel or resources to counter the guerrillas where they operated: Colombia is a very large country with very difficult terrain, including steep mountains, thick jungles, and vast, hot lowlands. There was no way the central government could protect all of its citizens throughout the country, as it historically had had little or no presence in much of it. Many villages were left to their own devices, as were wealthy landowners and large oil and mining corporations, and they armed themselves in self-defense. At the same time, at the advice of the U.S. military — which was none too hesitant to help any willing government in the Western Hemisphere counter their domestic Communists — the Colombian military recruited civilians in guerrilla-controlled territory to support the security forces as informants and guides. This approach was bolstered by a 1965 presidential decree encouraging citizens to organize resistance against guerrilla influence and a 1968 law that provided the legal framework through which citizens could form legitimate civil-defense militias. During the 1970s, wealthy

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[11] Stathis N. Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence': Action and Identity in Civil Wars," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003): 475.

landowners, including smugglers, narcotraffickers, oilmen, and miners, formed their own private security forces as bodyguards and to protect their property, justifying it, when necessary, by reference to the 1968 law. But in 1989 the Colombian Supreme Court ruled that that law was invalid, and the government quickly criminalized the civil-defense groups. But that did not stop them from continuing to operate.

It also did not stop the government from finding other ways to make paramilitaries legal. A presidential decree was issued on 11 February 1994 authorizing and regulating the creation of nonstate organizations to provide "special vigilance and private security services" (servicios especiales de vigilancia y seguridad privada) through a government program that later became known as Convivir (Living Together).[12] Convivir was meant to support the formation of community self-defense groups — bodyguards, security guards, escorts, armed "neighborhood watch"-like services, etc. — in areas where state security forces were too weak to protect people from guerrillas and criminals. Just as banks hire private security firms, and businessmen and politicians hire private bodyguards, supporters of the policy argued, the Convivir [cohn-vee-VEER] policy enabled vulnerable communities to form their own private security forces (and, not incidentally, enabled the security forces to recruit informants to gather local intelligence).[13]

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[12] El Presidente de la República de Colombia, "Decreto Número 356 de 1994 (Febrero 11)," published electronically by Superintendencia de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada, http://www.supervigilancia.gov.co (accessed 2 August 2009).

[13] María Isabel Rueda, "Convivir en blanco y negro," ["Convivir in black and white,"] *Semana,* 1 September 1997, 32.

The U.S. Embassy in Bogotá warned of the dangers of arming such groups,

writing in a cable, following a conversation with then-Defense Minister Fernando Botero

Zea (a few years before his arrest on corruption charges for taking drug money), that the

> proposal has been met with mixed and heated reaction locally, and many
> have expressed warranted fears that without the proper supervision of the
> state, the groups could degenerate into local armed militias in the service
> of legitimate or illegitimate economic interests with little regard for human
> rights concerns. Botero has insisted that state supervision and
> administration of these groups will be strict and that examples of the
> efficacy of such groups abound from the experience of other insurgent
> conflicts. We believe … that Colombia's protracted vaguely ideological
> conflict is quite *sui generis* and that *there has never been an example in
> Colombia of a para-statal security group that has not ultimately operated
> with wanton disregard for human rights or been corrupted by local
> economic interests*.[14]

Within a few years, those concerns had proven well founded, and these words, prophetic.

The Convivir groups, like Coosercom before them (see § 4.1.2), were given weapons and

technical assistance, but once formed they were poorly regulated: of the approximately

10,000 members of Convivir, for example, fewer than 9 percent had even been subjected

to a basic criminal background check. Oversight was poor to nonexistent, to the point that

by 1997 government sources were unable to tell inquiring journalists how many such

groups even existed in the country (and when they could, the numbers they cited were

inconsistent). It was clear that, while some were operating as legitimate (according to

law) community self-defense groups, many others were operating in reality as

paramilitary death squads, and still others were being corrupted through links to

narcotrafficking and other criminal organizations.[15] According to a declassified

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[14] American Embassy Bogotá, "Botero Human Rights Letter to A/S Shattuck," 9 December 1994, cable to United States Department of State, published electronically by The National Security Archive, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB217/doc01.pdf (accessed 30 June 2009) (emphasis added).

[15] María Isabel Rueda, "Convivir en blanco y negro."

intelligence report, a senior Colombian Army officer in mid-1997 described the Convivir groups as "very difficult to control":

> Once peasants are armed and get a taste for power and easy money, it is hard to disarm them and keep them under tight government control. [The officer] said that was the concern of his government too, i.e., awareness of the potential for Convivir's *[sic]* to devolve into full-fledged paramilitaries, though the MoD [Ministry of Defense] was reluctant to admit it publicly.[16]

The government finally recognized the failure of the policy and issued a decree on 16 December 1997 that clarified the standards of behavior to which the Convivir groups were legally required to conform and expanded the authority of the Superintendent of Vigilance and Private Security to suspend the license of any Convivir group that violated those standards.[17] Most lost their licenses and were officially dismantled. But many of their members — now well trained and experienced in battle — simply formed their own paramilitaries or joined existing ones in guerrilla-controlled areas.

And yet, despite the central government's official withdrawal of support for its failed Convivir policy, paramilitaries still enjoyed a great degree of support from regional and local state actors, both civilian and, especially, military, as they had for decades in Colombia. Colombia is a state whose authority has always been fragmented among its different regions. The difficult geography made it possible, and perhaps necessary, for remote regions to develop their own economic relations with the outside world, independent of any central authority. Like a hundred "Wild Wests," the remote regions

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[16] United States Defense Intelligence Agency, "Senior Colombian Army Officer Biding His Time During Remainder of Samper Regime," 15 July 1997, declassified intelligence information report, published electronically by The National Security Archive, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB217/doc12.pdf (accessed 30 June 2009).

[17] El Presidente de la República de Colombia, "Decreto Número 2974 de 1997 (Diciembre 16)," published electronically by Superintendencia de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada, http://www.supervigilancia.gov.co (accessed 2 August 2009).

grew up fiercely independent, with order maintained by local strongmen acting as patrons

to local clients (who depended on them for jobs, social standing, and political influence)

and as the interlocutors to outsiders (such as political candidates) seeking local influence

or resources. Moreover, Colombia was settled by "Spaniards who arrived after a seven-

century war against the Arabs," writes Francisco E. Thoumi.

> They came from one of the most medieval regions of Europe, and the
> regional isolation that they experienced in Colombia allowed them to
> maintain their mores and customs. … Traditional premodern Spanish
> values did not encourage respect of the laws or authorities of the central
> government, and the isolation of many descendants of the conquistadors
> allowed them to maintain a significant degree of autonomy from the
> central government. At the beginning of the 20th century, Colombian
> society had strong hierarchies and the landlords had great autonomy. Their
> local power was strong, and they frequently abused it. In other words,
> their societies did not impose significant behavioral controls.[18]

Ricardo Vargas describes this history as having cultivated an *esprit mafioso,* or

mafia mindset, in Colombian culture and society, especially outside the major cities, and

this characterization is about right. He describes a *mafia* as not so much an organization

as a "medieval sentiment that arises from a belief that an individual can be assured the

protection and integrity of their person and property through their own worth and

influence, independent of the actions of the authorities or the law." This mafia mindset,

he continues,

> suggests that to achieve success in life, one must have the valor to oppose
> authority and if necessary the law, or at least support those who can do so
> and not suffer formal legal consequences.[19]

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[18] Francisco E. Thoumi, "The Colombian Competitive Advantage in Illegal Drugs."

[19] Ricardo Vargas, "State, Esprit Mafioso, and Armed Conflict in Colombia," in *Politics in the Andes: Identity, Conflict, Reform*, ed. Jo-Marie Burt and Philip Mauceri (Pittsburgh, Penn.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 107, citing the conceptualization of Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, *Histoire de la Mafia [A History of the Mafia]* (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 1994); Vargas translates *esprit mafioso* as *mafia sentiments*.

This mindset proved fertile ground for the growth of the illicit drug economy in Colombia in the 1980s, making vast wealth available to men of "valor" in places remote from the central authorities in Bogotá. The mafia powers of the past — a lot of them, at least — became the narcotraffickers of the 1980s and the paramilitary leaders of the 1990s. By joining the fight against the guerrillas they had previously cut deals with in their areas of influence, the mafiosi were able to neutralize one set of competitors to their drug profits, the guerrillas, while simultaneously legitimizing themselves to another set of competitors, the state actors and foreign powers (especially the United States) who otherwise might have targeted them as "narcoguerrillas" or "narcoterrorists."

A consequence of the state actors' implicit support for the paras, however, was an increased fragmentation of the Colombian state, a further consolidation of strongman control over remote regions, and a reinforcement of the mafia mindset, all at the expense of the rule of law at the local, regional, and national levels. As Vargas warned:

> By substituting for the legitimate exercise of state power the atrocities and cruelties carried out by private actors, a subculture is emerging that is based on values of order enforced through premodern private powers. … [The state's] premodern condition does not allow it to construct affirmative cultural references, which in turn makes the use of force the primary mechanism to resolve conflicts and regulate behavior. Even with its use of force, the state does not act to realize and consolidate a strategic monopoly. Rather, it acquiesces in and tolerates private violence to resolve conflicts, which may be effective in the short term but over time tends to contribute to the state's delegitimization.[20]

Short-term effectiveness at the expense of long-term legitimation is a recipe for instability. And instability was exactly what Colombia was about to get at all levels: in the country as a whole, especially in its outlying regions; in the city of Medellín (among others); and in that city's Caicedo La Sierra sector (among others!).

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[20] Ricardo Vargas, "State, Esprit Mafioso, and Armed Conflict in Colombia."

In April 1997, having already absorbed a number of smaller nearby paramilitaries into the ACCU, Castaño called a meeting of para chiefs from other regions of the country to propose a national association of paramilitaries. This association, to be called the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC: Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia), was intended to be something he could present to the country, in the words of one history of the group, as "an organization with a unified command, a national plan, a mechanism to coordinate actions across regions, and an agenda with programmed aims, all with a view toward achieving a place at negotiations with the state and a status that would guarantee its future recognition as a political actor"; this agenda included "containing the expansion of guerrillas and penetrating the zones where [the guerrillas] had sources of funding, principally from narcotrafficking."[21] Castaño appointed himself head of the AUC's political wing. To oversee the military wing, he selected Gabriel Salvatore Mancuso Gómez, called by his second name Salvatore or his alias 'El Mono' ('The Monkey'). Mancuso was an old friend who had been a founding member of Los Tangueros in Castaño's youth. Over the next months and years, Mancuso and Castaño expanded the association by incorporating existing paramilitaries from throughout the country and recruiting police officers, soldiers, peasants, and even some former guerrillas into the AUC's different blocs.

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[21] "… con el propósito de presentarse como una organización con un mando unificado, un plan nacional, una coordinación multiregional de las acciones y una agenda con pretensiones programáticas, todo con miras a lograr un espacio en la negociación con el Estado y un estatus que garantizara, a futuro, su reconocimiento como actor político. A partir de este momento, las autodefensas se trazan la meta de contener la expansión de la guerrilla e incursionar en las zonas donde estos grupos tienen sus fuentes de financiamiento, principalmente del narcotráfico." VerdadAbierta.com, "El Nacimiento de las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (1997-2002)," ["The Expansion: Birth of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (1997-2992),"] Paramilitares y Conflicto Armado en Colombia [Paramilitaries and Armed Conflict in Colombia], published electronically by Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP) and Semana, http://www.verdadabierta.com/web3/la-historia (accessed 31 July 2009).

Some of these blocs were true civil-defense groups, founded to defend themselves and their interests against extortion and kidnapping by guerrillas. Others were ideologically antisubversive, para-statal organizations, formed to take the offensive against guerrillas. Many acted more like private security forces, formed primarily to protect the economic interests of their founders: coca farms, cocaine production facilities, oil fields, banana farms, or mining interests. A distinction is sometimes made between the "political" paras and the "narco" paras. This distinction is sometimes useful as a description of general tendencies. But in fact individual paras usually operated on mixed motives, each depending on some combination of personal experience, political outlook, and economic interest.

The organizational purpose of the AUC was to provide a means through which otherwise isolated units, whatever their motivation, could work together toward shared objectives. To the outside world, that's what it looked like: independent paras working together as a federation toward shared objectives. But internally, it was clear that Castaño and Mancuso always had only a very tenuous control over the rest of the association's members.[22] They acted together when it was in their immediate interests to do so, and for the first few years of the federation, most of them considered it in their immediate interests to do so: by working together, they increased their numbers and the discipline of their troops, increased their income by protecting or monopolizing narcotrafficking in vast regions of the country, and succeeded in defeating and ejecting guerrillas from many parts of Colombia — something the state's security forces had been unable to achieve for decades.

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[22] Gustavo Duncan, *Los Señores de la Guerra: De Paramilitares, Mafiosos y Autodefensas en Colombia [Warlords: On Paramilitaries, Mafiosi, and Self-Defense Forces in Colombia]* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2006), 14.

This had immediate benefits for the local mafia bosses and their clients, but it did not automatically improve the lives of most people living in those areas. In some places it did, but in most others, control had merely shifted from one set of abusive and extortive armed actors funded by narcotraffickers and backed by local mafiosi, to another set of abusive and extortive armed actors funded by narcotraffickers and backed by local mafiosi. The only real difference was that the paras had the backing of the state as well — and were even worse abusers of human rights than the guerrillas and the military. Assassinations, torture, massacres, disappearances, and especially, forced displacements: the AUC were known for their brutality against known and suspected enemies, their supporters, their families, their business associates, their neighbors. Homicides nationwide increased 40 percent from 1997 to 2002,[23] not necessarily because the AUC murdered a lot of people (though they did), but mostly because the air of impunity — an expression and expansion of the mafia mindset — that pervaded the country during the rise of the paras had lowered the moral and practical barriers to the violent realization of personal and professional grudges. Most murders and massacres went uninvestigated and unpunished. It wasn't just that the government lacked the capacity to investigte and punish; it was also that significant sectors of the government supported what the AUC were achieving.

And so did most Colombians, even while they disapproved of the methods. The new paras seemed to be the only force in the country capable of forcing the insurgents to negotiate peace and put an end, once and for all, to the longest civil war in the Western Hemisphere, then in its fourth decade. As it happened, a cease-fire would soon be

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[23] Author's calculation based on Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas (DANE), "Estadísticas Vitales," http://www.dane.gov.co (accessed 2 August 2009).

negotiated with the FARC. But those talks would not bring an end to the war, not in

Colombia, and certainly not in Medellín.

5.1. Medellín: 'Don Berna,' 'Double Zero,' and the Complex War

5.1.1. 'Double Zero' Enters Medellín

The AUC's brutal campaign against guerrillas nationwide — which promised

both political and economic benefits for the AUC — was exactly what Carlos Castaño

was hoping to replicate in Medellín when he decided in 1997 to send in troops.[24] To do

that job, he selected his longtime military trainer, Carlos Mauricio García Fernández,

known as 'Rodrigo Franco,' 'Doblecero' ('Double Zero' or '00'), or most often,

'Rodrigo 00' ('Rodrigo Double Zero').[25]

'Rodrigo 00' García was a virulent anti-Communist who had been a junior officer

in the Army during the Betancur administration's negotiations with the FARC in the mid-

1980s. He retired in 1989, however, amid accusations that he and other members of his

unit had formed a death squad to exterminate and "disappear" members of the Patriotic

Union political party (UP: Unión Patriótica), which had been founded in May 1985 by

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[24] Information on the activities of the AUC is drawn from VerdadAbierta.com, "Las Auc," Paramilitares y Conflicto Armado en Colombia [Paramilitaries and Armed Conflict in Colombia], published electronically by Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP) and Semana, http://www.verdadabierta.com/web3/victimarios (accessed 31 July 2009); Mauricio Romero, ed., *Parapolítica: La Ruta de la Expansión Paramilitar y los Acuerdos Políticos [Parapolitics: The Course of Paramilitary Expansion and Political Accords]* (Bogotá: Intermedio/Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris, 2007); Margarita Martínez Escallón, personal communication (Interview No. 26), 1 July 2009; Luis Fernando Quijano Moreno, Interview No. 5; and other sources as cited.

[25] His family name sometime appears in print as García Duque rather than García Fernández, and his given names sometimes appear as César Mauricio instead of Carlos Mauricio.

demobilized guerrillas. During the investigations into those death squads, García retired

from the Army — and Fidel Castaño recruited him to train ACCU units in counter-

guerrilla tactics.[26] After Fidel's death, García, who had been born and raised in Medellín

and spent much of his youth in the surrounding countryside, continued working with the

ACCU, taking responsibility for paramilitary units in parts of Antioquia not already

controlled by the Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Magdalena Medio (ACMM,

Autodefensas Campesinas del Magdalena Medio), which later became one of the more

important co-founders of the AUC.

'Rodrigo 00' García was one of the few para leaders to refuse to allow

narcotrafficking money to corrupt his work: he was the purest of the political paras. His

units raised money instead by stealing and reselling gasoline, selling or racketeering

private security services, and extorting businesses. Despite his contempt for the narco

paras, García agreed to join the AUC to lead a new paramilitary bloc, named Metro

(Bloque Metro), into the Medellín metropolitan area.

He had already been operating on the outskirts of Medellín, having led a series of

attacks and massacres that had cut off the FARC and the ELN from the city. His

intimidation campaign in the countryside began with the killing of 14 farmers in a village

in eastern Antioquia on 3 May 1997; more were to follow.[27] When his attacks were

against guerrillas instead of unarmed civilians, he tried to capture rather than kill them so

he could convert their fighters into paras. "His first order was to respect the lives of the

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[26] Margarita Martínez Escallon, "Así Filmamos la Sierra," ["This Is How We Filmed La Sierra,"] El Malpensante, http://www.elmalpensante.com/index.php?doc=display_contenido&id=671 (accessed 5 August 2009).

[27] Manuel A. Alonso Espinal, Jorge Giraldo Ramírez, and Diego Jorge Sierra, "Medellín: El Complejo Camino de la Competencia Armada," 124.

ELN combatants" whom his units captured, a non-governmental organization (NGO) official told journalists for a history of the AUC. "You'd see them at the AUC's headquarters all chained up, then six months later they're military commanders for the AUC. I saw this one ELN commander who was already in the AUC call his brother, who also was in the ELN, and [tell him] to turn himself in and join them."[28] To enter a town or village, Metro Bloc members tried ingratiating themselves with the communities they were trying to take over by engaging in "social cleansing" campaigns like the ones the militias themselves had carried out during the 1980s to win community support. They were bloody, but in places where the guerrillas had been abusive, those campaigns worked. "When you're getting harassed and you're worried about kidnappings, about guerrilla checkpoints, you look to the state, and if it doesn't show up, you look for something else," Juan Diego Restrepo E., a journalist who has covered the paras, wrote about Metro's strategy. "They offered security and they legitimized their actions, due to the guerrillas' excesses."[29] It was the same approach the guerrillas themselves had used to enter Medellín and other cities as part of their own urban strategies a decade earlier: offer security against abusive strongmen, remove low-status social groups from the community, provide some benefits to supporters and neutral community members, and threaten death or displacement to anyone who offers opposition instead of compliance. Some of the bigger gangs in the city then copied the militias' strategy, and now the paras

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[28] "Su orden inicial era respetar la vida de los combatientes del ELN. … En las sedes de las AUC los veía encadenados y a los seis meses ya eran jefes militares de las AUC. Vi a un comandante eleno, ya en las AUC, llamando a un hermano que también estaba en el ELN, para que se entregara y se uniera a ellos." Quoted in VerdadAbierta.com, "Las Auc."

[29] "Cuando uno es acosado y está angustiado por secuestros, por controles de la guerrilla, busca el Estado y si éste no aparece, buscas otro. Ellos (BM) ofrecieron seguridad y legitimaron sus acciones, debido a los excesos de la guerrilla." Quoted in Ibid.

were doing the same. "In its basic structure, the Metro Bloc was a typically rural counterinsurgent organization that followed a strategy of territorial conquest based on the guerrilla model, in combination with a strategy of terror against the social base of its armed adversaries."[30] With this structure, Metro would end up controlling 45 municipalities in Antioquia at the height of its power.

The Metro bloc entered Medellín sometime in 1998, starting in the barrios where the leftist militias had their deepest roots. To the strategy he employed on the outskirts of the city, he added the tactics of co-opting or subcontracting the talent he needed to operate in an urban environment. He identified street crews, hit squads, gangsters, wayward militants, and community organizations already operating in the barrios whom he could hire or coerce into joining or backing Metro in its fight against the guerrilla-backed militias. He hired 'El Negro Elkin' Sánchez and the Terrace Gang — they were already allied with Murillo and Castaño — to take care of any gangs or community leaders who opposed him. Otherwise, he generally applied the same strategy he had been using in the surrounding region. Within a year, Metro, Terrace, and their allies throughout the city were winning control over most of the barrios they were targeting, and 'Rodrigo 00' García was well on his way to achieving his lifelong anti-guerrilla dreams in his own birthplace.

But then things got complicated.

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[30] "En su estructura básica, el Bloque Metro fue una organización contrainsurgente típicamente rural que desarrolló una estrategia de copamiento territorial siguiendo el modelo guerrillero, en combinación con una estrategia de terror contra la base social de sus contendores armados." Manuel A. Alonso Espinal, Jorge Giraldo Ramírez, and Diego Jorge Sierra, "Medellín: El Complejo Camino de la Competencia Armada," 125.

5.1.2. 'Don Berna' Joins the Fight

A war broke out between the Terrace Gang and the Envigado Office. Somehow, 'El Negro Elkin' Sánchez and his men got on 'Don Berna' Murillo's wrong side during 1999 in a dispute involving Carlos Castaño. There are different accounts of how the dispute started: some say Castaño was angry about a crime they had committed against one of his paramilitary units, or that they had committed in the name of the paramilitaries; others say Sánchez was angry because Murillo wasn't letting his men keep enough of their hard-earned money. Whatever the reason, the dispute escalated when the Terrace Gang killed Murillo's brother in November 1999, and Murillo and Castaño waged a war against them that, despite nasty counterattacks involving car bombs in upper-class barrios, would end up wiping out the Terrace Gang within a year. Sánchez and his top lieutenants were ambushed and killed in August 2000, and the rest of his organization drifted apart, disappearing completely sometime in 2001, its members fleeing for their lives or getting absorbed into other criminal networks — include Murillo's.

With Terrace liquidated, not only did 'Rodrigo 00' García lose his most powerful ally in the city; he also gained a new, even more powerful competitor. During the war with Sánchez, Murillo had fled Medellín after his brother's murder, seeking protection from Castaño in the Urabá region in northern Antioquia. There, he paid the AUC a sizeable sum of money to formally join the paramilitary alliance. In return, Castaño named him Inspector General of the AUC, responsible for overseeing the AUC's trafficking activities, and gave him his own paramilitary unit, which he named the Bloque Cacique Nutibara. The Cacique Nutibara Bloc was born directly into adolescence:

Murillo did not have to grow the bloc from nothing and nurse it to adulthood by recruiting troops, but rather simply informed the drug gangs and hit squads who already worked for him that they were now to call themselves "Bloque Cacique Nutibara" of the AUC. They complied. It was 2000, the year of the new millennium, and with this one act the AUC now controlled (by proxy) most of Medellín's peripheral barrios and almost all of its illicit markets. And García, the purest of the political paras, was not at all happy about having to ally himself so directly with Murillo, the newest and purest of the narco paras: Nobody expected that Murillo would be satisfied to share power with anyone once they ceased to be useful to him. For now, García and his Metro Bloc were useful to him. They all had a war to win.

5.1.3. Cacique Nutibara Plays 'Monopoly'

Cacique Nutibara was neither a hierarchical criminal organization nor a federation of gangs. According to a recent case study of the group, it is best characterized as a network, one whose nodes (units) had emerged from any one of four "complex routes" to membership: (1) the route taken by the self-defense groups that had emerged in Medellín to defend their barrios from crime, many of which themselves then turned to crime and were later absorbed into Cacique Nutibara; (2) the route taken by narcotrafficking groups as they restructured amid the fall of the Medellín and Cali cartels into networks of microenterprises and oficinas, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter; (3) the route taken by the street crews and gangs that controlled micro-territories in the peripheral barrios and later evolved or were co-opted into the hit squads, drug gangs, and other organized criminal structures that were coming together under Murillo's umbrella;

and (4) the route taken by the mafias and paramilitaries of the AUC who brought their counterinsurgency from the countryside into the city.[31] The franchises that made up the Cacique Nutibara network came from all of these types of groups, arriving via many different paths. They were given protection and the right to use the Cacique Nutibara name in exchange for their compliance with Murillo's orders and those of his field officers.

In a few short and very violent years, the Cacique Nutibara network and its hesitant allies in Metro's network took over most of the city, gang by gang and barrio by barrio. The defeated Terrace Gang had not been the only large criminal organization in the city, nor was it the only one to be defeated by the AUC: Frank's Gang (La Banda de Frank) and the Triana Gang (Los Triana) had both been nearly as powerful as Terrace, and like Terrace both had been liquidated by mid-2001, their survivors chased from the city or absorbed into Cacique Nutibara. Metro took a similar approach with militia groups: fight then negotiate with the militias to try to turn them to his side. In Caicedo La Sierra, for example, M-6&7 switched sides and become a unit of Metro (see § 5.2). Over time, other AUC blocs joined the fight as well: ACMM sent some troops into Comuna 13 in the city's West Central zone, and Bloque Central Bolívar joined the fight for the AUC's final push toward a monopoly over the whole city. The number of players on the board was shrinking fast: by mid-2002, this handful of AUC blocs, with Cacique Nutibara the most ambitious, had taken control of every barrio formerly controlled by a leftist militia or a competing criminal organization, except for a few in Comuna 13 and a

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[31] Ibid.

few in East Central Medellín (including Caicedo La Sierra). To eject those would require just a little more time — and some help from the local and national governments.

5.1.4. The Battle for the West

Comuna 13 was one of those areas in the city that no outsider could ever hope to understand. Every few blocks, it sometimes seemed, a different group was in control. In the 1980s it was all the street crews, gangs, *chichipatos,* assassins, and others that have been described elsewhere (see §§ 2.1.1–2.1.2), and that attracted the urban militias of the late 1980s. For example, in 1990, the ELN founded the Free-America Militia (Milicias América Libre) to take control in some barrios, and sent other urban fronts to deal with others. The FARC and its urban fronts arrived beginning in 1994, and the People's Armed Command (CAP: Comandos Armados del Pueblo), which was formed by militants in 1996 or 1997 in the aftermath of the failed Coosercom policy (see § 4.1.2), showed up soon thereafter. The paras started arriving around 1998, eventually sending units from Metro, Cacique Nutibara, Central Bolívar, and ACMM. In response, a dissident ELN faction founded the Anti-Paramilitary Revolutionary Front (FRAP: Frente Revolucionario Anti-Paramilitar), and the FARC activated more urban fronts from units it still had stationed nearby as well. By the time the war ended, many dozens of illicit groups had appeared and disappeared in the area, as in the rest of the city, including some uncounted number of small gangs and tiny street crews that the outside world has never documented and will probably never know about. The paras were able to defeat some of

these groups, but the guerrillas were well entrenched in these communities and the AUC could neither co-opt, nor coerce, nor defeat the last of them.[32]

So far in this chapter little has been said about the role of the state security forces in the battles over Medellín, which might have given the false impression that they were not involved. In fact, in many barrios the community police kept the peace, but in others, especially those on the periphery, their presence was weak to non-existent, limited mainly to occasional raids to arrest or kill militants and gangsters, which sometimes led to civilian casualties, sometimes a lot of them. It is also clear, however, by most accounts, that the police and the military were covertly supporting AUC units and some of the larger criminal organizations in the city — many off-duty or retired police officers and soldiers even joined the illicit groups directly — or they used intelligence provided by such groups for their own raids, an arrangement similar to that of the Search Bloc in 1993, where regular and irregular forces, cops and robbers, worked together to find Pablo Escobar (see § 2.1.3).

But it wasn't until 21 May 2002 that the national government stepped in to organize a large-scale, joint raid by police, military, and intelligence units designed to take Comuna 13 from the remaining guerrillas by force. Operation Mariscal — so named only because *mariscal,* which means *marshal,* begins with the letter *m,* and the Colombian military's operations conventionally began with the same letter as the month in which they were launched, in this case, May — lasted only a few hours, and the

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[32] Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas, Héctor Gallo, and Blanca Inés Jiménez Zuluaga, *Dinámicas de Guerra y Construcción de Paz*; Yoni Alexander Rendón Rendón, *Comuna 13 de Medellín: El Drama del Conflicto Armado [Comuna 13 in Medellín: The Drama of the Armed Conflict]* (Medellín, Colombia: Hombre Nuevo Editores, 2007); Ricardo Aricapa Ardila, *Comuna 13: Crónica de Una Guerra Urbana*.

security forces failed to make inroads into the community, being quickly forced to retreat in battle. But they regrouped and added troops so that the next operation would not fail.

Operation Orion, so named because it was to begin in October, involved more than a thousand troops from the National Police, Army, Administrative Security Department (DAS: Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad, Colombia's equivalent to the FBI), and other agencies. It started in the middle of the night, on 16 October 2002, when residents started hearing a lot more gunfire than usual, followed by the sound of helicopters. Combat operations lasted nearly two days, and city and national officials took credit for the victory, the first of the new presidential administration of Álvaro Uribe. It sent a signal to most Colombians that their government now had real credibility in the fight against subversives: the war against the guerrillas would be won with a strong fist. Most observers agree, however, although it continues to be officially denied, that some members of the government had quietly enlisted 'Don Berna' Murillo's fist to help prepare for and carry out Orion.[33] (Some say it was Murillo who had originally enlisted the help of the state security forces to initiate Mariscal in the first place, although, again, this theory is officially denied and has little public evidence to support it.) One can state with reasonable confidence that Murillo quietly provided intelligence and tactical assistance from Cacique Nutibara, and that some elements of the security forces returned the favor with intelligence the paras could use during or following the operation. Speculation aside, what is certain is that Cacique Nutibara had free reign of Comuna 13 as soon as combat operations were completed: roadblocks were common through at least 2004, a local children's zoo had been named after 'Don Berna' Murillo, and the paras

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[33] Paul Richter and Greg Miller, "Colombia Army Chief Linked to Outlaw Militias," *Los Angeles Times,* 25 March 2007.

were accused of a range of abuses against residents, including at least 46

disappearances.[34] Their presence was not welcomed, as one resident explained:

> In this barrio, with the paramilitaries, the law of silence reigns. You could say we were better off with the guerrilla, because they acted openly. You could get killed in a shooting, but at least you knew where the bullets were coming from. With the paramilitaries everything happens in secret. We do not know exactly who is responsible for the disappearances.[35]

In August 2003 a mass grave was found nearby with the bodies of 11 people, including

some who had disappeared during Orion.[36]

With the completion of Operation Orion, the FARC had been completely driven

out of Medellín, and the only place left in the city where the ELN and its allies were still

operating was in the uppermost area of Comunas 8 and 9 in the city's East Central zone,

primarily in the Ocho de Marzo barrio, just across Santa Elena creek from Caicedo La

Sierra and just above the barrio Pablo Escobar had built twenty years earlier. Cacique

Nutibara teamed up with Metro and the other AUC blocs in the city for one final assault.

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[34] Ralph Rozema, "Urban DDR-Processes: Paramilitaries and Criminal Networks in Medellín, Colombia"; *Comuna 13, la otra Versión: Caso Tipo No. 2, Banco de Datos de Violencia Política [Comuna 13, the Other Version: Case No. 2, Political Violence Data Bank]*, Noche Niebla: Panorama de Derechos Humanos y Violencia Política en Colombia (Bogotá: Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular–CINEP and Justicia y Paz, 2003), http://www.nocheyniebla.org/node/46 (accessed 2 April 2009); Amnesty International, *Colombia: The Paramilitaries in Medellín: Demobilization Or Legalization?* (London: Amnesty International, 31 August 2005), http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/019/2005.

[35] Quoted in Ralph Rozema, "Urban DDR-Processes."

[36] Amnesty International, *Colombia: The Paramilitaries in Medellín: Demobilization Or Legalization?*

5.2. Caicedo La Sierra: 'Job,' 'Scab,' 'Doll,' and the Final Battle

5.2.1. Metro Takes Over M-6&7

Just as the bad behavior of gangs in the 1980s had created the conditions that enabled the militias to take over the neighborhood, proposing to bring order, the bad behavior of the militias in the 1990s was creating the conditions that would enable the paramilitaries to take over the neighborhood, proposing to bring order. The takeover happened in two stages, one with a source internal to the barrio, the other external.

The internal source was a neighborhood crew in La Sierra, led by a young man named Jason, known as 'Cascarita' ('Scab'), a "lost soul," in the description of a journalist who knew him well.[37] His parents were said to have abandoned him, leaving him to live with an aunt, and he grew up lonely and serious. He joined a neighborhood crew, which was later recruited into M-6&7, which controlled his barrio. But like many others in the community, he didn't like what a lot of the militants were doing to their neighbors, friends, and families: despite his own reputation as a harsh, sometimes brutal, person, even Jason thought the M-6&7 had gotten out of control. Hugo, the man who had founded the militia a decade earlier, was assassinated sometime in 2000. Accounts of the assassination differ: some say it was done by Jason and others in Jason's combo who were sick of his abuses; others, that Hugo was killed in a police shootout after a fellow militant left to become a para and a police informant; still others, that a fellow militant named Fredy killed Hugo because Hugo had taken his girlfriend. It's possible that there are elements of truth to two or all three of these accounts, since it was not uncommon for

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[37] Information for this and the next two paragraphs are based on Margarita Martínez Escallón, Interview No. 26; 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10; and Arleison Arcos Rivas, "Ciudadanía Armada," 188.

the police or the army to illegally help local gangs target leftist militants, nor for the local gangs to provide intelligence to help the police or the army target rival gangsters, nor for groups of gangsters to participate in a killing, each with his own motive. Whatever the case, Hugo was dead, and Jason and his crew took over M-6&7.

The external source of the paramilitaries' entry into Caicedo La Sierra was a prison conversation. One journalist told me, regarding how the underworld did business, that "all the deals were made on Saturdays in prison: who's going to get killed, who's going to get paid."[38] Still, it is difficult to say exactly what happened in prison that day, since the principals are dead or their identities unknown, and the recollections of different people affected by that conversation are contradictory.

What can be pieced together, however, is that in 1999 or 2000, sometime before Hugo was killed, he or somebody very close to him (possibly his brother) was arrested and spent some time in Medellín's notorious Bellavista prison. There he encountered a former colleague named Severo Antonio López, known by everyone as 'Job.' López had started out as a militant in M-6&7 years before, and there he had built himself a reputation as a political strategist of the first order. But he got into a dispute with some of his fellow militants over some cash they had robbed and that he apparently was supposed to guard but spent instead. Going down the hillside seeking protection, he joined La Cañada. "He left," one of his former colleagues, Danilo, told me, "and since he was very strategic about organizing things with gangs and things like the politics of organizations, he was very useful" to them.[39] 'Job' López had a lot of information about M-6&7

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[38] Margarita Martínez Escallón, Interview No. 26.

[39] 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10.

members, such as their identities and where they lived, and he did not hesitate to share it

with La Cañada or even with the police when it was mutually convenient. A few years

later, he was captured during a bank robbery (according to one account) and sent to

Bellavista. At the time, La Cañada was doing a lot of business with the Envigado Office,

which itself was cooperating with the AUC in its efforts to rid Medellín of militias such

as M-6&7. So López was well placed to try to get M-6&7 to switch sides, neutralizing

them so the paras would not have to fight them. He must have gotten into a discussion

about this with Hugo (or whomever it was from M-6&7 he met in prison), and at some

point, López offered M-6&7 a chance to avoid getting into a war with the paras by

switching sides and joining the Metro Bloc of the AUC. López and his men "offered

them money, they offered them everything," Danilo said. "Imagine when they come in,

mafia-style: they come in, they negotiate, and they give them lots of cash. You went in

there, and they already have gold chains, gold earrings, gold rings. These were not

hippies."[40] Whether it was for money or from a prediction that the paras would ultimately

prevail in the war, the choice was made: M-6&7 would join Metro.

The membership of M-6&7 was both stunned and divided: it still had some

members who were old-school leftists, political militants, in the movement for the good

of the people. The call for them to join up with the mortal enemies of the guerrilla, to join

the worst human-rights violators in the country, was not something they could easily

stomach. Moreover, as Danilo explained, they had been at war with La Cañada (referred

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[40] "… les ofrecen plata les ofrecen de todo. Imaginencen cuando entran al estilo mafioso, entran, negocian allá y les dan mucha plata. Usted iba allá y ellos ya eran con cadenas de oro, aretas de oro, anillos de oro. No eran hippies." Ibid.

to as "those people from below") for over a decade, so the thought of allying with them was anathema:

> They called us and told us that we now have to be Metro. … And we … some of us, said, hell no. I was afraid to become one of those people from below. So I said to them, no, screw that. You fight with these dudes from down there and now it's like we're friends? Things aren't like that, because there were grudges and hurts, and to say that it's like now we're friends and like nothing's happened! So in that space of time, that's what they negotiated in prison from Bellavista.[41]

Many chose to leave the barrio rather than join their enemies. Some had to leave the country. Those who refused to leave or switch sides risked death. Others found sanctuary with the FARC or ELN militias that still held territory in the city. Danilo quit entirely, leaving the barrio and the war behind and not returning until years later, after there was peace. Those who stayed did so for many reasons, chief among them that most of the current members had never had any grand political agenda in the first place, and things were getting dangerous:

> The urge almost always was to have a motorcycle, to get girls, to be in a gang. And that's what it was [for a lot of those who stayed]. And also because the state was hitting hard. There was also a lot of pressure from the state. Even the Metro Bloc made alliances with the Army to finish off the [ELN], because, let's just say they had information and details. And the Metro Bloc did their dirty work, the violations of human rights and all that, so that the state could say that it was the Metro Bloc and not them.[42]

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[41] "A nosotros nos llaman *[sic]* y nos decían que teníamos que ser ya Bloque Metro …. Y nosotros … unos decíamos, no, juepucha. A mi me daba mucho temor ser de esa gente de abajo. Entonces yo les decía, no, ¡las pelotas! Uno pelea con estos manes de abajo y ¿ahora es que ya son los amigos? Eso no es así, porque había rencores y dolidos, y ¡decir es que ya somos amigos y que ya no pasa nada! Entonces en ese lapso de ese tiempo, eso lo negociaron en la cárcel desde Bellavista." Ibid.

[42] "El anhelo casi siempre era tener una moto, tener muchachas, estar embandados. Y así era. Y también porque el estado estaba golpeando muy duro. Había mucha presión del estado también. Incluso el Bloque Metro tuvo alianzas con el ejército para acabar los Elenos, porque ellos hacían la parte digamos información y detalles, y el Bloque Metro hacia la parte sucia, la violación de derechos humanos y todo eso, pa' que el estado dijera que fue el Bloque Metro y no ellos." Ibid.

Jason and his crew stayed, taking over as soon as Hugo had been killed, and went to war
— the fourth, and the most complex, of Caicedo La Sierra's gang wars — against the
ELN guerrillas, their former allies, whose territory was just across the river from them in
Comuna 9, centered in a barrio called Ocho de Marzo. Some of those who remained in
Metro, however, did not leave behind all their grudges against La Cañada.

5.2.2. 'Job' Takes Over Cacique Nutibara

After 'Job' López left prison, he returned to La Cañada, and soon became a key
figure in Murillo's network, first in Comuna 8, since he was from there and was the one
responsible for neutralizing M-6&7, and then in Medellín as a whole, and eventually as a
national spokesman for the paras after their demobilization (see § 6.1). With his strategic
mind and political skills, he came to 'Don Berna' Murillo's attention and quickly rose to
a high position in Murillo's network. Different sources describe him as having become
Murillo's "right-hand man," his "No. 2," his adviser, and his political spokesman.
Whatever his position, when Murillo founded Cacique Nutibara, he put López in charge
of its day-to-day operations, and they recruited Alberto, founder of La Cañada (see §§ 3.2
and 4.2), to join their network.[43] M-6&7 was now part of the Metro Bloc, but Cacique
Nutibara owned La Cañada and soon recruited under its own banner the rest of the gangs
in lower Caicedo La Sierra — including those that a couple of years earlier had made
peace with La Cañada in negotiations facilitated by Mama Luz (see § 4.2.3).

Since Metro's chief 'Rodrigo 00' García had an ideological bias against drug
money (although his crews in La Sierra certainly did not), and since Metro and Cacique

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[43] Margarita Martínez Escallón, Interview No. 26.

Nutibara were technically in an alliance, 'Job' López was now in a position to control most of the illicit markets in Comuna 8, in both upper and lower Caicedo La Sierra. He became the *de facto* ward boss, the man people went to when they had problems to solve and conflicts to resolve. Diego Ríos, who grew up there, told the story of a city investigator who came to Comuna 8 to respond to a citizen's complaint: when the investigator met the woman who had called, the first thing he asked her was whether she had brought it up with 'Job.' "Imagine that," Ríos said: "A city detective asking a citizen if she'd taken her complaint to the criminal! Who's really in charge here?"[44]

5.2.3. The Battle for the East

Margarita Martínez Escallón was a Colombian reporter for the Associated Press (AP) who had interviewed 'Rodrigo 00' García on several occasions and had earned his trust as a journalist. Scott Dalton was a photojournalist and cameraman from Texas who had worked with Martínez on several stories about Colombia's war and its peace negotiations. He had recently left his job at AP's Bogotá office when he saw some photographs that had been published with a story Martínez had written about the Metro Bloc's conquest of Medellín's peripheral barrios, including La Sierra. Interested in the possibilities there, he asked her for some contacts so he could get into one of the war zones to do a freelance photojournalism project. It was the summer of 2002. The AUC was well on its way to defeating the city's guerrillas and militias, Operation Mariscal had already come and gone, and preparations for Operation Orion were then under way. In short, the war was about to reach its climax, and Dalton, who had covered wars in Latin

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[44] Diego Ríos, Interview No. 4.

America in the past and had recently bought a new videocamera, thought it would be interesting to film a documentary about it. He talked to Martínez about the idea: Would she be interested in working with him on the project? At first reluctant, she ultimately agreed, picked up her phone, and called García to ask his permission to film one of his Metro Bloc units. "We asked for his authorization to do a documentary, making it clear that we had no experience, no financing, and that we didn't even know if it was going to end up being a fiasco."[45] Permission granted, they jumped in a taxi and headed to La Sierra, the uppermost barrio of Comuna 8 where some of the most intense fighting was taking place.[46]

At the appointed hour, they were met by a group of young men in ski masks and camouflage, who took them around the neighborhood, marched in formation with their military-grade weapons, told them about how the paras had imposed order in the barrio, and posed for the camera like battle-hardened soldiers, at the top of the hill, with the panorama of Medellín making for a dramatic backdrop. The oldest in the group was 22. At the end of the tour, they thought they were finished and, as Martínez described it, "they wanted to leave and wanted Scott and me to go."

> We, however, had more ambitious plans and, much to their consternation, we told them we wanted to see them the next day. They just looked at each other. I think they were figuring out what they were going to do, since they had already done everything they had prepared for the press. They couldn't refuse, since their boss, '[Rodrigo] Double Zero,' had authorized us …. "What for?" they asked us. Obviously they had done their performance and they didn't have anything else to show. … "Our project

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[45] "…le pedí autorización para hacer un documental, dejándole claro que no teníamos experiencia, ni financiación, y que no sabíamos si iba a resultar un fiasco." Margarita Martínez Escallon, "Así Filmamos la Sierra."

[46] Margarita Martínez Escallón, Interview No. 26.

is a little longer," we told them. They stood there in silence for a bit, and then told us to return the next day.[47]

Their original plan had been to follow around the leader of Metro's La Sierra unit, a young man named Jason, alias 'Cascarito' ('Scab'), the former crew leader who had joined M-6&7 then took it over after the assassination of its founder, Hugo (see § 5.2.1). But Jason was serious and camera-shy, and he didn't show up for the second day of filming. His top deputy arrived instead, a charismatic young man named Édison Alejandro Flórez Ocampo, known as 'La Muñeca' ('Doll'). In addition to being a top leader of Metro's La Sierra unit, Flórez did a lot of work in the community, acting as *de facto* mayor of the barrio and therefore as Metro's *de facto* director of community affairs and outreach. A native son, he was well liked and respected and had a reputation for usually being fair in his judgments. More importantly, from the filmmakers' perspective: "He *wanted* to be filmed," Martínez said. "I think he wanted to be something more. He knew he would die young, so this was his way of maybe having a longer life."[48]

Martínez and Dalton filmed Édison and others for nearly a year, beginning in January 2003, when the area around Caicedo La Sierra was the last place in the city where guerrillas were fighting: they had lost everywhere else, and these battles were their last stand. Édison, Jason, and crew intended to defeat them, and they had powerful people backing them: 'Rodrigo 00' García, head of all Metro Bloc units in the country; 'Don

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[47] "… ellos querían irse y que Scott Dalton y yo nos fuéramos. Nosotros, sin embargo, teníamos planes más ambiciosos y, para su desconcierto, les dijimos que queríamos verlos al otro día. Se miraron, pienso que calculando qué iban a hacer si ya habían hecho lo que tenían preparado para la prensa. No podían negarse, pues nos había autorizado su jefe 'Doblecero' …. ¿Para qué?, nos preguntaron. Obviamente ellos ya habían hecho su espectáculo y no tenían nada más que mostrar. … Nuestro proyecto es un poco más largo, les dijimos. Se quedaron en silencio un instante y luego dijeron que volviéramos a la misma hora al día siguiente." Margarita Martínez Escallon, "Así Filmamos la Sierra."

[48] Margarita Martínez Escallón, Interview No. 26.

Berna' Murillo, head of Cacique Nutibara and proprietor of the Envigado Office, one of

the wealthiest drug-trafficking networks in the world; and, unofficially, the state security

forces, who were unofficially on the side of whomever was against the guerrillas. The

fourth gang war of Caicedo La Sierra was reaching its climax.

The fight did not last much longer, barely two months into 2003. In February,

Metro and Cacique Nutibara decided on a joint operation. "We decided we had to risk

everything and go in," Édison explained. "The first group went in and attacked. All of

[the guerrillas] who were in that area over there [across the creek] came out to respond,

but since we were above them it was easy to blow them away like this." Cacique

Nutibara went in from below, Metro went in from above. The guerrillas put up a fight,

then the survivors fled into the mountains, from where they would occasionally launch

brief retaliatory attacks into Caicedo La Sierra. But from the AUC's perspective, the

battle was won: the war was over.

Medellín belonged to the paras now.

In Caicedo La Sierra, Metro and Cacique Nutibara divided the territory more or

less according to their traditional areas of influence, with Metro in control of upper

Caicedo La Sierra, but now all the way south to the creek, and Cacique Nutibara in

control of lower Caicedo La Sierra and the territory on the other side of Santa Elena creek

in Comuna 9. Together the two blocs reached out to the communities that had been under

ELN control for so long, with Édison continuing to play his traditional community-

outreach role, but this time in hostile territory, as he explained in Dalton and Martínez's

film, *La Sierra: Urban Warfare in the Barrios of Medellín, Colombia:*

> … our relationship with the people [across the creek] is that we're trying
> to take it slow, because we have a dirty reputation with that community.

> They say the Metro Bloc of La Sierra is bad, really ruthless. We're trying to integrate the people from both neighborhoods. For example, tomorrow there's a festival where we're going to try to integrate the people, to show them that we're people, too, and not just war machines.[49]

The film — which in 2005 won an honorable mention at the Slamdance film festival and was chosen as best documentary at the Miami International Film Festival — shows the block party briefly, with music and dancing, food and drink, and the filmmakers reported no immediate outbreak of hostilities. By all accounts, everybody was happy that, if nothing else, the shootouts and the stray bullets were a thing of the past.

But Édison was realistic about the prospects for lasting peace. "For now we're living well, because they have theirs and we have ours," he said, referring to the division of territory between Metro and Cacique Nutibara. "But they — I know that later they're going to want all of it."[50]

5.2.4. Cacique Nutibara Targets Metro

In late 2002, Jesús Alberto Martínez, 'El Mocho,' was building a homemade grenade when it accidentally detonated. He lost his left hand in the explosion. He was a member of Metro under Jason and Édison's command, and was one of the documentary film *La Sierra*'s main protagonists. In the film's first scene with him, Jesús is snorting cocaine, and he is shown throughout the film smoking pot and snorting coke with his friends. In most of his on-screen interviews, he speaks deliberating and lazily, as if he were high. In one, he spoke about one of the rules the Metro Bloc imposed on the

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[49] *La Sierra: Urban Warfare in the Barrios of Medellín, Colombia,* DVD, documentary film written and directed by Scott Dalton and Margarita Martinez (Medellín, Colombia: Human Rights Watch, 2005).

[50] Ibid.

community: You have to smoke marijuana only where people can't see you. "Not like those other barrios," he added with ironic contempt.[51]

"A lot of mistreatment" is how Jesús described life under M-6&7, "a lot of mistreatment by the gangs that roamed around here." He explained that he and some friends decided that things needed to change, so they put together a crew and, just as the story has been told already (see § 5.2.2), took control of the area. There were many wars — this was the fourth gang war in the sector, but each war had many battles separated by tense periods of calm — and he had clearly become resigned to his fate. "We might survive [one war, but] another will come, another will come, another will come, until eventually you get killed … maybe not in this war, but there will always be more wars. After one comes, another comes." The peace that settled on East Central Medellín after the joint operation against the ELN by Cacique Nutibara and Metro did not last more than a couple months. As Édison had predicted, and as Jesús explained, Cacique Nutibara now wanted to take over Metro's territory. "And they're narcos!" Jesús exclaimed, taking a hit of weed. "This neighborhood is our life, and we'll defend it with our lives. As long as we're here, as long as we're alive, they won't get us out of here."[52]

'Rodrigo 00' García was, by that point, already at war with the AUC in the rest of the country, and he was losing: since he did not have the vast resources of the narco-backed paramilitaries, he could only fight, as one source put it, until his ammunition ran

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid. The scene this quote is taken from appears only in the pirated version of the film. The filmmakers had shown an unedited cut of their documentary to the community, and had left a copy of it with the main protagonists. Within days, it was being sold on the black market in Medellín. Jesús told Martínez that, when he went downtown to sell his copy to the video pirates, "somebody had already beaten him to it." The version of the film available in the United States is the shorter, edited edition. Margarita Martínez Escallon, "Así Filmamos la Sierra"; Margarita Martínez Escallón, Interview No. 26.

out. The state's security forces unofficially aligned themselves with Cacique Nutibara, targeting Metro in raids as they had done to M-6&7 before they had become paras. They never knew if the next attack was going to come from the paras who controlled the peripheral barrios, from the guerrillas who had fled to the mountains, or from the security forces stationed downtown. They were under attack from all sides. Metro was running out of ammunition.

On Saturday, 24 May 2003, Édison bought a new shirt. It was Jason's birthday, and he wanted to wear it that night when they went out to celebrate. The television news reports said that he was killed in a shootout with the ELN. In fact, sometime after the party, he and a friend found themselves under attack by the Army's special forces.[53] In the documentary of the war, a young boy nicknamed 'Pirulu,' not yet a teenager, is shown throughout the film following Jason's crew around, drinking beer with them, acting as a lookout, carrying their ammunition. Jason appears (uncredited) only once in the film, and that is in the scene when young 'Pirulu,' who had witnessed the battle, was telling Jason what had happened[54]:

> Édison came up first, with [another Metro member] behind him. So Édison hid behind that [broken-down car]. ... That's when they started shooting. Blam, blam, blam, blam, blam, blam! So Édison came down here and he got hit in the leg, and they caught him, dragged him over there, and shot him in the head.[55]

He was buried two days later, his funeral attended by an outpouring of community members, including the seven teenage girls who were the mothers or mothers-to-be of his

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Margarita Martínez Escallón, Interview No. 26.

[55] *La Sierra.*

children. "Édison was an amalgam of complexities, of beauty and darkness," Martínez, the filmmaker, would write about him later, "a born leader with hopes of doing something more with his life, but who, in his misfortune, came from a world marked by violence." That violence marked his youth, but he managed to transform his lot into something beneficial to many whose lives were also marked by violence, to become a respected community leader. Yet he made his mark on the world with no small amount of violence himself. His public persona hid a dark side. "His disregard for life was shocking." Martínez wrote. "[During] shootouts with rival factions, he would just fire into the void, without any apparent target and without the slightest precaution against wounding people who weren't involved. In that, he was like everyone else."[56]

Jason had already been getting calls from prison, from men offering him money and power if Metro would just give up the fight and join Cacique Nutibara. But he had resisted their offers, his men afraid of what would happen once Cacique Nutibara took over the neighborhoods they had grown up in. War had broken out between them — not at all beneficial to the neighborhoods they had grown up in — and now his top deputy, the man whose charisma had kept the unit's morale high and its relations with the community warm, was dead. A few months later, Jason got another call from prison. Was he ready to switch? This time the pot had been sweetened: the government was now offering the paras amnesty from prosecution and paid jobs in exchange for their agreeing to lay down their weapons and reenter civilian society (see next chapter). 'Rodrigo 00'

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[56] "Édison era una amalgama de complejidades, de bellezas y oscuridades, un líder nato con ganas de hacer algo con su vida, pero que, para su infortunio, venía de un mundo marcado por la violencia. … Su desprecio por la vida era impresionante. Por ejemplo, en las plomaceras con las facciones rivales disparaba al vacío, sin objetivo aparente y sin la menor precaución de herir a gente no involucrada. En eso era como todos." Margarita Martínez Escallon, "Así Filmamos la Sierra."

García, whose Metro Bloc had by then been reduced to less than half of the municipalities he had controlled just a couple of years earlier, was having none of it. He wanted the state to negotiate with the "political" paras, such as Metro, separate from the "narco" paras, and until the state agreed to that, he refused to demobilize what remained of Metro, including what was left of his urban units. Jason was in charge of one of those urban units, the last Metro holdout in Medellín, and he was ready for the whole thing to be over. So were most of his crew. In Caicedo La Sierra, they laid down their weapons, and Metro became Cacique Nutibara.

Cacique Nutibara and its boss, 'Don Berna' Murillo, now had, for all practical purposes, a monopoly on Medellín's underworld. There was noone left for them to fight.

Jesús, the Metro soldier who had lost his hand, was talking with another friend about the demobilization, about what kind of job they might get, about earning a normal salary. "My family's very happy about this," Jesús told his friend. "It's a good idea, isn't it?" His friend responded, "To leave the weapons behind." Jesús: "And the drugs." His friend smiled: "The drugs [we keep] for ourselves." They laughed, probably not realizing how profoundly their joke foretold of more violence to come in the wake of the paras' demobilizations. Jesús turned out not to be eligible for the first round of demobilizations: he had lost his identification card.[57] Things would change, and he later demobilized, but like many of those who laid down their weapons in the years after the end of the war, he did not stay demobilized for long. His return to a life of crime continues in the next chapter. Jason, the leader of M-6&7 and then Metro's Caicedo La Sierra unit, did demobilize with Cacique Nutibara. But, like many others in his position, he was later

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[57] *La Sierra.*

killed in a dispute with one of his former brothers in arms. 'Pirulu,' the young boy who in the documentary of their lives was the one telling Jason how Édison had been killed, the boy who was a lookout and a munitions porter, was himself killed in the barrio a few short years after the war had ended. He was 17.

Even after the wars, there was still violence in Caicedo La Sierra; it had just changed form.

Chapter 6. Traffickers and the Corruption of Paramilitaries: 2002-2007

The rise of Colombia's national paramilitary association, discussed in the last chapter, took place in a national context of growing public frustration with the government and the guerrillas who were fighting them. The cumulative result of a long string of government failures in that fight over the previous 20 years was a public who were growing cynical about politicians and political parties and their ability to bring peace — a public who therefore were willing to back even something as ruthless as the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC: Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia) if it could raise their hopes at all. But even the AUC would dash their hopes, and by 2002 the country was very much ready for a change. What follows in this introduction is a brief discussion of the evolution of public attitudes about the guerrillas, the paras, and the state, by way of setting the context for the narco paras' takeover of the AUC.

During the presidential administration of Julio César Turbay Ayala (Liberal Party, 1978-1982), the civil war took a turn for the worse, driven in large part by a worldwide economic recession. President Belisario Betancur Cuartas (Conservative Party, 1982-1986) tried to cool it off through an important national strategy that involved negotiating with the guerrillas, but after the failure of peace talks and the disastrous takeover of the Palace of Justice by the M-19 guerrillas on 6-7 November 1985 — which ended in the deaths of all the guerrillas, half of the Colombian Supreme Court, and a hundred other hostages — the conflict only heated up further. Virgilio Barco Vargas (Liberal, 1986-1990) did manage to negotiate the demobilization of the M-19 — Colombia's only

successful demobilization — but he also ended up presiding over a period of the greatest increase in violence in Colombia's history, during which hundreds of narcotrafficking and paramilitary groups appeared in force throughout the country, adding their violence to that already perpetrated by the guerrillas and the state's own security forces.

Presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán of the New Liberalism faction of the Liberal Party was assassinated by drug traffickers in 1989 (see § 2.1.3), and César Augusto Gaviria Trujillo, a Galán aide, won the election in his place (Liberal, 1990-1994). Now very personally aware of the risks his country's violence posed and hoping to stem its tide, Gaviria tried opening up the political system by appointing a demobilized M-19 guerrilla to his cabinet, supporting the establishment of the 1991 Constitution, expanding government programs to address social grievances, and negotiating the surrender of narcotraffickers and the demobilization of guerrillas. Homicide levels and other forms of violence did fall, and by the end of his presidency, he had taken down the Medellín Cartel, was starting on the Cali Cartel, and had succeeded in demobilizing most of the guerrilla group EPL (Ejército Popular de Liberación, People's Liberation Army). He ended his presidency with a majority of Colombians approving of his performance.[1] Yet his presidency was the period when the guerrillas lost their patrons in the Soviet Union, which collapsed in 1991, and turned increasingly to the drug trade to finance their operations — and the increase in income gave them access to higher-quality recruits and more lethal weapons, which made them much more formidable against the demoralized, underfunded, and mostly conscripted armed services.

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[1] All public-opinion polling data in this section are taken from Gallup Colombia Ltda., *Gallup Poll Bimestral: Poll 62* (Bogotá: Gallup Colombia, 2008).

But what really drove the growing cynicism in Colombia, and the growing support for the paras, happened during the next two administrations. The Liberal Party that Gaviria's presidency had helped to renew suffered fatal damage during the term of his successor, Ernesto Samper Pizano (1994-1998). The scandal began during the campaign of 1994, when rumors surfaced that the Cali Cartel had donated large sums of money to support Samper's candidacy. He won the election anyway. But after the election, cassettes surfaced of conversations between a Cali Cartel spokesman and Samper's campaign staff. The subsequent investigation, which uncovered what came to be known as the 'Process 8000' scandal (named after the case number on the files of the official investigation), and led to the arrests of dozens of mostly Liberal Party officials — including Samper's Minister of Defense, Fernando Botero, and other ministers — and to the public revelation of pervasive corruption throughout elite Colombian society. Disgusted, the U.S. State Department cancelled Samper's visa. Domestic pessimism grew as well. Whereas at the end of the Gaviria administration only 31 percent of Colombians polled by Gallup believed that things in the country were "getting worse" (38 percent thought things were "getting better"), that figure rose to 44 percent at the beginning of the Samper administration, to 70 percent by October 1995, and to 78 percent by October 1996 (he would end his presidency with a just a 30 percent favorability rating). To distance himself from the budding Process 8000 scandal, Samper went hard after the Cali Cartel and finished dismantling it (most of its leaders had been arrested by July 1995), amended the 1991 Constitution to allow for the extradition of Colombian nationals, and sponsored other reforms that strengthened the government's hand against

narcotraffickers.[2] But those successes hardly made a dent in the drug trade. It succeeded mostly in fragmenting the illicit economy: after the fall of the Cali Cartel, drug trafficking organizations, such as 'Don Berna' Murillo's, shifted from *cartel* to more diffuse *oficina* arrangements, making it rather more difficult for police to trace links among traffickers. Moreover, with so much drug money at its disposal, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) became a wealthy, nearly unbeatable insurgent force, while the number of paramilitaries fighting them grew from nearly 3,000 combatants in 1995 to almost 4,000 in 1997, the year Castaño organized the paras into the AUC.[3] Samper made some efforts to stem their growth, including some military actions against them. But in the view of many in the security forces and the Colombian public more generally, the state simply wasn't capable of beating the guerrillas in battle: at least the paras were giving the guerrillas a reason to negotiate a peace agreement.

Peace became a public mandate during the 1998 election campaign, which was won by Andrés Pastrana Arango (Conservative, 1998-2002). The FARC had been demanding for some years a *despeje* (demilitarized zone) where it could operate freely, as a precondition for negotiations with the government. Initially the request was for one municipality, then in 1996 it was for four municipalities. By the 1998 campaign, the guerrillas were demanding five and the demand kept growing. Pastrana, who would take office in August 1998, announced he would grant the *despeje* so that negotiations could begin. By the time the last of the armed forces, police officers, judges, prosecutors, and

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[2] Alfonso Monsalve Solórzano, *Legitimidad y Soberanía en Colombia 1958-2003*, 194.

[3] Colombian Ministry of Defense figures cited in Ibid., 197.

all other state officials except for mayors were ordered out of the zone in December of

that year, the area in the southern region of the country that had been designated and

granted to the FARC as a demilitarized zone had grown to more than 42,000 square

kilometers — the FARC now controlled and governed a statelet within Colombia that

was as large as the entire country of Switzerland.

But as early as the negotiations with the state over the agenda of the peace talks,

the FARC began using that statelet to rearm and regroup: "they planned actions, trained

their troops, hid hostages and negotiated their release, stored stolen vehicles, accumulated

explosives, [and] maintained and expanded their illicit coca crops and processing

laboratories."[4] But Pastrana continued the negotiations over the negotiations, making

concession after concession to the guerrillas, until finally an agenda was agreed upon, on

6 May 1999, containing 12 points with more than 100 subpoints intended to address, in

one account, "fundamental aspects of the economic, political, and social life of the

country."[5] The public was already angry about the deal: once the agenda was signed, 80

percent of Colombians polled by Gallup said they disapproved of how Pastrana was

managing the guerrillas, and that disapproval held at more or less that level until the end

of 2001. Yet even as the guerrillas repeatedly broke their side of the bargain, even as they

continued kidnapping and killing and setting off car bombs and laying landmines,

Pastrana kept taking them at their word, offering them what they asked for — national

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[4] "… planeaban sus acciones, entrenaban sus tropas, escondían secuestrados y negociaban sus rescates, guardaban carros robados, acumulaban explosivos, mantenían y aumentaban sus cultivos ilícitos y laboratorios de procesamiento de coca …." Ibid.

[5] "… aspectos fundamentales de la vida económica, política y social del país …." Ibid., 199.

recognition, international recognition, prisoner exchanges, etc. — as if he believed they would at some point begin to make good on their word.

They never did. Word was beginning to leak out of the demilitarized zone about narcotrafficking activities and human-rights violations, such as summary executions and the persecution of religious minorities. It continued attacking the country's infrastructure and laying land mines and setting off car bombs. In late 2001, the group assassinated a former cabinet minister, an incumbent senator, and the senator's family. In February 2002, it hijacked an airplane containing another senator who was also a human rights commissioner — then bombed a bridge that took down with it an ambulance carrying a pregnant woman and two other women, killing them all. The killing of a pregnant woman in an ambulance was one atrocity too many: the Colombian public had had enough, and so had Pastrana. He called off the negotiations and ordered the military to retake the zone. (The National Liberation Army [ELN: Ejército de Liberación Nacional] had also been given a demilitarized zone for separate negotiations with the state, but the locals there formed self-defense groups to fight the guerrillas themselves.[6]) By then, Pastrana had already become one of the most hated presidents in recent history. Gallup found his approval rating at just 17 percent in December 2001, with 74 percent of those polled reporting an unfavorable view of him, the same percentage of people who thought things were getting worse in the country (only 10 percent thought things were improving); disapproval of his handling of the negotiations was up to 87 percent.

Still, while his administration's most important policy was a complete failure in terms of its stated objective — a negotiated settlement with the FARC — it did

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[6] Ibid., 197.

accomplish something else that would turn out to be at least as significant, something Pastrana is rarely given credit for: the definitive illegitimation of the insurgent project in Colombia. By publicly taking the guerrillas at their word and offering them practically all the concessions they had been publicly saying they required before beginning peace talks, Pastrana was unmasking the FARC for what, by all evidence, they had become: part narcotrafficking organization masquerading as a people's insurgency, part extremist organization masquerading as a political movement willing to negotiate peace for justice. Once exposed, they lost almost all of their remaining support within the population: in February 2000, the FARC's favorability rating was still 3 percent of the population; by April 2002, it was down to just 1 percent; even given that both figures are within Gallup's margin of error and that its method likely failed to account for the views of rural villagers in FARC-controlled territory, where its traditional base of support had always been, that is still an extraordinarily low level of public support, and it indicates not just that the FARC had failed to legitimize itself beyond a tiny constituency but that it had actually illegitimized itself as a result of its response (narcotrafficking) to the loss of its foreign patron (the Soviet Union) during the 1990s, wiping out most of its remaining base of support in the country.

In other words, Pastrana may have left office a hated man, but he had accomplished something that no president before him had been able to do: He had called the FARC's bluff. It worked.

Halfway through his presidential term, in June 2000, about half of the country still believed that guerrillas were capable of taking power in the country by force and that the Colombian military was incapable of defeating them militarily, about 7 or 8 points higher

than those who believed otherwise. By the end of Pastrana's term, things had changed: 61 percent believed the guerrillas were no longer capable of winning and 62 percent believed the Colombian military could defeat them; on both questions, only 32 percent thought otherwise. Wishful thinking or no, the tide had turned: since the guerrillas — all of them had been tainted by the failure of the FARC peace talks — had demonstrated such bad faith, had demonstrated they never intended to negotiate in good faith, most of the public now believed (51 percent to 41 percent in June 2002) that the best option for dealing with them was not negotiation but defeat by the Colombian military.

I say "military" and not "paramilitaries" because the paras had lost most of their public support as well. Their atrocities during the Pastrana administration had become impossible to keep rationalizing, even by a public fed up with the nominal targets of the paras' growing campaigns of death and increasingly cynical about the government for whose counterinsurgency efforts the paras were claiming to be a proxy. The paras were the subject of powerful denunciations by domestic and international human rights monitoring organizations and the government was coming under harsh criticism from intergovernmental organizations for its failure to distance itself from their actions. Domestically, 63 percent of Colombians polled by Gallup a few months into Pastrana's term in December 1998 disapproved of the president's handling of the paramilitaries; it was up to 82 percent by the end. Gallup didn't start asking about the paras' favorability ratings directly until February 2000, but by then 77 percent were reporting an unfavorable view, with just 9 percent in favor; the August 2000 poll did find 16 percent favorable and 74 percent unfavorable — but that was the best the paras would ever do again. At the end

of the Pastrana administration the figures for public opinion of the paras were 6 percent

favorable and 86 percent unfavorable. They had hardly more support than the guerrillas.

What was left, then, was the government, and it was scarcely doing better in the

public's view than the nonstate actors. Samper had damaged the public's confidence in

the Liberal Party, and Pastrana had done the same to the Conservative Party. At the

beginning of both of their administrations, for example, more people approved of their

handling of corruption in the country than disapproved, but both ended their terms with

the same number, 72 percent of the country, believing that they were not adequately

addressing corruption. A lot of Colombians I spoke with informally talked about the

incredibly low morale in Colombia before the 2002 presidential campaign, the high level

of cynicism, and the fear that, not only was the government illegitimate, but so were all

of the alternatives: the guerrillas and the paras. Fernán González, too, described the

climate of fear that was overtaking the country at the beginning of the 2002 campaign,

amid "the expansion of guerrilla activity toward the more central and integrated zones of

the country, which ended up affecting the outskirts of the biggest cities and the roads

connecting them, [and which] produced as a response the organization and expansion of

right-wing paramilitary groups":

> This change in territorial logic caused the war among the guerrillas, the
> paramilitary groups, and the state to stop being seen as something that was
> taking place in peripheral regions, far from the biggest cities and the
> centers of economic production, and to become perceived as a threat to the
> development and daily life of all Colombians, including city-dwellers.
> Many sectors of the population thought that they could be kidnapped or
> extorted at any moment … [and they] felt trapped in their towns and cities
> …. Colombians believed … that the nation's woes were due in large part
> to the incompetence of their leaders and representatives, together with the

corruption and political maneuvering invading state agencies, Congress, and political activity in general.[7]

In short, the state was seen as increasingly weak — the terms of art at the time were "failing" or "collapsing" — and the political parties and government bureaucracies, and often even the Colombian state itself, as less and less legitimate.[8] If anything, however, people feared the nonstate actors more than the state actors; some even held out hope that their country might someday start acting like a state. If some political candidate could come along and feed that hope, could give Colombians a reason to believe that things really could get better, he would be a shoe-in for the presidency. To put it another way, what the country needed, in the popular view of the time, was somebody independent from the traditional parties, somebody willing and able to defeat the guerrillas militarily, and somebody who could set a good example for the country's political establishment.

Álvaro Uribe Vélez had been a former senator, governor of Antioquia, and mayor of Medellín, all as a member of the Liberal Party. But when he ran for president he did so as an independent. He never technically left his party, but he did manage to distance

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[7] "… la expansión de la actividad de la guerrilla hacia zonas más centrales e integradas del país, que llegó a afectar los alrededores de las ciudades más grandes y las vías de comunicación entre ellas, produjo como respuesta la organización y expansión de grupos paramilitares de derecha. Este cambio de lógica territorial hizo que la guerra entre las guerrillas, los grupos paramilitares y el Estado dejara de ser vista como algo que pasaba en las regiones periféricas, lejos de las ciudades importantes y los centros de producción económicos, para pasar a ser percibida como una amenaza para el desarrollo y la vida cotidiana de todos los colombianos, incluso los citadinos. Muchos sectores de población pensaban que podían ser secuestrados o extorsionados en cualquier momento … [y] se sentían encerrados en sus pueblos y ciudades …. [Los] colombianos consideraban … que los males de la nación se deben en gran parte a la incompetencia de sus líderes y representantes, junto con la corrupción y politiquería que invaden las agencias estatales, el Congreso y la actividad política en general." Fernán González, "El Fenómeno Político de Álvaro Uribe Vélez: ¿De Dónde Proviene la Legitimidad de Este Líder Elegido por Segunda Vez Como Presidente?," ["The Political Phenomenon of Álvaro Uribe Vélez: Elected President for the Second Time, Where Does This Leader's Legitimacy Come From?,"] Instituto de Investigación y Debate sobre la Gobernanza [Institute for Research and Debate on Governance], published electronically by Equipo de Investigadores del Centro de Investigaciones y Educación Popular (CINEP), http://www3.institut-gouvernance.org/es/analyse/fiche-analyse-245.html (accessed 8 February 2009).

[8] Eduardo Posada Carbó, *'Ilegitimidad' del Estado en Colombia*.

himself from it. A dark-horse candidate for president until late in the Pastrana administration (amid the failure of the peace talks), he campaigned on the theme of "firm hand, big heart" and proposed a series of reforms intended to improve both the country's security and its democracy: to strengthen the military and police to fight traffickers and guerrillas, to treat subversives not as political actors worthy of recognition but as narcoterrorists worthy of defeat, to clear the highways of guerrilla and paramilitary checkpoints, to boost economic activity and investment, and to reestablish the state's presence in all municipalities of the country. He was a notorious workaholic, the type of person who needed only a few hours of sleep a night, and his tirelessness and self-discipline were assets to the campaign, something that most Colombians considered to be admirable and perhaps worthy of imitation. He won the election with 53 percent of the popular vote and took office in August 2002 with a 69 percent approval rating. He turned his campaign promises into an overall strategy he called Democratic Security. In fact, he was so successful in implementing this strategy and so popular during his first term in office, that he was able to persuade Congress, with broad public support, to amend the Constitution to allow him to run for a second term, which he won easily in 2006. His second-term strategy focused on what his administration called the "consolidation" of democratic security.[9]

Operation Orion took place a few months into Uribe's first term. The joint Army-Police raid of Comuna 13 in Medellín succeeded in ejecting the last of the FARC from the city in October 2002, an operation that stood in stark contrast to an identical effort

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[9] Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, *PSCD: Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática [Policy for the Consolidation of Democratic Security]* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, República de Colombia, 2007).

just a few months earlier, at the end of the Pastrana administration. Whether its success

had anything to do with Uribe's leadership, it nonetheless signaled a major change in the

country — and in the city of Medellín. Before Uribe's election, in July 2002, 49 percent

of people polled in Medellín said they believed things were getting worse in their city; in

September 2002, after his election, that fell to 38 percent; at the next Gallup poll in

January 2003, a few months after Orion, it dropped to 10 percent. At the same time, the

percentage of people saying things were getting better jumped from 27 percent before the

election to 42 percent after the election to 79 percent after Orion.

Uribe complied with his campaign promise to take back the highways, and did so

in dramatic fashion. On national television, caravans of security vehicles were shown on

the country's highways escorting scores of Colombians traveling between cities in their

own vehicles, something that had long been simply too dangerous even to consider. Soon

enough, the caravans disappeared as Army posts were stationed every few kilometers on

the highways, with billboards appearing all over the country trumpeting the heroism of

the soldiers protecting the nation's highways. Travel between cities became safe for the

first time in many years — an enormous boost to the morale of a people who, in

González's words, had previously "felt trapped in their towns and cities."[10]

At least as significant was his ability to propose and successfully implement a

one-time tax on wealthy Colombians as a way to fund his policies; in Colombia, where it

had long been said that tax evasion was the national sport, it is nothing short of

astonishing that so many actually paid the tax. He pushed Congress to increase spending

on the military and police forces, building on Pastrana's increase in security spending, to

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[10] Fernán González, "El Fenómeno Político de Álvaro Uribe Vélez."

further strengthen the foundation on which military investment could one day be

sustained by fully domestic sources (the United States had been giving Colombia billions

of dollars a year to fund Pastrana's Plan Colombia initiative). It did not hurt that during

Uribe's first term the economy was growing at a healthy pace, after the recession years of

his predecessor.

Uribe continued to use his personal tirelessness as an asset as well. Every single

weekend he left Bogotá and took one or more of his cabinet ministers and a few staff

with him to a different municipality in a different part of the country, the more remote the

better, to engage in lengthy discussions with citizens in town-hall-style meetings that

often lasted many hours. Most previous presidents had started their political careers in

Bogotá and spent most of their time in that capital city; Uribe had come from Medellín

and recognized the political value of leaving the capital regularly. At these community

forums, he would hear people out as they expressed their opinions and told him about

their problems, and he would immediately assign his staff or ministers to take care of

those problems, even handing out his own cell-phone number to locals so they could

follow-up as needed. "With his recognized slogan of *work, work, and work,* Uribe

fascinated citizens who had had the idea that the people who govern steal much and work

little. … These [community forums] helped him project an image of a man who was

diligent and effective in resolving problems, sensitive and accessible to citizens, and

talented in leadership."[11]

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[11] "Con su reconocido lema de trabajar, trabajar y trabajar, Uribe fascinó a una ciudadanía que tenía la imagen de que los gobernantes robaban mucho y trabajaban poco. … Estos espacios de gobierno le sirvieron para proyectar un perfil de diligente y eficaz en la resolución de las necesidades, sensible y asequible a los ciudadanos y poseedor de un don de mando." Ibid.

In truth, he also benefited from a lot of policies that had been put in place by Pastrana, the most important being Plan Colombia, which, with billions of dollars in aid from the United States, had strengthened the security forces (with better training and useful equipment, including helicopters) and had initiated important reforms in the judicial system. The military under Pastrana also had quietly begun to revise its doctrines and improve its training for counterinsurgency, using money and advice from the United States to professionalize its forces, require human rights training, offer better pay, and shift its emphasis to volunteers so it could decrease its dependence on conscripts.[12] Even under Samper the military had recognized it had a problem with human rights. In 1994, Minister of Defense Fernando Botero laid out four "long-term strategic goals": (1) "promoting and strengthening a human rights culture and ethic within the military and police forces"; (2) "creating the necessary tools and mechanism [sic] to make the military criminal justice system … an efficient instrument"; (3) "resolving situations of human rights violation in which members of the public may be invovled"; and (4) "strengthening the legitimacy and credibility of the military forces both at the national and international levels concerning human rights. … The state should attempt to not only recover its monopoly over armed forces, but to guarantee its legitimate enforcement." To those ends, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) created an office of human rights and political affairs, required all military and police units to establish human rights offices, and increased human rights training, among other efforts.[13] Nearly a decade would pass, however,

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[12] Peter DeShazo, Tanya Primiani, and Phillip McLean, *Back From the Brink: Evaluating Progress in Colombia, 1999-2007,* A Report of the Americas Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies (Washington: CSIS, 2007), 10.

[13] American Embassy Bogotá, "Botero Human Rights Letter to A/S Shattuck," 9 December 1994, cable to United States Department of State, published electronically by The National Security Archive, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB217/doc01.pdf (accessed 30 June 2009).

before these internal reforms started showing real results. (Botero himself was later

arrested on charges of corruption.)

Finally, Uribe immediately began talks with the AUC over the possibility of their

demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) into society. This, of course, had

not been the first of Colombia's demobilization attempts. "Colombians have acquired the

status of serial demobilizers," Douglas Porch and María José Rasmussen have written.

"Colombian presidents have issued amnesties so often that most could dictate them in

their sleep."

> The process has become ritualized: cease-fires are declared and
> negotiators assemble in jungle clearings. After violations carried out by
> renegade elements on both sides, insurgents eventually mass in designated
> areas. Amid proclamations before an assembled international press that
> Colombia has, at last, turned the corner in its long history of armed
> violence, weapons are surrendered and peace declared. So far … [this
> history] has merely transitioned, rather than terminated, violence … for
> the same reasons: the state lacks the power and legitimacy to enforce the
> agreements and the resources to integrate demobilized fighters into the
> legitimate economy. As a result, enough bad actors remain to carry the
> violence forward.[14]

The story would be scarcely different with the demobilization of the AUC. After the

military victory of Operation Orion in Medellín, followed a few months later by the

victory of the AUC blocs against the city's last remaining guerrillas in East Central

Medellín in early 2003 (see Chapter 5), Uribe and the AUC decided on a pilot

demobilization involving the Cacique Nutibara Bloc, which, if successful, would be

followed by successive demobilizations of the rest of the AUC nationwide — or at least

of those that agreed to participate.

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[14] Douglas Porch and María José Rasmussen, "Demobilization of Paramilitaries in Colombia:
Transformation Or Transition?," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 6 (2008): 520.

The period during which the AUC were demobilizing was a period of great hope throughout Colombia, nowhere more so than in Medellín. The city's homicide rate plummeted, from among the highest in the world to levels lower than the rates in American cities such as Detroit, Miami, Baltimore, and Washington. The same drop was seen at the national level, and in Caicedo La Sierra as well. Common crime in Medellín also fell: assault and battery, robberies of delivery vehicles, kidnappings, and reports of extortion.[15] By 2007, police were patrolling the streets and alleys of barrios formerly controlled by militants, gangs, and paras.[16] People were starting to go out dancing more, visit friends more, hang out downtown more, and take better advantage of public spaces that had once been considered too dangerous. The mayor initiated a massive development effort, building two aerial cable-car systems to connect the hillside slums to the public-transportation rail system, and building parks, soccer fields, community centers, and big, modern public libraries in the peripheral barrios. The city began touting its turnaround as the "Medellín model of good governance and comprehensive social development" and invited foreign officials to come and visit the "Medellín Laboratory" to help the city experiment with new approaches to managing complex problems or simply to learn how they, too, could bring peace amid the complex violence of their own cities. Tourism was up, foreign investment was up, self-confidence was up, and fear and violence were down.[17] How did this miracle happen? How long could it last?

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[15] Policía Metropolitana del Valle de Aburrá.

[16] Ralph Rozema, "Urban DDR-Processes."

[17] Gerard Martin, et al., *Medellín: Transformación de Una Ciudad*; *Medellín en Cifras*; *Medellín en Cifras [Medellín by the Numbers]* (Medellín: Alcaldía de Medellín, 2006); *Medellín en Cifras [Medellín by the Numbers]* (Medellín: Alcaldía de Medellín, 2005).

6.1. Medellín During the 'Miracle' Period

6.1.1. The Fall of the 'Political' Paras

On 10 September 2001, a day nobody yet knew would be seen as the end of an era, the U.S. Department of State announced a revision to its list of foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs). Already on that list had been Colombia's two largest insurgent groups, the FARC and the ELN. To these were now added (effective 5 October 2001) the county's paramilitary network, the AUC.[18] The AUC and its member organizations had long been the subject of strong domestic and international criticism for their human rights abuses — including in the State Department's annual human rights reports — but successive governments in both countries had variously supported in secret or turned a blind eye to those abuses because, in addition to the harm caused to innocents and mere sympathizers, the paras had been the only forces in the country that consistently killed real guerrillas as well: they were considered in many parts of the country and among many elites to be a necessary evil, distasteful but effective, and therefore less illegitimate than the guerrillas whose war, more and more people were feeling, had destabilized the country long enough. But the FTO declaration held legal implications for U.S. foreign aid, which would make implicit support for the paramilitaries much more difficult. The move immediately legitimized the views of the paramilitaries' critics. The next day, when the United States suddenly found itself under attack, it declared war not merely against the terrorists who had attacked it, but against "terrorism" itself. Immediately, as the

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[18] State Department Daily Briefing, 10 September 2001; United States Department of State, "Redesignation of Foreign Terrorist Organizations," *Federal Register* 66, no. 194 (5 October 2001).

Colombian newsweekly *Semana* wrote, "sectors of the [Colombian] establishment who had once looked favorably [upon the paras] … began to distance themselves now that the United States was painting the AUC as terrorists."[19]

The AUC's leader, Carlos Castaño, foresaw greater opposition and quickly announced a strategy for the "conversion" of the association from a paramilitary organization with political ambitions to a political organization with paramilitary backing. This strategy — which involved lowering the profile of its violent activities and coercing access to political offices at all levels of government, an approach that came to be known as "parapolitics"[20] — would within a few short years exacerbate existing divisions within the association, spark a major political scandal, and lead to the break-up of the AUC and the assassination of many of its key commanders — including Castaño himself.

One of the first things Castaño wanted to accomplish was to lower the AUC's profile as much as possible, and to that end he announced that there would be no more massacres, which in his judgment brought too much negative press and unwanted attention. Ministry of Defense figures show that paramilitaries had been responsible for 281 deaths in 42 massacres in 2001, a figure that fell to 54 deaths in 11 massacres once the conversion strategy was in place the following year[21]; the Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC, Centro de Recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos) recorded 132 massacres committed by paras in 2001, 88 in 2002, and 44 in 2003, falling eventually to

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[19] "Sectores del Establecimiento que veían con buenos ojos … comenzaron a marcar distancia ahora que Estados Unidos rotulaba a las AUC como terroristas." Juanita León, "La metamorfosis de las AUC," ["The Metamorphosis of the AUC,"] *Semana,* 23 December 2002, 58-59.

[20] Mauricio Romero, *Parapolítica*.

[21] León, "La metamorfosis de las AUC."

six in 2007.[22] This decline in massacres was a direct result of the AUC's strategic

response to their marginalization by the United States. The figures, however, masked the

fact that this was not, at the outset, a strategy of non-violence but a strategy of deception:

> Nevertheless, in the zones where the self-defense forces were disputing control, as they were in Medellín, Cúcuta, and Valle de Cauca, they carried out homicides individually. What makes one think that this had the effect in the media of lowering the profile of the AUC's military actions — since killing one person a day for 15 days does not call as much attention as killing 15 people all at once — is that attacks by this organization against the civil population continued during 2002.[23]

Part of the strategy was to infiltrate the government at all levels, identifying

candidates who were friendly to the paras' interests and threatening their political

opponents and intimidating voters to ensure that their slates would win during the 2002

elections. Mayors, town councils, and members of congress were elected in all regions of

the country with the backing of local mafia bosses and narcotraffickers associated with

the AUC. With friendly officials in office, the AUC bosses expected certain benefits,

ranging from government contracts for their legal businesses to favorable laws and

regulations regarding the political standing of their members. With friends in high places,

they believed, they could negotiate a demobilization without having to worry that they

would be required to surrender their wealth, pay reparations to their victims, or spend

lengthy terms in prison. In other words, their people on the inside would help them wipe

the slate clean so that they could retire without worry — or keep earning drug profits

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[22] Centro de Recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos (CERAC) Base de Datos de Conflicto (CCDB-CERAC V.8; accessed 11 June 2008).

[23] "No obstante, en las zonas donde las autodefensas disputaban el control, como en Medellín, Cúcuta y Valle del Cauca, se dispararon los homicidios individuales. Lo que hace pensar que se logró el efecto mediático de bajarle el perfil a las acciones militares de las AUC, ya que matar de uno en uno cada día durante 15 días no llama tanto la atención como asesinar a 15 personas de un tajo, los ataques de esta organizicación contra la población civil continuaron durante 2002." León, "La metamorfosis de las AUC."

without interference. What they offered to their government representatives in return was electoral support, inside influence, and an opportunity to take credit for stabilizing the country.

But Castaño was concerned that the growing influence of narcotraffickers within the AUC would threaten the ultimate success of his conversion strategy. Despite his own narcotrafficking wealth, his position on the purpose of the AUC was farther away from that of the narco para 'Don Berna' Murillo, whose Cacique Nutibara Bloc was trying to monopolize the illicit economy of Medellín, and closer to that of the AUC's purest political para, 'Rodrigo 00' García, whose Metro Bloc was battling Medellín's guerrilla-backed militias. Narcotrafficking was the association's main source of income but it was also an important source of tension: the political paras (some of them, at least) considered drug money a necessary evil, but feared its corrupting influence would prevent the achievement of their broader political goals and began to believe it was time to cut the links; the narco paras, on the other hand, if given a choice between the political project and the money they were making off the drug trade, would have chosen the drug money.

Castaño gave them that choice. He wanted to weaken the narco wing before it was too late. So in 2002 he offered himself — both in an open letter and in secret talks with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) — as a mediator between the United States and the most powerful narcotraffickers in Colombia, most of whom had already purchased their membership in the AUC, having recognized that joining the paras was an excellent way to win political immunity for their crimes (and thereby avoid extradition); the United States wanted a lot of those traffickers extradited and jailed in the United States. Castaño called a meeting of the hundred most important traffickers in the country

and persuaded half of them to sign a letter to the U.S. State Department offering to negotiate a settlement of some sort, possibly sacrificing their drug assets and entering the legal economy in exchange for non-extradition. Most of those who didn't sign were already enjoying the benefits of membership in the paramilitary association — national coordination, political status, etc. — without even concerning themselves with working toward the AUC's original mission of counterinsurgency, unless doing so happened to benefit their trade. They were betting that they could beat the political paras at their own game and keep winning drug profits indefinitely.

Castaño, his military chief Salvatore Mancuso, and 'Rodrigo 00' García, now one of his strongest allies, were disgusted. Even though both of them enjoyed vast wealth from their own assets, Castaño and Mancuso considered themselves counterinsurgents first, with narcotrafficking mainly as a means to that end, and they publicly denounced the rest of the AUC in August 2002, the month president Álvaro Uribe Vélez took office. "We find ourselves with a series of groups, fragmented and deeply penetrated by narcotrafficking, that in many cases went from confederation to anarchy or lost their principles."[24] A month later, the United States, apparently unsatisfied with the outcome of its secret talks with Castaño, submitted a request directly to the new president for Castaño's extradition — on charges of drug trafficking.

Still, the parapolitical component of his conversion strategy was working, at least through the end of 2002. The AUC's candidates had won handily in elections throughout the country. After Operation Orion, Uribe's High Commissioner for Peace, Luis Carlos

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[24] "Nos encontramos con una serie de grupos atomizados y altamente penetrados por el narcotráfico que, en muchos casos, pasaron de la confederación a la anarquía o perdieron sus principios." Quoted in Semana, "La Maldición de Caín: Qué Llevó a Vicente Castaño a Mandar Matar a Su Hermano Carlos?," ["The Mark of Cain: What Led Vicente Castaño to Order the Killing of His Brother Carlos?,"] 26 Agosto 2006.

Restrepo, approached the AUC to suggest a unilateral ceasefire on the part of the paras so that they might begin DDR talks. The AUC agreed, announcing its ceasefire on 1 December 2002 and promising an end to drug trafficking and attacks against civilians while the framework for the talks was being negotiated. On 15 July 2003, AUC and government negotiators met at Santa Fe de Ralito in the department of Córdoba, just north of Antioquia and close to Salvatore Mancuso's ranch, and signed the framework for the negotiations. AUC leaders agreed to maintain their ceasefire, support government counternarcotics efforts, and concentrate their troops in designated locations for the duration of the talks, the goal of which, according to what became known as the First Santa Fe de Ralito Accord, was to demobilize all AUC combatants by the end of 2005, starting with a pilot demobilization of more than 850 members of the Cacique Nutibara Bloc in Medellín on 25 November 2003. With the framework in place, the talks began in earnest.

But without 'Rodrigo 00' García. He refused to participate in any process that would legitimize narcotraffickers as political actors. In mid-2003, he proposed parallel talks in which he and the other political paras could hope to achieve the same objectives proposed at Ralito but without the taint of drug money. His proposals were ignored. The war between Metro and Cacique Nutibara that was taking place in Medellín at the time was also taking place in macrocosm at the national level. García had been speaking out publicly against the narco paras for years. He'd found the emergence of 'Don Berna' Murillo as the AUC's inspector general to be particularly grating, and a personal rivalry had grown between them, even as their urban units cooperated in anti-militia operations in Medellín. Back in September 2002, as Operation Orion was about to get under way,

García had started distancing the Metro Bloc from the AUC. And now, in May 2003, after the guerrillas had been forced out of Medellín and Cacique Nutibara had gone on the offensive against his men, he declared war against the AUC.[25]

Within a few months, that war was over. Metro was defeated in Medellín and had lost almost half of the other municipalities it had once controlled. The narco paras were winning.

During the talks with the government, the paras were supposed to stay concentrated in certain designated zones of the country, which generally meant they could travel between Ralito where the talks were being held and whichever of their ranches they chose to stay in. Almost completely marginalized within the organization he had founded with the help of his older brother Vicente, Carlos Castaño was keeping himself in the location he considered safest, in a region his family had long dominated, in a ranch that abutted Vicente's ranch. Known as 'El Profe' ('Professor') for his intelligence, Vicente, far more than Carlos wanted to admit, had no problem with the presence of the narco paras in the AUC, having recruited many of them into the association himself. But Carlos had always refused to denounce his brother during his own campaign against the narcos. Vicente was the quiet brother, the one whose image never appeared on television or in newspapers, who never spoke in public, who had never commanded a bloc. But he was very much respected among the country's paras, having been the one who had quietly assisted many of them in building their own blocs and then introducing them to the broader community of paras. While Carlos's star was falling, it was Vicente, along with Mancuso, who had succeeded in persuading almost all of the

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[25] Semana, "La Cacería de 'Doblecero'," ["The Hunt for 'Double Zero',"] 29 September 2003, 11.

country's paras to enter talks with the state. He was always the problem-solver, the conflict-resolver, the counselor, and most importantly the strategist: Vicente, until then a businessman, joined his brother Carlos in 1995 after Fidel's death, and he designed the paras' strategy of national expansion, which included forming the national association, the AUC, and cutting deals with whomever he needed to achieve national coverage: where paras were not available, he approached narcotraffickers to do the job. They had then grown to become dominant force among the paras, and Vicente was unashamedly on their side.[26]

Vicente's chief of security and most trusted aid was a pale-skinned *paisa* named Jesús Ignacio Roldán Pérez, alias 'Monoleche' ('Milky White'). In early March of 2004, Roldán invited the best troops of the Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU: Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá) — which had been founded by the Castaño brothers in the years before the AUC — to come to Vicente's ranch. For a month, Roldán trained them. He brought them new uniforms. He brought them new weapons. He had them escort Vicente between his ranch and the talks at Ralito. He was preparing them, they all could tell, for an important military operation — the ceasefire agreement be damned — but they didn't know what it was going to be, or when. On 16 April 2004, Roldán arrived on the ranch with enough trucks to transport 30 fully armed men. He did not tell them where they were going or what their mission was. But they didn't travel very far along the rural highways. At 2:00 in the afternoon, the trucks turned in to visit the ranch next door.

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[26] Information for this and the next two paragraphs is taken from: Semana, "Habla Vicente Castaño,"
6 June 2005; Semana, "La Maldición de Caín"; Gustavo Duncan, *Los Señores de la Guerra*.

Carlos Castaño was in his kitchen, his bodyguards outside. In a storm of gunfire, the bodyguards were dispatched quickly, and Carlos was told to come outside. No response. Two men were sent in to get him. They found him hiding in the refrigerator. Out of bullets, he surrendered without yet knowing who it was who had sent these men to kill him: which of his enemies among the narco paras was it? When he stepped outside, his arms tied up, the answer was immediately clear. But he asked anyway: "Who ordered this?" he demanded of his brother's most trusted aid. 'Monoleche' Roldán's response — "'El Profe.'" — was followed immediately by a volley of twelve 9 millimeter rounds into Castaño's white shirt. His body was loaded into one of the trucks, covered with plantain leaves, taken to Vicente's ranch, and hidden — where, exactly, it would not be known until August 2006, when 'Monoleche' confessed the crime. Until then, one rumor had it that Carlos Castaño was still alive but had escaped to live a secret life outside of the country, the same rumor that had followed their brother Fidel's disappearance ten years earlier. DNA evidence in September 2006 dispatched the more recent rumor. Carlos Castaño was dead.

'Rodrigo 00' García knew that 'Don Berna' Murillo and the rest of the narco paras wanted him dead, too. Aside from his own bodyguards, Carlos Castaño had been the only thing standing between them and his own life. With Castaño gone, he gave up the fight, disbanded most of the Metro Bloc, and went into hiding.[27]

In his last e-mail to Margarita Martínez, the AP correspondent and documentary filmmaker to whom he had given permission to film his men in La Sierra, he expressed no fear of speaking freely about the AUC any longer. "What can happen to me?" he

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[27] Amnesty International, *Colombia: The Paramilitaries in Medellín: Demobilization Or Legalization?*

wrote. "What, they want to kill me more times, or more intensely, or with a bigger weapon?" On 30 May 2004, possibly a day or so earlier, García was on Colombia's Caribbean coast, in a port town called Santa Marta, when he and a woman were walking out of a supermarket together. Five bullets to the head.[28] He was 39 years old, and in his career as a military and then a paramilitary commander he was never tempted nor corrupted by drug money; his fight was always to defeat the guerrillas and end his country's civil war. But after six years as commander of the Metro Bloc, the official records show, he left behind a very different legacy, far less noble: the number of people registered as victims of violence perpetrated by his units exceeded 12,000.[29]

6.1.2. The Fall of the 'Narco' Paras

The first of the AUC units to demobilize was 'Don Berna' Murillo's Cacique Nutibara Bloc. The ceremony took place on 25 November 2003 and was televised to a live national audience, as more than 850 former combatants handed in their (mostly broken and least favorite) weapons and pledged to reenter society as peaceful civilians and productive citizens. Then they were carted off to the municipality of La Ceja, Antioquia, where they received training on the legal and social issues they were expected to face once released, and got whatever medical, legal, and psychological help the authorities thought they needed. "During this time their criminal records were checked by the judicial authorities to ensure there were no criminal investigations pending against

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[28] Margarita Martínez Escallon (AP), "Asesinan a Fundador del Paramilitarismo en Colombia," *La Prensa: El Diario de los Nicaragüenses*, 31 May 2002.

[29] Sistema de Información de Justicia y Paz (SIJYP), [Justice and Peace Information System,] cited in VerdadAbierta.com, "Las Auc."

them, before they received a *de facto* amnesty under Decree 128 and allowed to return

home," read one report on the demobilization. Decree 128 was a legal instrument issued

on 22 January 2003 to regulate what benefits the government could bestow upon the

demobilizing paras and the circumstances under which those benefits must be denied.

The report continued:

> But the process raised serious concerns over whether combatants were
> effectively being removed from or "recycled" into the conflict. The fact
> that most demobilized paramilitaries would simply be allowed to return to
> their homes following a short rehabilitation course heightened concerns
> that paramilitaries would continue criminal operations on their return. …
> The short space of time which judicial authorities were given to verify the
> criminal record of each demobilized combatant meant that it was unlikely
> that each could be subjected to a full and impartial judicial review. Many
> of those who participated in the demobilization ceremony …, although
> possibly responsible for serious offences …, would thus not be subject to
> criminal proceedings.[30]

A week before Cacique Nutibara's demobilization in November 2003, the Uribe

administration also issued Decree 3360, which among other things removed the

verification procedure intended to prove that those who had wished to demobilize with a

paramilitary bloc had actually been a member of that bloc; instead, the bloc's leader

needed only to submit a list of names. As a consequence, some unknown number of

common criminals "joined" Cacique Nutibara just a few days before demobilizing,

thereby wiping clean their criminal records before returning to their barrios a few weeks

later.

Because many of the para leaders would not be eligible for benefits under either

Decree 128 or Decree 3360, they agreed to what came to be called the Second Santa Fe

de Ralito Accord on 13 May 2004. The government designated Santa Fe de Ralito as a

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[30] Amnesty International, *Colombia: The Paramilitaries in Medellín: Demobilization Or Legalization?*, 38.

"placement zone" in which any paramilitary leader who wanted to demobilize would have to remain until a legal framework could be worked out for the demobilization. The administration then spent two years trying to get relevant legislation passed. The result was the Justice and Peace Law, ratified on 22 July 2005, which granted the paras just about everything they had set out to achieve when Castaño first proposed his conversion strategy: It granted political status to paramilitary activities, thereby protecting them from extradition; provided for minimal prison sentences, some of which could technically be served out at their private ranches; did not technically require the dismantling of existing paramilitary structures, allowing instead for individual demobilizations, making it possible for the larger structure to continue its illegal activities; protected most of their assets from repatriation or reparation; and did not even require a full confession in exchange for pardon. Victims advocates were furious: the language recognized no right to truth, justice, or reparation and nearly guaranteed impunity for the paras. The paras couldn't have been happier.[31]

Murillo was among the para leaders who had relocated to Ralito. His fighters from the Cacique Nutibara Bloc, however, had returned to their villages and barrios on 16 December 2003, except for those who had reason to believe that doing so would be too dangerous. In those cases, the government was helping them relocate and start a new life. All of the demobilized fighters from Cacique Nutibara (and subsequently from the rest of the demobilized blocs) became members of an organization formed for the explicit

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[31] Rodrigo Uprimny Yepes and María Paula Saffon Sanín, "La Ley de 'Justicia y Paz': ¿Una Garantía de Justicia y Paz y de No Repetición de las Atrocidades?," ["The 'Justice and Peace' Law: A Guarantee of Justice and Peace and No Recurrence of Atrocities?,"] *Revista Foro* No. 55 (2005): 49; Amnesty International, *Colombia: The Paramilitaries in Medellín: Demobilization Or Legalization?*, 21; Hermman Eduardo Noreña Betancur, "Los Paramilitares en Medellín."

purpose of representing their needs and rights to the government. Its status was officially

recognized in the formal peace agreement between Cacique Nutibara and the national

government, which was signed at La Ceja, where the reeducation was taking place, on

10 December 2003, about a week before the first of the demobilized paras went home:

> The government recognizes the non-governmental organization named "Corporación Democracia" as the corporate representative of the reincorporated forces of the Cacique Nutibara Bloc, with whom will be maintained a permanent dialog for the monitoring, development, and support of the process of reincorporation. The national government, the office of the mayor of Medellín, and Corporación Democracia will design monitoring, development, and support programs for the reinsertion process.[32]

As 13 more blocs demobilized between November 2004 and August 2005, many former

paramilitary commanders became officers of Corporación Democracia. Within a few

years, almost all of those officers would be dead or in prison.

During the reinsertion process, a lot of paras were not able to find productive

work and returned to crime. Others had never intended to distance themselves from

illegal activities in the first place, using the DDR process mainly as an easy way to wipe

clean their legal record. One mechanism the ex-paras-now-criminals used to make money

was the participatory budgeting process that was put in place by Mayor Sergio Fajardo

Valderrama (2004-2007) as a way to improve citizen access to city services. That process

gave the barrio-level JACs substantial influence over the awarding of city contracts

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[32] "El Gobierno nacional reconoce a la Organización No gubernamental denominada 'Corporación Democracia' como la organización representante de los reincorporados del Bloque Cacique Nutibara, con quien se mantendrá una interlocución permanente para el seguimiento, desarrollo y apoyo del proceso de reincorporación. El Gobierno nacional, la Alcaldía de Medellín y la Corporación Democracia diseñarán los programas de seguimiento, desarrollo y apoyo al proceso de reinserción." Quoted in Agencia de Prensa IPC, "Nueva Captura en la Corporación Democracia," ["Another Arrest in Corporación Democracia,"] VerdadAbierta.com, published electronically by Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP) and Semana, http://www.verdadabierta.com/web3/conflicto-hoy/50-rearmados/1371-la-corporacion-democracia-acorralada-por-la-justicia (accessed 22 August 2009).

(below a certain value) to local (barrio-level) businesses, gave legal small businesses better access to city money, and a gave citizens more say in how city money was spent. But it also posed an opportunity for the ex-paras. Some of them started approaching JAC officers and telling them to award the city contracts to the companies that some of the ex-paras had formed as part of the demobilization process. By threatening JAC officers who didn't comply, killing or forcing them out of the barrio, the ex-paras could get easy access to city money without necessarily having to then do the actual work the contract required. Later, when election time came, some ex-paras implemented a local version of Castaño's parapolitical strategy — which was still being implemented, right through the national elections of 2006 — by cutting out the middle man (the JAC officers) and running for office directly. By threatening or killing their political opponents and intimidating their opponents' supporters, they ensured that their own candidates would win the JAC elections.[33]

It was political violence, but it was political violence "corrupted" by economic violence. Or better put: it was economic violence disguised as political violence. It was the most recent incarnation of a longer-term trend in Medellín as well as the country as a whole. Fifteen years earlier, the militias in the peripheral barrios had used political violence disguised as social violence, their social-cleansing campaigns intended as a means to win community support for the guerrillas' broader political struggle. Later, they used economic violence disguised as political and social violence, their revolutionary or communitarian rhetoric only masking the fact that they had become drug traffickers and hit squads. Similarly, anti-union violence had once been part of a mainly political

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[33] This conclusion is based on many informal conversations, press reports, and what amounts to common knowledge in Medellín, as well as Ibid.

struggle, under the assumption that labor had an incurable affinity for Communism and was therefore by definition subversive. But hidden beneath the antisubversive rhetoric of the self-defense groups and paramilitaries was an undeniable economic motive: union organizers, after all, were a threat to the profits of businessmen and regional mafias. Again, economic violence was disguised as political violence. But as the guerrillas themselves turned increasingly to economic violence disguised as political violence — as they, too, were corrupted by the influence of drug profits — the political rationale for the anti-union forces gradually eroded as well, to the point where anti-union violence today cannot be said to have any conceivable political motive: it is, once again, economic violence disguised as political violence. And of course the takeover of the AUC by the narco paras was just one more example of the turn from political violence to economic violence.

The self-defense groups, the guerrillas, the militias, the paras, and now the demobilized paras — all had been corrupted by the lure of easy money. Whatever collective violence remained in Colombia by the early 2000s could not be said to be principally political or social by nature. Even where motives truly were mixed — as in the case of the political paras who had considered drug money an easy means to anti-guerrilla ends, or the political guerrillas who had considered drug money an easy means to revolutionary ends — the mix had an increasingly economic flavor. Colombia's complex violence was becoming simpler and simpler with each passing year: less political, less social, more economic. It could be argued, in fact, that political and social violence in Colombia — including Medellín — has suffered a gradual delegitimation during the 1990s and 2000s as it has become increasingly "corrupted" by economic

motives. Support for and participation in subversive, anti-subversive, and social-cleansing groups has been experiencing a downward trend for at least a decade and possibly longer. That trend had begun earnest at the city level after the illegitimation of the militias and during the para-militia wars that followed, and at the country level after Pastrana called the FARC's bluff and Uribe started taking back the highways. It has only accelerated since, as the generally favorable impressions of Mayor Fajardo in Medellín's peripheral barrios and of President Uribe countrywide started to win back for the state some of the legitimacy it had lost years earlier to the nonstate armed actors who later crushed the country's hopes for peace.

As 'Don Berna' Murillo was holed up in Santa Fe de Ralito waiting for the Justice and Peace Law to pass so he could receive immunity for his crimes, he continued committing those crimes through what had become one of the most powerful and profitable international drug-trafficking networks in history: the Envigado Office was the clear successor to Pablo Escobar's Medellín Cartel. The word *governance* — meaning policy-making, public-goods delivery, institution-building, and network management (see Appendix A) — is sometimes translated into Spanish as *gobernabilidad.* It has not gone unnoticed in Medellín that this word rhymes with *donbernabilidad,* or, to see it more clearly, *DonBerna-bilidad.* Who managed vast illicit networks in Medellín? 'Don Berna.' Who controlled scores of community organizations, JACs, judges, police officers, prosecutors, bus and cab companies, private security firms, even pharmacies and bakeries, and any number of other organizations and businesses that provided community services or kept the peace in Medellín's peripheral barrios? 'Don Berna.' So who really set policy in the city? Among those who looked with skepticism upon the increasingly

popular idea that the city was coming into its own after the paras' demobilization, the answer was that the city still operated at Murillo's command and that city officials still served at Murillo's pleasure.

"Don Berna," wrote Mauricio Romero in the preface to his edited volume about the origins of the parapolitics scandal — the AUC's corruption of elections between 2002 and 2006 came to light in late 2006 — had "won many confrontations":

> against the FARC and the ELN, against the Terrace Gang, and finally, against the Metro Bloc. In 2001 the city ended up reaching 220 murders for every 100,000 residents, the highest rate in Latin America, which can be explained only by a veritable situation of war. He thus established control over security in the city and a decisive influence over electoral niches in the city wards and the municipalities of the metropolitan area, such as Envigado and Bello.[34]

With so much power supposedly at his disposal in and around Medellín, why did Murillo demobilize Cacique Nutibara and the other blocs he controlled? Juan Carlos Palou has given three reasons. First, because the paras simply weren't needed anymore: the guerrillas were out of Medellín and no longer a threat, and the state had built up the strength of its military units to the point where they could be counted on to keep the guerrillas in the jungles and out of the cities. Second, Murillo still controlled the illicit economy in Medellín and had influence over it in most other regions of the country: he had been using the paras just to get certain political benefits, and now they paras were just dead weight on his organization. It wasn't worth continuing to support the barrio gangster-paras who had helped him, since now they could get job training and education

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[34] "En Medellín, Diego Murillo Bejarano, alias don Berna, varias confrontaciones: a las FARC y al ELN, a la banda La Terraza y, finalmente, al Bloque Metro. En el 2001 la ciudad llegó a tener 220 asesinatos por cada 100 mil habitantes, la tasa más alta de América Latina, sólo explicable por una verdadera situación de guerra. Se estableció así un control sobre la seguridad de la ciudad y una influencia decisiva en los nichos electorales de las comunas y en municipios de la zona metropolitana, como Envigado y Bello." Mauricio Romero, *Parapolítica*, 20.

from the state; and those who weren't interested in those benefits from the state could just keep working for him anyway. Third, he really was afraid of being extradited to the United States, where he would certainly be unable to control his empire or enjoy his wealth as he could in Colombia — even in prison if it ever came to that. The demobilization, therefore, was a way for him to earn both legal and moral protection from extradition: legally, by gaining official political status, and morally, by being seen as someone who was "helping" the state and therefore worthy of keeping around. And the state kept him around, Palou argued, because at the time of his demobilization it did not have the military strength or the backing of the city's marginalized citizens it would have needed to get into a direct confrontation with him: better to engage Murillo in a DDR effort where they could keep track of his activities in the short-term, then slowly chip away at his influence as the state built up its own strength and support in the years that followed.[35]

The next section addresses the contrary view: that Murillo and city officials had entered a secret pact in which Murillo would control violence in the city but let Fajardo take credit for it, in exchange for the city's granting him the benefits of demobilization but turning a blind eye to his criminal activities. Whatever the real nature of the relationship between Murillo and Fajardo, what can be said is that Murillo's gamble did not pay off. Even if he had made a secret pact, the city did not end up living up to its end of the bargain. After a high-profile murder attributed to his men, Murillo was arrested in October 2005. There was no search bloc, no shadowy death squad of his enemies helping to look for him: the police just went to Santa Fe de Ralito and seized him. On the day of

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[35] Juan Carlos Palou, personal communication (Interview No. 3), 11 March 2009.

his arrest, there was a general strike of bus and cab drivers that halted most transportation within the city, a fact that some cite as evidence of Murillo's vast power over Medellín. But the strike lasted only a few hours; it was little more than a symbolic protest. Escobar could shut the city down for weeks. Murillo was still in control of his empire, commanding his staff from the maximum-security prison in Itagüí. But it would not last much longer. On 24 August 2007, the authorities, tired of hearing about his continuing control over the Envigado Office, transferred him to the maximum-security prison in Cómbita, in the department of Boyacá, greatly complicating his ability to communicate with his field commanders and thereby diminishing his influence. But things would get even worse for Murillo. On 13 May 2008, in the middle of the night and without warning, he and 13 other paramilitary leaders — including Salvatore Mancuso — were extradited to the United States.

6.1.3. The Rise of the 'City of Eternal Spring'

"Some people say that Medellín today is a city of peace, a city of calm, a city of rights for everyone. But I have another view. It's all bullshit. It's a lie. It's a city of paramilitaries." The short man with the tailored suit and huge personality continued in this vein for an hour, pacing the room as he spoke: "When one group is in control, obviously the crime statistics are going to fall. But extortion, prostitution, arms trafficking, and drug sales all continue." This is not a phenomenon of common-crime gangs, or of organized-crime gangs, but of paramilitary-crime gangs. The murder rate is

down because the paramilitaries control the rural land surrounding the city where there are mass graves: "If there are no bodies, there's no crime."[36]

Luis Fernando Quijano Moreno was explaining to me his theory of the Medellín Miracle. He spoke quickly, interrupting the conversation frequently to check something in the other room or look up the name of a book he was thinking about. Antioquians will make a deal with anyone if it will benefit them, he said. It's all business. Militias have made deals with the government. Mafias have made deals with the government. Drug traffickers have made deals with the government. And the government has made deals with paramilitaries. Today they are calling the gangs of ex-paras *bacrim,* or *bandas criminales emergentes* (emerging crime gangs). But these bacrim, he said, represent nothing more than "neoparamilitarism" in the city: it's a "paramafioso" project. He then proceeded to lay out a series of 20 hypotheses that he said his organization was investigating regarding Medellín's neoparamilitarism.

Quijano, head of an organization founded more than a decade ago by demobilized guerrillas, offered the most developed of what I would characterize as the conspiracy-theory explanation of Medellín's peaceful period after 2003. Calling it a conspiracy theory is not at all meant to disparage his account. According to my own findings, the conspiracy account turns out to be more than half right. But it is a hard-line, antiestablishment position that seems to be based on a reading of the facts that overlooks evidence for any interpretation that would tend to cast a favorable light on the motives or actions of government officials. It is a position shared by a passionate minority in Medellín, particularly among a subset of the city's human rights and labor activists,

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[36] The quotes in this section are from Luis Fernando Quijano Moreno, Interview No. 5.

advocates and social workers for victims, and survivors of atrocities committed by paramilitaries and state security forces. It is a position that admits of little possibility for government legitimacy, especially that of the current president, Álvaro Uribe Vélez, whom they consider, according to a number of informal conversations I have had in Medellín, to be the among worst presidents in the country's history. Their disdain for Uribe is understandable: he was governor of Antioquia during the mid-1990s, a place and a time in which some of the worst paramilitary atrocities in the country's history took place, leaving thousands of victims dead, displaced, and traumatized. That level of violence is difficult to forgive, and impossible to forget. Most people who are passionate in their defense of victims and their promotion of human rights and humanitarian norms in Colombia, I should make clear, do not take such an extreme conspiratorial position. They recognize that there have been enough real examples of impunity and conspiracy in Colombia to keep them busy for years to come: they do not feel the need to manufacture any more.

With Quijano, I did not engage in a debate about such issues: for my formal interviews, I was there only to ask questions and listen. Quijano, who was once associated with the guerrillas but today runs a research and advocacy NGO in Medellín, has kept in contact with what he ambiguously calls the "underworld" so that he can get information when he needs it for his research. To be sure I would not mischaracterize his comments, he recorded our conversation (my quotations, however, are based on hand-written notes that my research assistant and I took during the conversation).

He was trying to argue, as others have, that the peace that descended upon Medellín after 2003 was a result of an explicit but secret strategy by the government to

outsource the city's stability to the "paramafiosi." "Medellín is the model for the Democratic Security policy," he said, explaining why the Uribe government has been so concerned about keeping the homicide rate low there. "If it fails here, the policy fails nationally." The deals they had cut with the paras to keep the murder rate low had to be kept hidden, he argued, lest the policy be tainted by the scandal that would surely result.

He wanted to explain why the secret pacts were made and how they came about. Let me ask you a question, he told me: "Who is it easier to negotiate with: two hundred gangs, or one patron? The city cuts deals to let a patron consolidate control and control the violence." The strategy had been used many times in the past: he suggested, without saying it explicitly, that such a deal had even been cut with Pablo Escobar. And the fact that violence fell immediately after 'Don Berna' Murillo had managed to take control of illicit activity in the city by the end of 2003, he claimed, demonstrates that the city had made a similar deal with Murillo. Without prompting, he immediately responded to the obvious objection, namely, that the state arrested Murillo in 2005 and then extradited him to the United States in 2008 — how does that square with the claim that there was a secret pact between him and the government? "Here's a point of debate," he started. "Is 'Don Berna' the name of a man, or the name of a mafia society?" After a pause too brief to allow for an answer, he answered: "He's part of a mafia society. It's impossible to dismantle a mafia just by removing its head: the society remains." It was the same with the Italian mafias in the United States, he argued: the government kept arresting leader after leader, but the mafias remained. "So who do you make the deal with: 'Don Berna' as a man or 'Don Berna' as a society? Obviously, with 'Don Berna' as a society."

To understand who was really behind the secret deals with the illegal armed actors, Quijano suggested a simple exercise that is the standard heuristic of conspiracy theorists: *look at who benefits.* In Medellín, he said, the deals are between the ruling class and the illegal powers who run the illegal economy; the elites use the law only when it is convenient. Who solves their problems, he asked rhetorically, the police or the hegemonic power? The answer was too obvious to answer. "Antioquians make deals with whomever has real power. Today it's the paras. But tomorrow if a group of anti-paras comes into power, [the ruling class] will make deals with them." In Medellín, he reiterated, there is a system of deal-making: you either arm yourself or you make pacts with those who are already armed. With so many people unemployed, so many people involved in the conflicts, it's the best anyone can do.

An important flaw in Quijano's explanation is that the identities of the supposed deal-makers were such a moving target: Who made a pact with whom? City officials with Murillo? Departmental or national officials with Murillo? Government officials with "'Don Berna' as a society," as he puts it (which must be either the Envigado Office or the Cacique Nutibara Bloc)? Or between local elites (never identified) and the "paramafiosi"? Which paramafiosi? Which local elites? Who was in on the deal, and what mechanisms were in place to enforce it, other than the threat of violence? Were there other government officials who opposed such pacts? How were they marginalized to make sure the pacts would hold?

But an even more significant flaw in this line of thinking is that, as part of an explanation for the Medellín Miracle, these secrets pacts simply aren't necessary: the public pacts, the Santa Fe de Ralito Peace Accords; the fact that Murillo had successfully

ejected his rivals from Medellín; and the structure of interests that both sides in the public

pacts had for keeping violence under control, all provide sufficient explanatory power

without having to resort to a secret-pacts explanation.

To be sure, there were secret pacts, and a lot of them at that. The entire

parapolitics scandal — the AUC's rigging of almost every local, regional, and national

election between 2002 and 2006 in an effort to infiltrate the country's political system —

emerged from a series of revelations about scores of secret pacts that had been made (and

in some cases literally signed) between the paramilitary chiefs and the candidates for

political office whom they helped get elected. Those candidates and other public officials

in on the deals were the ones who later helped draft and pass the Justice and Peace Law

that provided such generous benefits to the paras and almost no rights to their victims.

The *quid pro quo* involved was: the paras' support for political campaigns, in exchange

for the candidates' support for para-friendly policies once in office. That, however, is not

what the conspiracy theory argues, or at least, that is not *all* that the conspiracy theory

argues. The conspiracy theory argues that the *quid pro quo* was: the paras' direct

suppression of violence in Medellín, in exchange for immunity from extradition and

impunity for their crimes. That is, as long as they were safe from extradition and free to

run their criminal enterprises, the narco paras would keep a lid on violence and let city

officials take credit for it.

Of course, that did not happen. Even if, for the sake of argument, such pacts had

been made, they must have been broken almost from the start and therefore could not

have any real explanatory power. First, upon his victory over the guerrillas and the Metro

Bloc, 'Don Berna' Murillo changed his alias to 'Adolfo Paz' ('Adolph the Peacemaker'),

thereby publicly taking direct credit for the Medellín Miracle that followed. Second, this peace-maker's staff continued to kill, kidnap, extort, and otherwise intimidate people even after the alleged secret pacts had supposedly been made. While it is true that homicides fell during that period, that was mainly because the war had ended: without war, of course there would be less collective violence; without the context of war, of course there would be less of the interpersonal-communal violence that always accompanies such wars. The idea that Murillo had explicitly ordered his network of criminal organizations to cut back on violence is not inconceivable, but it also is not necessary to the explanation. And even if it were true, there were enough violent crimes committed in Murillo's name during the Miracle period that either he wasn't carrying out his end of the bargain or he didn't have as much direct control over his network as the conspiracy theorists gave him credit for. In fact, Murillo's arrest came as a result of his having ordered the assassination of a legislator in the department of Córdoba. Third, state actors were certainly not turning a blind eye to his crimes. Investigations continued, and eventually he and dozens of other high-level paramilitary leaders were arrested. If city and state actors had made any secret pacts with the paras, they were not in compliance. Finally, in general, regardless of whatever pacts had or had not been agreed to with city officials, or national officials, or members of Colombia's ruling class, there were many others whose efforts had the ultimate effect of undermining them. Most significantly, the Justice and Peace Law that so benefited the paras was not immune to revision:

> The Constitutional Court stood in the way. In the legitimate exercise of its inspection of laws, it removed from the Congressionally approved framework the [granting of] political status [and] mandated truth in confessions and more severe penalties. For its part, the Supreme Court of Justice and the Public Prosecutor's Office kept up their investigations and initiated processes against political leaders and high officials against

whom there was evidence of collaboration with the paramilitaries. The United States continued insisting on the extradition of some of the paramilitary chiefs and pressuring [the Colombian government] not to make any firm commitments on this issue in the case of the self-defense groups. Some members of the press uncovered veritable conspiracies in favor of the paramilitaries and the politicians committed to them. The judicial uncertainty was evident and the untroubled admission of the paramilitaries into civilian life was not guaranteed.[37]

In the end, fourteen of the narco paras — a term that, by this point, had become a redundancy — were extradited to the United States in May 2008, in a midnight operation that took the entire country by surprise, perhaps especially the men who themselves were extradited. Among them were 'Don Berna' Murillo, who had bought his way into the AUC, heading the Cacique Nutibara, Heroes of Granada, and Heroes of Tolová blocs; Salvatore Mancuso, the former head of the AUC's military arm, chief of the AUC's Northern Bloc, and lifelong right-hand man to Fidel, then Carlos, then Vicente Castaño; Rodrigo Tovar Pupo, 'Jorge 40,' who had been Mancuso's deputy at the Nothern Bloc; Juan Carlos Sierra Ramírez, 'El Tuso' ('Pockmark'), Mancuso's chief of staff; Ramiro Vanoy Ramírez, 'Cuco Vanoy' ('Pussy Vanoy'), chief of the Miners Bloc (Bloque Mineros) in northeastern Antioquia and a North Valley Cartel associate; Francisco Javier Zuluaga Galindo, 'Gordolindo' ('Fat Cutey'), a former Medellín Cartel associate who later commanded the Pacific Bloc of the AUC and managed finances for some of the Castaños' narcotrafficking activities; Eduardo Enrique Vengoechea Mola, 'El Flaco'

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[37] "Corte Constitucional se interpuso en el camino. En ejercicio legítimo del control de las leyes, retiró del marco aprobado por el Congreso el estatus político, hizo obligatoria la verdad en las confesiones y más rigurosas las penas. A su vez, la Corte Suprema de Justicia y la Fiscalía mantuvieron sus investigaciones e iniciaron procesos contra dirigentes políticos y altos funcionarios de los cuales se tenía indicios de que colaboraban con los paramilitares. Estados Unidos seguía insistiendo en la extradición de algunos de los jefes paramilitares y presionando para que no se hiciera ningún compromiso duradero sobre este tema para el caso de las autodefensas. Algunos medios de comunicación impresos destapaban verdaderas conspiraciones para favorecer a los paramilitares y a los políticos comprometidos con ellos. La incertidumbre jurídica era evidente y el ingreso tranquillo de los paramilitares a la vida civil no estaba garantizado." Mauricio Romero, *Parapolítica*, 42.

('Thin Man'), associated with both the AUC and a narcotrafficking organization called

Los Mellizos; Hernán Giraldo Serna, chief of the Tayrona Resistance Bloc (Bloque

Resistencia de Tayrona); Giraldo's nephew Nodier Giraldo Giraldo, 'El Cabezón'

('Bighead'); Martín Peñaranda Osorio, 'El Burro' ('Mule'), who had demobilized with

Tayrona Resistance; Edwin Mauricio Gómez Luna, 'Pobre Mello' ('Poor Spooky'), also

with Tayrona Resistance; Diego Alberto Ruiz Arroyave, 'El primo' ('Cousin'), of the

Centauros Bloc; Manuel Enrique Torregrosa Cargos, 'Chan,' who after demobilizing was

said to head a trafficking organization called Los 40; and Guillermo Pérez Alzate, 'Pablo

Sevillano,' who demobilized with the Liberators of the South Bloc. Scores of other narco

paras have been captured, imprisoned, and extradited since then.[38]

Quijano made an observation that is very important to recognize. "When one

group is in control, obviously the crime statistics are going to fall. But extortion,

prostitution, arms trafficking, and drug sales all continue." He was right that the nature of

violence in the city did change during the Medellín Miracle: physical and psychological

violence both fell, but the ratio of psychological to physical rose. Of the violence that

remained, it was more economic than social or political violence, and many of the victims

were associated with criminal enterprises rather than being innocent bystanders. This is

suggestive of a strategy on the part of organized crime to keep violence at a lower profile.

But one does not need to resort to an argument about conspiracies to explain this strategy:

a similar lesson had been learned by the Cali Cartel in the wake of the high-profile

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[38] El Tiempo, "Extradición de 14 jefes 'paras' se comenzó a planear desde que 'Macaco' fue enviado a E.U.," ["Planning for Extradition of 14 'Para' Chiefs Started When 'Macaco' Was Sent to the U.S.,"] 14 May 2008; "The Paramilitary 'Extraditables'," Plan Colombia and Beyond, published electronically by the Center for International Policy (CIP), http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/blog/archives/000313.htm (accessed 31 August 2009); "Los Otros 10 Extraditados," ["The Other 10 Who Were Extradited"] published electronically by El Heraldo, http://www.elheraldo.com.co (accessed 31 August 2009).

excesses of the Medellín Cartel. High-profile atrocities generate widespread opposition, which leads the public to call for government action; low-profile violence — psychological instead of physical (i.e. threats instead of attacks), murders of criminals instead of bystanders, etc. — tends not to generate such opposition, enabling one to go about one's business, as they say, under the radar. Or, to put it in terms of this study's findings: atrocities generate illegitimacy, illegitimacy raises the costs of control (in this case, control over the illicit economy), and the ex-paras wanted to keep those costs low. In short, it is a long way from the observation that the ex-paras had engaged in a profile-lowering strategy, to the claim that the decision of the "paramafiosi" to keep a lower profile had come at the request of government officials or local elites through secret pacts: it is far more likely that the ex-paras recognized that the strategic environment had changed such that keeping a low profile and resorting to less violence was simply in their best interest.

But, again, even this observation is almost unnecessary: violence in Medellín fell mainly because 'Don Berna' Murillo and his network had played a big, violent game of Monopoly and came out the undisputed winner of the game board, and violence associated with a conflict naturally falls once the conflict ends; to this the national government added real resources for security in the city, most visibly during Operation Orion. Together, the legal and the illegal powers had brought real force to bear against a mutual enemy for reasons that were entirely consistent with their own interests or values. Then they negotiated a deal with each other, in public, that both sides felt were in their own interest: demobilization of the illegal in exchange for political recognition by the legal.

The deal between the government and the paras was mostly a national-government initiative. When Sergio Fajardo took office at the beginning of 2004, the Santa Fe de Ralito Accords had already been agreed upon, the demobilization of Cacique Nutibara had already taken place, and the agreement recognizing Corporación Democracia as the ex-paras' representative had already been signed. The mayor was given responsibility for implementing a reinsertion process that he had had no say in developing. There was much about it that he did not agree with, but he accepted it as a *fait accompli* and incorporated it into his own agenda for city, an agenda widely viewed as having been implemented so successfully that he would become a front-runner for the 2010 presidential elections.[39]

Fajardo, a newspaper columnist and mathematician educated in the United States, had gotten some friends together in 1999 to talk about what could be done to improve the quality of life in Medellín. "We realized that we could work, talk, dream, but to really do anything we had to go into politics, because politicians are the ones who have power," he explained in an interview with *Newsweek.* "So after many years of being outside of traditional politics, we built an independent civic movement."[40] With that foundation, the professor ran for mayor in the 2003 elections as an outsider to the traditional political parties, with his independent party, Citizens Promise, an approach Uribe had taken in the presidential election the year before. A charismatic man with long, wavy hair and a

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[39] Information on Fajardo's career and policies is drawn from Jesús Balbín, personal communication (Interview No. 1), 25 February 2009; Gerard Martin, et al., *Medellín: Transformación de Una Ciudad*; Simon Romero, "Mayor of Medellín Brings Architecture to the People," *The New York Times*, 15 July 2007.; Charlie Rose, "A Conversation with Sergio Fajardo," television interview (20 February 2009), The Charlie Rose Show, http://www.charlierose.com/view/interview/10098 (accessed 26 August 2009); Daniel Kurtz-Phelan, "The Mathematician of Medellín," *Newsweek*, 11 November 2007.

[40] Ibid.

penchant for blue jeans, Fajardo campaigned in the city's poorest barrios, on foot, and

"sold them a dream," in one expert's words, telling them not to steal, and not to kill, and

that if he became mayor he would work with them to overcome their problems.[41] They

loved it. Walking the streets of barrios that until very recently had been war zones and

riding a wave of national optimism following Uribe's election, Fajardo won his campaign

for mayor. He entered office with a 72 percent approval rating, which generally rose over

the next four years, at one point reaching 95 percent; he left office at the end of 2007 with

a favorable image among 89 percent of city residents, and in 2009 was considered the

strongest candidate for the presidency in the 2010 elections.[42]

As mayor, he continued walking the poorest barrios and made them the focus of

his efforts to rebuild the city. Demobilized paramilitaries and narco paras had already

returned to many of those barrios, and he wanted to be sure they would not have reason to

return to the illegal economy. But making sure that the system for reintegrating them into

city life was providing them the opportunities they needed was not the only, or perhaps

even the main, focus of his efforts. The main focus was public education, for which his

administration increased spending to 40 percent of the city's entire budget, more than

$350 million. It was not just education in the schools, however, but in the "the whole life

of society":

> We went school to school, classroom to classroom, designing and carrying
> out "quality pacts." We mobilized everyone — business leaders,
> universities, private schools — to start working in the public education
> system. … We also built a lot of new schools and five "library parks" in
> the poorest neighborhoods in the city. These are not just libraries; they are

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[41] Balbín, Interview No. 1.

[42] Gallup Colombia Ltda., *Gallup Poll Bimestral: Poll 62*.

> community centers, the new axis of the neighborhood. And we made sure
> that they were beautiful, with spectacular architecture.[43]

The architecture drew worldwide attention, despite some local complaints that they were

a waste of resources. Fajardo claimed that putting the city's most beautiful buildings in

its most destitute neighborhoods was sending a message of inclusion in a city long known

for its marginalization of the poor. At least as importantly, he argued, it gave those

communities high-quality facilities to which they had not previously had access: libraries,

classrooms, meeting spaces, Internet access, auditoriums, public parks, etc.

These were barrios that the state had neglected for years, and the social

investments were explicitly intended to address inequality and injustice. But implicitly

they were a clear effort to displace or preempt the rivals to the state that had existed for

years: community self-defense groups, then militias, then paras, and now, possibly, the

demobilized paras. Those were the entities that had provided essential services and public

goods, set local policy in their micro-territories, resolved conflicts, endeavored to keep

the peace — in short, the entities that had been governing the peripheral barrios. And

Fajardo wanted to incorporate them into the life of the city. One way to do that was to

literally connect them to the city. The hillside barrios had steep, narrow streets, and while

bus service to most of them was regular, it was not fast, sometimes taking hours just to go

a few miles to the city center; moreover, some areas were accessible only by foot, up

long, concrete stairs, some exceeding 300 steps. Fajardo's predecessor had initiated a

plan to connect two of these hillside barrios to Metro, the rail-based public transportation

network, using cable cars, the kind that normally take wealthy skiers to the top of the

slopes at expensive resorts. The cable car system was completed during Fajardo's

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[43] Daniel Kurtz-Phelan, "The Mathematician of Medellín."

administration. A trip downtown that, by bus, had taken two hours or more, would now take just 45 minutes by cable car — connecting to rail at no extra cost — making the commute to some jobs feasible and thereby expanding the possibilities for employment. It was a strategy aiming for long-term stability:

> We had to reduce violence, but every reduction in violence we had to follow immediately — and immediately is a key word — with social interventions. The order is important. Social interventions require time and resources to work, so they will have little effect in the midst of such profound violence. It is true that you must have effective social interventions to make sure violence does not return, but first you must do something about violence … and for that we needed more police — as long as they were police who respected human rights, and out of conviction, not just because Human Rights Watch tells them to. [44]

No place in the city, he said in a television interview, should be ruled by somebody other than the state.[45] To pay for all this, he accepted donations from other countries — Mexico donated money for one project along the city's main thruway, Spain funded the building of the most architecturally dramatic library in the city — but he also did something his predecessors had not managed to accomplish: he improved the city's tax revenue. "We have improved transparency in the city's finances, so more people are paying their taxes. When businesses trust that we are not stealing, and they know that we are going to use their money effectively, they pay," he told *Newsweek*.[46]

His chief of staff, Alonzo Salazar Jaramillo, won election for mayor in 2007, ensuring that the model of governance the two of them had developed during Fajardo's administration would be extended for at least another four years. (Salazar had once lived

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Charlie Rose, "A Conversation with Sergio Fajardo."

[46] Daniel Kurtz-Phelan, "The Mathematician of Medellín."

in the Santa Lucía barrio of Caicedo La Sierra for four years, during which he got to know some of the protagonists of the gang wars; his book of interviews with Medellín's gangsters, *No Nacimos Pa' Semilla,* has long been a best-seller in Colombia.[47]) The "Medellín Model of Good Governance and Comprehensive Social Development" (Modelo Medellín de Buen Gobierno y Desarrollo Social Integral), as they called it, was based on their municipal development plans: *Medellín, the Most Educated,* under Fajardo, and *Medellín Is Caring and Competitive,* under Salazar. Taken together, they prioritized six "management areas" (áreas de gestión: education, public spaces, inclusion and equity, arts and culture, peace and security, and a culture of learning and competitiveness) and six "management mechanisms" (mecanismos de gestión: long-term planning, financial transparency, participation, and public information). Most of the experts and residents I interviewed, most of the people I talked to informally, and most of the foreign visitors who have come to see the Medellín Miracle first-hand generally agreed that the city was well managed, and that the approaches Fajardo and Salazar were taking — built on city-government best practices, science-based evaluation, and, to give due credit, key institutions established under their mayoral predecessor Luis Pérez Gutiérrez — were the right steps for establishing long-term stability in the city. The mayors were popular and generally trusted, and during their administrations the quality of life was improving more, and more rapidly, than anybody had dared to hope. The city seemed to be doing everything right.

What were they missing?

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[47] Diana Marcela Ruiz Ramírez and Diana María Gaviria Ramírez, "Alonso Salazar: Las Palabras Son Semillas," ["Alonso Salazar: Words Are Seeds,"] Sextante, published electronically by Fundación Universitaria Luis Amigó, http://www.funlam.edu.co/sextante/edicion2/entrevista.htm (accessed 27 August 2009). See also: Alonso Salazar J., *No Nacimos Pa' Semilla*.

6.2. Caicedo La Sierra: 'Job,' 'Memín' and the Quiet War

6.2.1. 'Memín' and the Death of 'Alberto Cañada'

Memín is a comic book figure from Mexico, whose adventures are told, soap-opera style, in a weekly magazine that has been published off and on since the 1940s. Despite its depiction of Memín and his mother in a stereotypical "pickaninny" and "mammy" style — which has caused more controversy when imported to the United States than it has in Latin America — Memín has been and continues to be an enormously popular comic-book character. His Wikipedia entry describes him as "a restless child, not a very good student, not for lack of intelligence, but for not being able to pay attention (he is surprisingly good at arithmetic). He helps his mother working in the street, selling newspapers, and as a shoe shine boy. Memín reflects the life of a poor Mexican boy in Mexico City. Memín and his mother are the only Afro-Mexican characters."[48]

I have not been able to find out when or why John William López Echavarría took on the alias of Memín, but given Memín's popularity in Colombia, López Echavarría's curly hair, his dark skin, and the context of a society that does not shy away from nicknaming people by their looks, even by stereotypes that American liberals would consider racist, it would not be surprising if his alias came from the comic hero. (In fact, other Colombians have been nicknamed 'Memín' by friends explicitly citing the comic,

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[48] Wikipedia, s.v. "Memín Pinguín," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memín_Pinguín (accessed 22 August 2009).

including at least one soccer player and, possibly, another paramilitary leader from the AUC.[49])

An American reporter who interviewed Memín in 2004 after he demobilized with the Cacique Nutibara Bloc described the former paramilitary leader as "a thick-chested 39-year-old with a crucifix hanging from a silver chain around his neck … a father of two and [a self-described] model citizen in this city overrun with violence." Memín told the reporter that "we did what was necessary to protect our community," citing the AUC's cultural projects, social work, social-cleansing campaigns, and defense against guerrillas as the things that Memín claimed had won him support as one of the paramilitary leaders in Comuna 8, in East Central Medellín, the ward where Caicedo La Sierra is located. "My community believes in me."[50]

After demobilizing with Cacique Nutibara, Memín and others from the sector spent three weeks of "reeducation" at La Ceja (see 6.1.2) then arrived in Comuna 8 on 17 December 2003 in the middle of the night. They were supposed to be given jobs, but the new mayor had only just taken office when he was told by the national government, which had initiated the demobilization, that the city was going to be responsible for implementing it. Designing such a complicated program would take time, and the jobs just weren't ready yet. The paras' return to what everyone called "legality" was therefore

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[49] See Santiago Hernández Henao and Jaime Herrera Correa, "Clásico con un Solo Doliente," *El Colombiano,* 9 May 2009; and VerdadAbierta.com, "'Memín, Luis Arnulfo Tuberquia," Paramilitares y Conflicto Armado en Colombia [Paramilitaries and Armed Conflict in Colombia], published electronically by Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP) and Semana, http://www.verdadabierta.com/web3/victimarios/los-jefes (accessed 22 August 2009). In fact, there is some confusion across multiple published accounts of the paramilitaries: either there are two people associated with the AUC who have used the alias 'Memín,' or there is one person who has used that alias but has two "legal" names: John William López Echavarría (or variants: "Jhon" or "Wilmar") and Luis Arnulfo Tuberquia; both "legal" names have been associated with the death squad Águilas Negras in print. In my judgment, they are two different people who use the same alias.

[50] Daniel Kurtz-Phelan, "Mr. Nice Guy," *New Republic* 230, no. 18 (2004): 11.

met by unemployment; they were still getting paid just for participating in the demobilization program, but they were not all given a productive way to spend their days.

"It's messed up to say it but the state already hasn't kept its promises to us," Memín told a visiting reporter in January 2004, just a month after being "reinserted" into Comuna 8. As one of the leaders of the AUC's Cacique Nutibara Bloc, he used to patrol the barrios all day long, solving problems in the communities as they arose. And now as one of the coordinators of the demobilized paras in Comuna 8, he was still seen within the community as one of its governors, or *muchachos,* as people always called the barrios' strongmen. His patrols, his command structure, and his community service, therefore, simply continued once the demobilization was over. "Legality sucks, because you still gotta get up early."[51]

Edwin Tapias, who had worked with Jason and Édison in the Metro Bloc during its war with Cacique Nutibara (see § 3.2), ended up joining Cacique Nutibara before demobilizing with them and returning to La Sierra with Memín and the others as one of the barrio's muchachos. He had been arrested at an Army checkpoint in Las Estancias around 1999 and was accused of being associated with the paras, but "at the time, he wasn't with those groups," a community leader told me: Edwin was just a leader in the barrio's New Generation Youth Organization (JNG: Corporación Jóvenes Nuevo Generación), a youth group involved in sports and cultural activities and supported by the Community Action Board (JAC: Junta de Acción Comunal) of La Sierra.[52] But the false

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[51] "Es maluco decirlo pero el Estado aún no nos ha cumplido. … La legalidad es jodida porque a uno le toca madrugar." Quoted in Armando Neira, "'Sí Nacimos Pa' Semilla'," ["'Not Born to Die',"] *Semana*, 26 January 2004.

[52] 'Boris,' Interview No. 8.

arrest ended up becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy: after getting out of prison he joined

Metro. After the demobilization, the same reporter who interviewed Memín was talking

to Edwin about his hopes for La Sierra, and mentioned that Edwin sounded like a leftst,

what with all the talk about social justice and human dignity. "Dear God, don't tell me

that!" he responded. "We're from the Right. The Left is the enemy we defeated." The

reporter asked him if all the leftists had been killed or forced out of La Sierra:

> "We know that there are some professors and community leaders [here] who sympathize with those groups. But if they don't help the guerrillas they can keep living here without worry."
>
> "But what would happen if, for example, a legal organization of the left started operating here?"
>
> "Like what kind?"
>
> "I don't know. For example an office of the Communist Party. Would you respect them?" [the reporter asked.]
>
> "Oh, no. If they're Communists then we'd have to talk with the staff commanders of the AUC to see what to do about them."[53]

This was exactly was critics of the demobilization had feared, that the program

had amounted to an amnesty for criminals and that the demobilized paras would go back

to their same old tricks once they returned home, now with a clean slate as far as the state

was concerned. In fact, after the demobilizations and a brief rest for reeducation, many of

the paras, though not all, did simply return to their barrios and continue operating under

the same command structure as before — as indicated by Edwin's reference to the "staff

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[53] "'Por Dios, ni me diga eso. Nosotros somos de derecha. La izquierda es el enemigo al que vencimos.' '¿Mataron a todos? ¿No queda gente de izquierda viviendo aquí?' 'Sabemos que hay algunos profesores y líderes comunales que simpatizan con esos grupos, pero si no ayudan a la guerrilla pueden quedarse a vivir tranquilos.' '¿Pero qué pasaría si por ejemplo aquí se montara una organización legal de izquierda?' '¿Cómo cuál?' 'No sé. Por ejemplo, una sede del Partido Comunista. ¿La respetarían?' 'Ah, no, si es comunista ahí sí nos tocaría hablar con los comandantes del estado mayor de las AUC para ver qué se hace con ellos.'" Armando Neira, "'Sí Nacimos Pa' Semilla'."

commanders of the AUC" rather than to the officers of Corporación Democracia. They no longer carried weapons and they no longer killed people in public to make an example of them. But people did disappear during this period, and a lot of people were forced out of their homes; it was some time before sufficient evidence arose to link those crimes to some of the demobilized paras. A lot of them really did want to return to civilian life, but for others it did not take long to return (to use the other term that became popular) to "illegality" — with a much lower profile.

Still, it was a time when the gang wars were finally over and the community's hopes for peace were just beginning to find fertile soil. From what most people could see, the demobilized paras in Comuna 8 were acting as prodigal sons, returning to barrio life and finding ways to improve the community and keep the peace without resort to violence. With the return of the prodigal sons, the JAC presidents and other community leaders recognized the need to help them reintegrate into the barrios as peaceful citizens. Or, as one community leader put it, they wanted to work with the ex-paras to "repair the social fabric."[54] Between 2004 and 2006, some JACs in Caicedo La Sierra tried helping the ex-paras form community organizations and start community projects. It was a hopeful time, he said, because a lot of people believed in the reinsertion process. But the community leaders were ultimately disappointed by the response of the demobilized leaders. "Some of them did want peace, but others didn't," the community leader told me. Some took the peace process seriously and engaged with the community leaders, but others just went back to doing what they had been doing all along, be it drugs or

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[54] 'Boris,' Interview No. 8.

coercion. The JACs decided to just let the demobilized leaders form their own organizations. The social fabric was divided in two.

The demobilized leaders and their community organizations did do productive work for their barrios, just as the JACs and their community organizations had been for years. And as people saw that they were, in fact, acting as productive members of society, the ex-paras were beginning to win the affection of the community. (One resident said she thought that, after his demobilization, 'Job' López, 'Don Berna' Murillo's right-hand man and Comuna 8 boss, had done a lot to help the community, especially his efforts to keep young people out of gangs.[55]) After a couple of years, they started to run for elected office. Edwin was rewarded for his service to the community by being elected president of La Sierra's JAC. Memín stood as candidate for president of the Local Administration Board (JAL: Junta Administradora Local) for all of Comuna 8 in the elections of October 2007 and won the election, becoming the ward's official representative to the city and giving him even greater influence over its 18 barrios and 38 JACs.

On 16 May 2008, less than a year into his term, however, Memín was arrested. "I think you're familiar with the case of this young man … Memín?" Flavia, one of only about 30 women who demobilized with Cacique Nutibara, asked me. "He's my supervisor. I'm part of his work staff." Now an elected community leader in Caicedo La Sierra herself, she had been responsible for carrying out a lot of Memín's community service and social work, she said. She knew him well, and

> there was a lot of controversy over his case, because according to what
> they convicted him of, well, according to when we went to his hearing and
> all of that stuff, they say he was the boss of Comuna 8, that nothing
> happened without his authorization, that he ordered extortions, that he

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[55] 'Cristiana,' Interview No. 9.

ordered people to commit murder. And it wasn't like that. No. … We're human beings and we all make mistakes. But there are things that aren't true, and proving otherwise is very hard because we're in a society where politics influences a lot of things.[56]

The day after his arrest, Corporación Democracia, the legally recognized representative of the demobilized paras, released a statement saying that it would not formally object to Memín's arrest, but it would encourage the public and the government to remember that Memín had undertaken "productive work on behalf of his community":

> as attested by the fact that he was recently elected head of the JAL, with a considerable vote that is indicative of the backing he has among citizens in the zone. … [We] calmly but firmly invite the relevant authorities to undertake in-depth investigations and ignore the rumors and tips that the enemies of [the reinsertion] process are so fond of.[57]

Among those "rumors and tips" were accusations that, in addition to holding elected office, he was one of the bosses of a criminal organization made up of demobilized paras operating in Comuna 8, especially in Caicedo, and had been attending secret meetings with other paras to decide how Comuna 8 was going to be ruled.

"After a while I began to attend meetings where it was decided who to kill for not supporting the demobilization process," Óscar Lubín Rodríguez Yepes said during testimony at the trial. Rodríguez Yepes, an associate of the demobilized paramilitaries, said those meetings took place in a room on the sixth floor of Medellín's Hotel Dann Carlton in the wealthy El Poblado neighborhood. Among the attendees were Memín,

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[56] 'Flavia,' personal communication (Interview No. 15), 3 April 2009.

[57] "… una fecunda labor a favor de su comunidad, como lo atestigua el hecho de que recientemente fue elegido edil en la Jal, con una votación importante, que es un indicativo del respaldo ciudadano con que cuenta en la zona. … con serenidad pero con firmeza, invitamos a los organismos competentes, para que las investigaciones se hagan con profundidad, sin hacer caso de rumores o consejas a las que son tan aficionados los enemigos de este proceso." Quoted in Agencia de Prensa IPC, "Nueva Captura en la Corporación Democracia."

Severo Antonio López ('Job'), and other demobilized paras who lived, worked, or oversaw operations in Comuna 8 and held undue influence there.[58]

At one of those meetings, Rodríguez Yepes testified, it was decided that Jairo Alberto Ospina Olaya — the founder of the gang La Cañada who himself was nicknamed 'Alberto Cañada' — was not adequately supporting the reinsertion process. It is not clear what Alberto had done that had made his former Cacique Nutibara Bloc colleagues decide he was not being supportive. But the penalty for being an "enemy of the process" was death, and Alberto's death sentence was handed down in that hotel room in Poblado sometime in mid-2005. On 18 October 2005, Alberto was assassinated by the men he had helped win the battle for the East (see § 5.2.3). Juan Carlos Parra, one of 'Job' López's body guards, had objected to the assassination, and he was killed a few months later, in the first days of January 2006. The man said to be in charge of these assassinations, Carlos Mario González Escobar, disappeared not long after that, on 4 January 2006. "They killed him," Rodríguez Yepes testified, "because according to 'Job' he knew too much."[59]

During Memín's trial in late 2008, a number of witnesses appeared to testify against him. One by one, they, too, were getting killed. On the first of October, a former para by the name of José de Jesús Mazo Ceballos answered the door at his house in Lower Villa Liliam and was met there by assassins, who shot him using pistols with

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[58] "Después de un tiempo comencé a asistir a reuniones donde se decidía a quién iban a matar ya que no ayudaba para el proceso de la desmovilización." Quoted in Agencia de Prensa IPC, "Asesinan a Otro Testigo en Proceso contra Alias 'Memín'," ["Another Murder of a Witness against Alias 'Memín',"] Ud. Reportero, published electronically by Terra Colombia, http://www.terra.com.co/noticias/articulo/html/acu17137-ud-reportero-asesinan-a-otro-testigo-en-proceso-contra-alias-memin.htm (accessed 22 August 2009).

[59] "A éste lo mataron porque, según 'Job,' sabía demasiado." Quoted in Ibid.

silencers. His nephew, Juan David Zapata Mazo, and Mauricio Londoño Londoño, a former para who had demobilized with the Heroes of Granada Bloc, were both executed outside of Medellín on the 20th of October. Rodríguez Yepes became a witness for the prosecution and testified in November. A few weeks later, on 2 December 2008, he was killed on the street in Caicedo.[60]

Flavia and others deny that these murders were related to their testimony in Memín's trial. The people who have made those accusations, she said, "did not look at the history [the witnesses] had. They're people who had a lot to do with the conflict in the past, and … there are people who hold grudges. There are still people who feel pain from what was done to their loved ones. Those are things that can't be forgotten. So [those witnesses] might have been killed because [their victims] had, as they say, a score to settle."[61] She complained, moreover, that the state had been protecting those witnesses without having investigated to see whether they were criminals who themselves were intimidating the community: the state wanted the community to offer proof of the witnesses' illegal activities before doing anything about it. "But sometimes the community is afraid to inform on them, because that fear of them still exists."

> So the community comes to us, the leaders, and says, "You're the leaders, you're not afraid to do it. But me, I am afraid, because I'm just a run-of-the-mill person. I have to think about my husband, my daughters, my family. So I go and denounce [a witness's continuing involvement in crime], and today or tomorrow they kill me. … Who wins, him or me? He

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[60] Ibid.

[61] "Pero son personas que no miraron el historial que ellos tenían. Son personas que tuvieron que ver con el conflicto pasado y … hay gente que guarda rencor. Todavía hay gente que le duele lo que le hicieron a sus seres queridos. Son cosas que no se olvidan. Entonces, esas personas la pudieron haber matado porque tenían, como se dice, el cuento con ello." 'Flavia,' Interview No. 15.

wins. Unfortuatley, he wins, because nobody came to investigate to see if the denunciation [against him] was true."[62]

In February 2009, despite massive witness intimidation, and despite claims that the witnesses were themselves crimials, Memín was sentenced to 22 years and eight months in prison for forced displacement, false imprisonment, and conspiracy to commit crime; he was found responsible for acts of murder, exortion, drug trafficking, and voter intimidation, among other crimes. Allegations of voter intimidation arose during his JAL campaign and the campaigns of other demobilized paras and allies, many of whom had stood for election and won the presidencies of at least eight and possibly as many as 14 JACs in Comuna 8 alone. One of them had been Edwin, but he later got into a dispute with other ex-paras and had to flee La Sierra; he was no longer a JAC president and as of early 2009 was still in hiding.[63] The tension between the JAC presidents who had demobilized and the JAC presidents who had never been involved in the conflicts was higher than ever.

6.2.2. An Uneasy Peace, with Hope for the Future

Caicedo La Sierra became known outside of Medellín and Colombia in 2005 when a documentary film about its urban wars was chosen as best documentary at the Miami International Film Festival: *La Sierra: Urban Warfare in the Barrios of Medellín,*

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[62] "Pero es que a veces a la comunidad le da miedo denunciar, porque todavía existe ese temor de esa persona. … Entonces llegan donde nosotros los lideres, y le dicen, es que ustedes son lideres, a ustedes, nos les da miedo hacerlo. A mi sí me da miedo, porque yo soy una persona común y corriente. Yo tengo que pensar en mi esposo, en mis hijas, en mi familia. Entonces yo voy y denuncia, y a mi hoy o mañana a mi me matan …. ¿Quién ganó, él o yo? Ganó él. Lastimosamente ganó él, porque no llegó a darse la investigación para ver si era verdad lo que ella denunció …." 'Flavia,' Interview No. 15.

[63] Diego Ríos, Interview No. 4.

Colombia (see § 5.2.3).[64] The problem, for those who lived there, was that by the time the film was released in 2005 their barrio was no longer anything like how it had been portrayed in the film: the documentary was about the fourth gang war, the one that started out as a battle between paras and militias and ended as an internecine war among paras. That war had ended in mid-2003, almost two years before the film was released internationally.

Residents have a complex relationship with the film: They do seem to feel that it was an honest portrayal of their lives during a very specific period, and it has become something of a touchstone in the community, used as a point of reference for their own understanding of that period as well as for those times when they are asked to explain it to outsiders. Yet several residents told me that they feel the film had further stigmatized them, making it difficult for people outside the barrio to give them opportunities, to trust them, to respect them. Some residents of Villa Turbay, just below and informally considered by many to be part of La Sierra, have begun in public to take more pride in, and insist upon, their distinct identity: *no, not La Sierra — Villa Turbay, right next door.* Meanwhile, community leaders in barrio La Sierra have begun writing a treatment for a documentary that they want to make, sort of a *La Sierra II,* showing the world what their barrio is really like, how things have turned out, what has changed. If they can find the resources to do it, their plan is to train young people in the community to use camera and sound equipment so they can make the documentary themselves.[65]

How did things change after the wars ended?

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[64] *La Sierra.*

[65] Information in this section is based on: 'Alicia,' Interview No. 7; 'Boris,' Interview No. 8; 'Cristiana,' Interview No. 9; 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10; and informal conversations with other residents.

First, there was a lot less mobility after 2003. There used to be people moving in and out all the time due to the conflicts: displaced people moving in, residents being forced out. Alicia had told me that, in the past, she knew that things were heating up n the barrios when students would stop showing up to school. "There is more stability now," she said. "More tranquility."

Second, public spaces started feeling safer to residents. People were now able to go to the cinema at night, and to play on the sports fields and hang out in the parks, spaces that had been controlled by gangs. There was a lot less anxiety about strangers passing through than there had been in the past, although the presence of outsiders was still noticed immediately.

Third, children developed more positive aspirations. In the past, when students were asked what they wanted to be when then grew up, they would often talk about gangsters or militants or guerrillas, the kinds of roles that were familiar to them through family members. That was no longer the case: most students were talking about college, about technical or professional careers, and many students who had recently graduated were succeeding.

Finally, the state established a much stronger, much more constructive, presence in the community. Mayors Fajardo and Salazar had both invested more heavily in the community than ever before. "They've brought in everything," Alicia said, referring to school supplies. Her staff were trying to reinforce the message to the students the state was something to appreciate, since it had brought them new computers and other cool supplies. The participatory budgeting process that gave residents more say in how money

was to be spent in their barrios helped bring in more social investment, and encouraged the community to develop a more positive image of the government as well.

Even more significant, however, has been the presence of the police in Caicedo La Sierra. Before, there had been no regular police patrols, only raids; the only other time residents would see police was when they came up to retrieve corpses after a night of shootings. The community police, units of the Immediate Attention Command (CAI: Comandos de Atención Inmediata[66]), established a station in Caicedo La Sierra around 2006. "People didn't want the police," Boris told me, but barrio leaders lobbied hard for the CAI. "For some people it was tough to accept them," but people got used to it. Flavia said people generally preferred to deal with the CAI rather than other police units because they were more accessible. "That's not to say that the others aren't, but they do have a more forceful, more rigid temperament; they're more strict. By contrast, the community police try more to communicate, to engage in dialog."[67] When people had problems before, Boris said, "it was, 'Go to the muchachos,' but now people say, 'Let's go to the CAI, we'll talk to the lieutenant.'"[68]

People in the community had misgivings about the police at first. When they wanted to deal with "problems between neighbors, domestic violence, rapes, drug addiction, then people would go under the table and look for the demobilized paras to

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[66] Sometimes called Immediate Attention Centers (Centros de Atención Inmediata).

[67] "No quiere decir que la otra no sea, pero sí tienen un temperamento mas rígido, mas fuerte, son mas estrictos. En cambio la policía comunitaria se trata más de comunicar, de dialogar." 'Flavia,' Interview No. 15.

[68] "La gente no quería a la policía. … Era, 'Ir donde los muchachos,' [pero] ahora la gente dice, 'Vamos al CAI, hablemos con el teniente.'" Boris, Interview No. 8.

solve the problems."[69] Many of the people I talked to remembered a time when it could

be dangerous to call the police, because there was a risk that the police might actually

respond — and if there was one thing the muchachos didn't like, it was too much police

attention: they would remind people that they were the ones to go to when there were

problems, not the police. Once the CAI were stationed permanently in the barrio,

however, the community police started proving themselves capable of solving problems

as well, slowly building up trust and credibility. Cristiana said that she herself had

recently gone to the demobilized paras to complain about her son after he had gotten

drunk and hit his sister, but the ex-paras told her that that was not something they would

get involved in: take it to the CAI. "Today, yes, it's the police. There are no

[paramilitary] commanders, at least not for people who aren't one of them," she said,

recognizing that the paras' command structure was still intact despite the

demobilization.[70] It was not clear who was actually in control, the police or the ex-paras,

because while both now regularly patrolled, neither side seemed to be trying to prevent

the other from doing so. But if nothing else, people were beginning to appreciate the

presence of the police; it gave them hope that they might one day be able to feel

completely secure and not so abandoned by the state.

One thing that had not changed much, several residents mentioned, was

intrafamiliar violence, both physical and sexual. It was not a highly visible problem, but

everyone seemed to know it was widespread. One resident went so far as to say that he

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[69] "… problemas entre vecinos, violencia intrafamiliar, violaciones, drogadicción, entonces por debajo de la mesa la comunidad buscaba a los desmovilizados para que les solucionará los problemas; ellos decían que no los buscarán que ellos no podían solucionar eso." Boris, Interview No. 8.

[70] "Hoy en día sí es la policía, no hay mandos, siempre y cuando no se sea de ellos." 'Cristiana,' Interview No. 9.

thought violence within families had actually increased once people started to lose their fear of the demobilized paras.

Still, the overall quality of life had undeniably improved in Caicedo La Sierra between 2002 and 2007, as it had throughout the city. It was an uneasy peace, with control structures and governance structures both divided between legality and illegality, police patrols and para patrols, JAC presidents and demobilized leaders, coexisting in an uneasy equilibrium that, given the sector's history, was nevertheless a welcome change. "I'd like for people to know about the change we've had here, that it's no longer dangerous, that people are different now," one resident told me, echoing the sentiments of many others. "The barrio changed radically. Why not show the good side the way the documentary showed the bad side? We've worked hard, fighting to change."[71] For the barrio's residents, the only thing that would be worse than the outside world's not learning about how things have improved, would be for fate to put the lie to their hopeful narrative of change, for them to wake up one day to discover that the violence of the past had returned to their barrio. My interviews in Caicedo La Sierra took place in March and April of 2009, just after a shootout in the sector left had several people dead in the streets, and just before some of the rumors about mass graves and threats and disappearances and corruption were turning out to be true after all.

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[71] "Me gustaría que conocieran el cambio que tuvo, que ya no es peligroso, que ya la gente es muy diferente. El barrio cambió radicalmente. ¿Porqué no mostrar la parte buena como el documental que mostró lo malo? … Hemos trabajado, luchando por cambiar." 'Cristiana,' Interview No. 9.

Chapter 7. A Window of Opportunity, Closing Quickly: 2007-2009

The arrest of 'Memín' López was not the only thing that shifted the internal

dynamics of Caicedo La Sierra's underworld in 2008: 'Job' López (no relation to

'Memín') was assassinated on the 28th of July that same year. 'Job' was the former

militant from M-6&7 who had switched sides to La Cañada and then negotiated from

prison M-6&7's conversion to the Metro Bloc before himself becoming a key figure in

the Cacique Nutibara Bloc and one of 'Don Berna' Murillo's most trusted aids (see

§ 5.2). After Cacique Nutibara's demobilization, 'Job' became a spokesman for

Corporación Democracia, the organization formed to represent the demobilized

paramilitaries. By 2006, however, the country's Public Prosecutor's office was

complaining that 'Job' "continues to be a pacifist by day, and a 'patron' who orders

deaths and transactions of arms and drugs by night in vehicles assigned for the

[de]mobilization. … He [has] become a real obstacle to the resocialization of young

people in the comunas, since while they study and work toward a change in their lives

and their families' lives during the day, at night they go back to being thieves and

murderers."[1] A former gangster told a reporter that 'Job' had anyone who did not comply

with his orders killed. "He gave the orders to assassinate a lot of the demobilized people.

He killed them because they were young group leaders who resisted the idea of his giving

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[1] "… continúa siendo un pacifista de día y un 'patrón' que ordena muertes y movimiento de armas y droga en las noches en los vehículos asignados para su movilización *[sic]*. … Se ha convertido en un verdadero obstáculo para la resocialización de los jóvenes en las comunas ya que mientras estudian y son atendidos durante el día para un cambio de vida para ellos y sus familias, en las noches vuelven a ser bandidos y sicarios." Quoted in Mary Luz Avendaño, "En la Mira de Delincuentes," ["In the Sights of Criminals,"] *El Espectador*, 10 August 2008; and Agencia de Prensa IPC, "Nueva Captura en la Corporación Democracia."

them orders." There was a backlash, the gangster said, against his having so much control

over people's lives and over almost all the drug markets in Comuna 8:

> 'Job' started to get a lot of enemies because of how he was. He was really arrogant, egocentric, and he thought of himself as the successor to 'Don Berna.' Things turned bad for him when he started trouble with Julio, a kid from here who people had an appreciation for and imitated. 'Job' lost control and was left with just Las Mirlas, Las Estancias, Villa Liliam, and San Antonio. All that was left was to kick him out and bump him off.[2]

Murillo sent 'Job' to Bogotá to become the national spokesman of Corporación

Democracia. "This was a political move to get him out of the comuna and out of the

city," because he had kept killing other leaders in Comuna 8 amid power struggles,

someone who works on development in Comuna 8 told me.[3] When the chicken came

home to roost in July 2008, it did not come as a great surprise to many people. He died by

an assassin's bullet at a restaurant in Medellín owned by another ex-para, who had

already been arrested and extradited.

Nor was 'Job' López the only demobilized paramilitary the city was having

problems with. The last chapter reviewed some of those problems, including the

intimidation and killing of JAC officers and other community leaders as an effort to win

city contracts, their continuing involvement in the illegal narcotics trade, and the return of

vacunas (protection rackets). By 2008 it was clear that a lot of the narco paras had

demobilized as paras but not as narcos. People in the drug trade have a tendency to

resolve their disputes by killing each other. Between 2004 and 2008, of the 4,200

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[2] "A muchos de los desmovilizados los mandó matar él. Los asesinó porque eran jóvenes con liderazgo en grupos y eran reacios a que él los mandara. … Job comenzó a ganarse varios enemigos por su forma de ser. Era muy arrogante, egocéntrico y se creía el sucesor de Don Berna. Las cosas se le voltearon cuando tuvo problemas con Julio, un muchacho de aquí al que la gente le tiene aprecio y le copia. Job perdió el control y se quedó sólo con los barrios Las Mirlas, Las Estancias, Villa Lilián y San Antonio. No fue sino que lo extraditaran y lo quebraron." Quoted in Mary Luz Avendaño, "En la Mira de Delincuentes."

[3] Diego Ríos, Interview No. 4.

combatants who had demobilized from the Cacique Nutibara and Heroes of Granada

blocs (both belonging to 'Don Berna' Murillo), 237 were killed, 172 were arrested, and

86 were removed from the reinsertion program; another 14 died in the first few weeks of

2009.[4]

Murillo's arrest in October 2005 and his transfer in August 2007 to the middle of

nowhere (a maximum-security prison in Boyacá, far from his area of influence) had

created a vacuum. And narcos abhor a vacuum. In November 2007, National Police

commander General Oscar Naranjo accused Corporación Democracia vice president

Carlos Mario Aguilar Echeverri, known by the alias 'Rogelio,' of having taken control of

the Envigado Office. But Aguilar wasn't the only one hoping to fill the vacuum. Power

struggles were taking place both within the Envigado Office and against other traffickers

who saw in Murillo's absence an opportunity to expand their own networks. Murillo's

former subordinates "didn't have enough power to sustain the monopoly their boss had

achieved," one report observed. "There were confrontations at the end of that year,

initially with the North Valley Cartel and then with the structures of [Daniel Rendón

Herrera,] alias 'Don Mario,' who was trying to position himself as the city's new

'patron.'"[5] Things got even worse after Murillo's extradition in May 2008, and by the end

of that year it was clear that new wars were being fought within, between, and among

groups of demobilized narco paras and groups of narcotraffickers who had never

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[4] Peace and Reconciliation Program (Programa de Paz y Programa de Paz y Reconciliación) figures, cited in Agencia de Prensa IPC, "Medellín, Sin Rumbo Claro en Materia de Seguridad," América Latina en Movimiento, published electronically by Latin American Information Agency (ALAI: Agencia Latinoamericana de Información), http://alainet.org/active/29137 (accessed 28 August 2009).

[5] "… quienes no tuvieron el suficiente poder para sostener el monopolio alcanzado por su jefe. A finales de ese año se registran, inicialmente, enfrentamientos con el cartel del Norte del Valle y luego con estructuras de alias don Mario, quien busca posicionarse como el nuevo 'patrón' de la ciudad." Ibid.

demobilized in the first place. In April 2009, a district attorney in Bogotá claimed

publicly that Corporación Democracia had become the "political arm of Los Paisas, the

rural unit of the Envigado Office."[6]

Los Paisas — the group most closely associated with Murillo's narco paras —

was only one of at least a dozen groups of narcotraffickers from around the country vying

to take control of Murillo's empire. The four most powerful in the country at the time —

or at least the four whose chiefs had the highest rewards being offered by the national

government for their capture — were those operated by: 'Don Mario' Rendón, about

whom we will read more in the next section; Luis Enrique Calle Serna, alias 'Comba'

('Jump Rope'), head of a gang associated with the North Valley Cartel called Los

Rastrojos (The Leftovers), operating mainly on the Pacific Coast; Daniel Barrera Barrera,

alias 'El Loco' ('Madman'), head of the narcotrafficking network that controlled Bogotá

and its surrounding area; and Pedro Oliverio Guerrero Castillo, alias 'Cuchillo' ('Knife'),

a narcotrafficker operating in southern Colombia and former head of the Guaviare Bloc

of the AUC. Of these, only Rendón had been captured as of mid-2009. Among those who

managed to take over significant, and often competing, portions of the Envigado Office's

Medellín network at different points were: 'Rogelio' Aguilar, the former Corporación

Democracia vice president who was arrested and later extradited to the United States the

same day as Murillo; José Leonardo Muñoz Martínez ('Douglas'), who was captured in a

luxury apartment building in the exclusive El Poblado neighborhood of Medellín in April

2009; Mauricio Cardona López ('Yiyo'), who negotiated his surrender and extradition

directly with the United States in July 2009; and Erick Vargas ('Sebastian'), Maximiliano

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[6] "… brazo político de la banda los Paisas, componente rural de la oficina de Envigado." Quoted in
Agencia de Prensa IPC, "Nueva Captura en la Corporación Democracia."

Bonilla Orozco ('Valenciano'), and Jader Botero ('Gancho,' or 'Hook'), all of whom

were still at large in mid-2009 (and one or more of whom were rumored in July to be

secretly negotiating with the United States as well). In Caicedo La Sierra, the main fight

was between traffickers associated with 'Memín' López's organization and those

associated with 'Don Mario' Rendón's network, which by 2008 was starting to win

control of the territory in upper Caicedo La Sierra formerly occupied by the Metro Bloc

(and by M-6&7 before that).[7]

Medellín Mayor Alonso Salazar Jaramillo, in comments to the press following

'Job' López's assassination in July 2008, said that the ex-para had "never really

disassociated himself from criminal activities — it's a reality that can't be hidden —

we're not talking about a hero of peace."[8] It was the first time Salazar — either as mayor

or as a top official within his predecessor's administration — had ever admitted in public

that a demobilized paramilitary leader was anything other than demobilized: previously

he had always insisted that those accusing the ex-paras offer conclusive evidence,

something few had been willing to provide given the danger inherent in doing so. Now he

was publicly vindicating those accusers, and the signal to the underworld was

unmistakable: Not only had the national government given up on the reinsertion process

— it had been President Uribe's decision to extradite the narco paras to the United States

two months earlier — but now the city government had given up on the process, too: the

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[7] Information in this paragraph was extracted from dozens of articles published in the Colombian periodicals *Semana, El Tiempo, El Colombiano,* and *El Espectador* between April and July 2009. Because some of those articles cite incorrect or contradictory facts, I have tried to corroborate each piece of information in this paragraph from at least two independent sources.

[8] "Él realmente nunca se desvinculó de las actividades delictivas, es una realidad que no se puede ocultar, no se trata de un héroe de la paz." Quoted in Juan Diego Restrepo E., "¿Por Qué Crece la Violencia en Medellín?," *Semana*, 11 August 2008.

ex-paras involved in crime could now be expected to be treated like criminals instead of prodigal sons or "heroes of peace." Any pacts that had been agreed to — whether the rumored secret pacts to control violence, or the known public pacts for the reinsertion process — were no longer in effect. Murillo had been extradited in May 2008, and so his illicit network was up for grabs nationwide; his deputy 'Job' López had just been assassinated in July 2008, so his illicit network was up for grabs in Medellín; and López's deputy 'Memín' had been arrested in May 2008, so his illicit network was up for grabs in Caicedo La Sierra. At all three levels, *of course* violence was going to increase.

7.1. Medellín: Dark Forces and Black Eagles

There had been rumors about mass graves on the outskirts of the city for years. As early as 2004 a demobilized paramilitary was testifying to prosecutors that a lot of the city's forced disappearances over the previous few years had involved taking people from their homes to areas where other victims had been buried, and killing and burying them at the grave site. In late 2008, the city began searching for those mass graves, and discovered some just outside of Comuna 13 in the West and others near Comuna 8 in the East. Others were still being sought as of mid-2009.[9] The mass graves were understood to contain the remains of people killed by armed actors on all sides of the conflict going back 20 or 30 years.[10] "It's like a cemetery up there," one resident of La Sierra told a

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[9] Juliana Eusse Guerra, "No Hay Técnica para Hacer Exhumación en Comuna 13," ["There Is No Technique for Comuna 13 Exhumations,"] *El Colombiano,* 20 August 2009.

[10] Agencia de Prensa IPC, "En Medellín, Bosque Del Barrio La Sierra Es Un Cementerio," ["In Medellín, the Woods in Barrio La Sierra Are a Cemetery,"] published electronically by Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC), http://www.ipc.org.co/page/index.php?option=com_content&task=view &id=1362&Itemid=368 (accessed 27 April 2009); Juan Diego Restrepo E., "Desenterrar la Verdad de las Laderas de Medellín," ["Unearthing the Truth on the Outskirts of Medellín,"] *Semana*, 21 November 2008.

research and advocacy organization, referring to the unpopulated area just across the border from the barrio. "Over there in the woods, they buried people they took from nearby barrios because they hadn't paid their *vacuna* or … because they were believed to be guerrillas. There's man up there from La Sierra who used to have a store and they killed him because he refused to pay the muchachos."[11]

Fear never fully went away in the city's peripheral barrios, even during the period of peace known as the Medellín Miracle. During those years, the fear had been counterbalanced, and during the best of those times perhaps even suppressed, by hope. But in 2007 the balance started shifting again, almost imperceptibly, and by the end of 2008, a rise in threats and extortion, persistent rumors of beatings and mysterious disappearances, and reminders of the past being dug up from the mass graves all started fraying the nerves of those who were paying attention (many chose not to pay attention and thereby kept the fear at bay).

As early as 2006 people were starting to talk about "dark forces," violence taking place against people who somehow had gotten on somebody's wrong side.

> Passenger carriers who operate in the informal sector and offer their services to thousands of customers from different barrios in Comuna 13 have been the objects of beatings by what they call "dark forces" for at least seven months. "As informal carriers they walk all over us and one thing they resort to is the use of 'dark forces.' They show up, intimidate our drivers, take them away, and deliver beatings and threats," said one director who asked that his name be withheld. He admits that those cases

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[11] "Eso allá arriba es como un cementerio. … En ese bosque enterraban la gente que sacaban de los barrios cercanos porque no pagaban vacuna o, como en el caso de los tres morenos, porque se creía que eran guerrilleros. Allá está un señor de La Sierra que tenía una tienda y lo mataron porque se negaba a pagarle a los muchachos." Quoted in Agencia de Prensa IPC, "En Medellín, Bosque del Barrio La Sierra Es un Cementerio."

will go unpunished because they can't be reported. The fear is that their drivers will get killed.[12]

During my field research, I encountered a lot of professed ignorance over who those dark forces represented. People might have had a general idea that they were associated with the demobilized paramilitaries or with gangsters who had never demobilized but who nonetheless had been relatively inactive in recent years. During the more violent times, at least people usually knew who the perpetrators were, because those perpetrators were fighting to control territory — under the assumption that micro-territorial control, and in many cases social control within that micro-territory, would facilitate access to local illicit markets — and it's very difficult to control territory and the people and resources in it without revealing your identity. Now, however, the fights didn't seem to be over territorial control or social control. Now, at least in Medellín, the fights seemed to be simply over access to illicit markets — drug houses, smuggling routes, extortion rackets, and so on — and over control of only those people involved in those markets. In that situation, not only is it possible to conceal one's identity, it also is beneficial to do so. And so, in the face of this unknown, a lot of people started getting anxious about what these incidents might portend: the balance of fear and hope was beginning to shift in favor of the unwelcome emotional state.

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[12] "Transportadores de pasajeros que operan en la informalidad y que prestan sus servicios a miles de usuarios de diversos barrios de la Comuna 13 son objeto de golpizas por parte de lo que ellos llaman 'fuerzas oscuras,' desde hace por lo menos siete meses. 'Como transportadores informales nos atropellan bastante y uno de los recursos es la utilización de "fuerzas oscuras." Ellos llegan, amedrentan a nuestros conductores, se los llevan y nos los entreguen golpeados y amenazados,' cuenta un directivo que pidió la reserva de la fuente. Admite que esos casos quedan en la impunidad porque no se puede denunciar. El temor es que les maten a varios conductores." Juan Diego Restrepo E., "Con Palizas Se Impone el Control Social en Comunas de Medellín," ["Social Control Imposed with Beatings in Medellín's Comunas,"] published electronically by Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC), http://www.ipc.org.co/page/index.php ?option=com_content&task=view&id=800&Itemid=368 (accessed 28 August 2009).

Despite the professed ignorance of the identities of the perpetrators of violence, by the end of 2008 it was pretty clear to the city's and the country's legal authorities that the main dispute in Medellín was between the demobilized paramilitaries formerly associated with Murillo's network — the Envigado Office, the Cacique Nutibara Bloc, Corporación Democracia, Los Paisas, and the rest — and groups of narcotraffickers associated with the networks partially coordinated by 'Don Mario' Rendón, who in other parts of the country was known to be leading or coordinating some of the most dangerous "bacrim" — *bandas criminales emergentes,* or emerging crime gangs — in the country. These were a new generation of armed actor, whose operations and tactics very much resembled those of the AUC but whose ideology had almost nothing to do with guerrillas and almost everything to do with cocaine: controlling drug markets, trafficking groups, and territories possessing coca farms, processing facilities, or smuggling routes. Many of these bacrim (including some not controlled by Rendón) had started calling themselves Águilas Negras, or Black Eagles, in 2006, and by mid-2007 there were at least 22 such groups operating in 200 municipalities in 22 departments throughout the country, including Antioquia. Some might have been new groups formed specifically as "Black Eagles," but most were existing trafficking or narco para groups that — in much the way existing, independent paramilitaries started calling themselves "blocs" of the AUC in 1997 — simply started calling themselves "Black Eagles" to make them seem like they had more of a national reach than they did. In reality, most operated locally and were threats mostly to locals — but they were very serious threats to locals.[13] One of Rendón's groups named itself in a way that hinted at its narco para roots: Autodefensas Gaitanistas

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[13] Semana, "¿Qué Son las Águilas Negras?," ["What are the Black Eagles?,"] 18 August 2007.

de Colombia (AGC: Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia).[14] Its emergence was announced in pamphlets that appeared in October 2008 in one part of the country, and soon a handful of affiliated groups were appearing all over the country.

'Don Mario' Rendón was born in the same village as the Castaño brothers, and he grew up knowing the family well. He and his brother, Freddy Rendón Herrera ('El Aleman,' or 'The German'), founded a paramilitary group that later joined the AUC as the Élmer Cárdenas Bloc, which operated in northern Colombia until its demobilization in August 2006. But 'Don Mario' Rendón, who had been his brother's deputy, was not among the more than 1,500 combatants who demobilized with Freddy.[15] Instead, between the demobilization of Cacique Nutibara in 2003 and that of Élmer Cárdenas in 2006, Rendón built up a major drug-trafficking army and took advantage of Murillo's absence to expand his control of the production zones and trafficking routes in the northern and western parts of the country. In 2008, he was the most wanted among the four most-wanted narcotraffickers in Colombia, and the increase in homicides Medellín experienced during the last few years of the study period was widely attributed mainly to the presence of his network in the city (although there were others as well), as he fought for access to the narcotrafficking resources left behind by 'Don Berna' Murillo.

But 'Don Mario' Rendón and a couple dozen of his men were captured on 15 April 2009. The government's hunt for him was so intense that at the time of his capture he had been reduced to hiding in a tiny space — barely large enough for a mat to

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[14] The name refers to Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala, the populist presidential candidate whose assassination in 1948 sparked a wave of violence that turned into La Violencia, a civil war that lasted more than a decade. Gaitán partisans take offense at the AGC's use of his name.

[15] VerdadAbierta.com, "Las Auc."

sleep on — next to a tree that had been surrounded by logs; the pictures of his hiding

place brought to mind the hole in the ground where Saddam Hussein had been captured

in Iraq in December 2003. Rendón's capture led some analysts to consider how far the

government had come in its ability to capture major drug traffickers — forcing them into

less hierarchical and more diffuse arrangements that nearly guaranteed an increase in

tensions among the nodes of the network — and how far the traffickers had fallen since

the heady days of the Cali and Medellín cartels:

> What happens today is that the "useful life" of the drug barons is shorter
> and shorter. The fragmentation of the business had caused internecine
> fights to be to the death. Some of those who are considered the top chiefs
> of the mafias have died at the hands of their own men.[16]

Others, more and more every year, were getting captured by the Colombian security

forces. Soon after Rendón's capture, the newsweekly *Semana* published a chart outlining

the number of years different traffickers had spent as head of their respective

organizations. The Cali Cartel's leaders had lasted 15-17 years and the Medellín Cartel's,

13-15 years; the next-generation North Valley Cartel's leaders lasted just four or five

years; and the ones who emerged after 'Don Berna' Murillo's arrest, including 'Don

Mario' Rendón, lasted just a year and half to two years.[17] Moreover, the narcotraffickers

of the current generation are not parastatal entities whose interests are aligned with those

of the state, despite the efforts of some such groups to claim otherwise. (AGC had

publicly claimed its objective was to protect citizens from guerrillas, but nobody believed

them: AGC was making too many drug deals with the guerrillas' own traffickers.) Today,

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[16] "Lo que ocurre ahora es que la 'vida útil' de los capos es cada vez menor. La atomización del negocio ha hecho que las luchas intestinas sean a muerte. Algunos de los considerados mayores jefes de la mafia murieron a manos de sus propios hombres …." Semana, "El Terror de los Malos," ["The Terror of the Villains,"] 18 April 2009.

[17] Semana, "La 'Vida Útil' de los Capos," ["The 'Useful Life' of the Capos,"] 21 April 2009.

the state both officially opposes the ex-paras and the bacrim (as it had the AUC) and more often than not opposes them in practice as well (as was definitely not the case with the AUC). There are exceptions, of course: the belief is widespread that many officials at all levels of government have been corrupted by narcotrafficking money or fooled by narco paras claiming to be counterinsurgents. And the recent rise in violence has many concerned about a return to the bad days. But the bottom line is that the trend in the past 25 years, and especially in the past decade, has been mostly positive with respect to the government's capacity and willingness to counter nonstate armed actors.

There is a very high risk, however, that the real progress that has been achieved since the quiet reforms of the Pastrana era began showing public results during the Uribe era, could be overshadowed by the challenges that remain. Some state actors might panic in the face of rising violence and either: quietly and illegally ally themselves with one side in the fight as a way of trying to control the violence, as many military and police units and individuals had done with gangs and paramilitaries up through the early 2000s (and as some are widely suspected of continuing to do today); or very publicly and very unwisely overreact to the threat in such a way that it leads to widespread abuses against the civilian population (against both "suspects" and innocent bystanders), as has happened repeatedly throughout Colombia's history. Neither approach, the experience in Medellín has shown, is likely to achieve lasting peace: the first would legitimize the use of violence by nonstate armed actors and thereby prolong their "useful life," and the second would delegitimize or, worse, illegitimize state actors as enforcers and promoters of social and political order and thereby forestall or reverse their consolidation of control and ability to govern.

During the Miracle period, the lull in violence gave state actors at the city, department, and national levels an opportunity to prove themselves capable of breaking the patterns of failure, corruption, and abuse to which many of their predecessors had become accustomed. Where there has been success in this regard, the result has been a virtuous cycle in which success has bred support, which has created the conditions for further success. The temptation on the part of many state actors to fall back into the old patterns will become increasingly acute in the next few years if the present trends in violence continue.

Over the weekend of 27-31 March 2009, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB or, in Spanish, BID: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo) held its 50th anniversary board meeting in Medellín. It was probably the most important international conference to take place in Medellín in the city's history, at least its recent history. No expense was spared, no effort neglected, to make certain the meeting would leave all attendees with a positive impression of the city's progress. While some international media had been publishing articles about the Medellín Miracle for a few years, this weekend promised to have the highest concentration of international media in the city since homicides began falling in 2003. The opportunity for good press — and the international investment that surely would follow — had never been better. The organizers were not disappointed by the outcome. Only the international leftist press — there to cover both the IADB conference and the international antiestablishment counter-conference that took place the same weekend — gave the city bad press, and although in some respects its coverage was more honest (if rather exaggerated) about the challenges that remained, its international readership was generally limited to the choir it had already

been preaching to. Most of the mainstream coverage generally reported the official version of events, attributing the city's peace to a successful peace process followed by a series of good-governance reforms and investments in social development and major infrastructure in poor communities.[18]

Three days after the meeting was over and the international press was gone, Medellín suffered a spree of violence reminiscent of the days of Cacique Nutibara, even the days of Pablo Escobar. Between Friday, 3 April, and Tuesday, 7 April, 31 people were killed in confrontations and executions among gangs and mafia figures. Four months later, homicide figures for the first seven months of the year were released: 1,043 people were murdered between 1 January 2009 and 31 July 2009, almost exactly the number of people who had been killed in all of 2008. The homicide rate had returned almost to 2003 levels.[19]

The Medellín Miracle was over.

7.2. Caicedo La Sierra: Rising Fear amid Hope for the Future

7.2.1. The Fear of Strangers Returns

It has long been the case in Caicedo La Sierra, as in other neighborhoods on Medellín's periphery, that people would get anxious when they saw someone strange

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[18] For a typical example, see Chris Kraul, "Medellin Has Undergone Renaissance: City Has Cleaned Up and Homicides Down 90 Percent," The Boston Globe, published electronically by Boston.com, http://www.boston.com/news/world/latinamerica/articles/2009/03/29/medellin_has_undergone_renaissance (accessed 29 March 2009). The official story of Medellín's success was published in a booklet handed out at the conference: Gerard Martin, et al., *Medellín: Transformación de Una Ciudad*.

[19] Secretaría de Gobierno Municipal de Medellín, Subsecretaría de Orden Civil, Unidad de Convivencia Ciudadana.

entering their community, because strangers often presaged an outbreak of violence. One community leader told a story about a woman she knew who was in the process of selling her car to a pharmacist in the barrio, when three strange men showed up and said they wanted to buy it instead. She didn't recognize them, so she told them she wanted to call her husband to ask for his guidance. Instead, she called one of the "muchachos" (presumably an ex-para leader), who came immediately to check out what was going on. When the strangers saw the muchacho arriving, two of them took off, while the third stayed behind to talk. It turned out they were from an outside gang that was trying to infiltrate the neighborhood. "So, you know, the community … you live [here] a lot of years, you more or less know people, you know when someone's a stranger. … So the community would say that there's someone, like, strange here, and hell would break loose. You have to be careful with the people who come in."[20] She told another story about a strange man who was seen walking up Sugarloaf Hill (Cerro Pan de Azúcar) with a young girl from the barrio:

> As I said, when the community sees someone unknown … you know, you're a man and you're taking a little girl by the hand up some path, so, where you going with that girl? So the community saw that and said to a few kids, "That guy went up around that side, go check out what's going on." So they went and the man had already gone some distance, and just as the kids arrived he was about to rape the girl. So what did they do? They contacted the [community police] station at Villatina and handed the man over to the police, because the community also helps out, because if the community doesn't help out we're not going to be able to do anything. We'd be like, any old person coming into whatever barrio doing whatever they wanted.[21]

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[20] "Entonces como la comunidad … viva muchos años, usted mas o menos conoce las personas, usted conoce cuando alguien es extraño. … Entonces la comunidad misma decía, hay alguien como extraño. Entonces ya se regaba la bola, hay que poner cuidado quien esta viniendo." 'Flavia,' Interview No. 15.

[21] "Hace como dos años hubo un señor que se metió con una niña y lo vieron cerro arriba de Pan de Azúcar. Como yo te decía, cuando la comunidad ve a alguien que no es conocido … pues si vos sos un señor y llevas de la mano una niña y te estas entrando por un camino, entonces ¿pa' donde vas con esa niña?

As my research assistant and I had discovered when word on the street got quickly to Ernesto, during my interview with Cristiana, that a couple of strangers were hanging around and he arrived to find out what we were doing in the barrio (see § 6.2), the communities in Caicedo La Sierra were ever-vigilant.

That vigilance, and the tensions that were giving rise to it, was growing as violence in the sector was intensifying. In February 2009, just a few weeks before my interviews with Cristiana, Ernesto, and the others, the Organization for Peace and Social Development (Corpades: Corporación para la Paz y el Desarrollo Social) warned city officials that "the situation in the barrios La Sierra, Las Mirlas, Las Estancias, and Villa Turbay [has gotten] very serious now that armed violence has left a death toll of three murders and five injuries in less than one month."[22] Then in early April, a few days after the IADB conference had ended, came the city's most violent weekend since the demobilization of the Cacique Nutibara Bloc. That's around the time when people started telling me that it probably was not safe for me to continue my field research in Caicedo La Sierra: strangers had always been considered a threat and, in the past, would often be shot on sight, without the niceties that Ernesto had offered: asking first. Then in May 2009, 'Don Mario' Rendón was captured in northern Antioquia close to the Caribbean coast. By this point in Medellín's history, everybody knew full well what happens when

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Entonces la comunidad vio eso y le dijo a unos jóvenes, ese señor se entro por eso lado, mire a ver que pasa. Entonces se fueron y el señor ya llevaba un trayecto, cuando ya llegaron preciso, y iba a violar la niña. Entonces, ¿que hicieron ellos? Se comunicaron con la estación de Villatina y le entregaron al señor a la policía, porque la comunidad también ayuda, porque si la comunidad no ayuda no podemos hacer nada, Estaríamos cualquiera entrando a cualquier barrio a hacer lo que quisieran." Ibid.

[22] "… la situación de los barrios La Sierra, Las Mirlas, Las Estancias y Villa Turbay es demasiado grave ya que la violencia armada deja en menos de un mes una cifra fatal de tres muertos y cinco heridos." Juan Carlos Monroy G., "Alcaldía niega denuncias sobre comuna 8" ["Mayor's Office Denies Allegations about Comuna 8"], *El Colombiano,* 20 February 2009.

the head of a major trafficking organization is captured: his subordinates and adversaries start fighting for control over his assets, and violence soon rises. Don Mario had won some assets in upper Caicedo La Sierra, and the expectation was that the violence would now get worse. That's when people told me that, from that point forward, I would be endangering my interview subjects by being seen with them in the barrio: in the past, the local muchachos would threaten or kill residents for interacting with outsiders, under the assumption that they were acting as informants for infiltrators trying to take over territory, drug markets, or local extortion rackets.

I had interviewed not quite as many people as I had planned, and did so during a period when it was safe for them to talk to me. With the interviews I had managed to do by that point, I was already hearing a reasonably consistent story, which I have since been able to corroborate with other sources. That story is the one I have told here. But with the security situation now having reached a turning point, and with warnings that doing further interviews in those barrios would put people in danger, I decided that what I had would have to suffice. Studying legitimacy amid complex urban violence involves trying to measure a phenomenon that is unobservable in a place that is inaccessible. I had already developed a framework for approximating the unobservable (see Appendix C); and now that I had managed briefly to get relatively free access to the barrio during its most violent period in six years, I was confident that I had captured a coherent approximation of its history and the complex situation that was emerging.

7.2.2. Selective Violence Returns

Soon after the first demobilizations, the city encouraged the demobilized paras to meet with JAC presidents and the leaders of different community organizations. Ernesto, a community leader in Villa Liliam who also headed a community organization, remembered that, at some point, those meetings started becoming coercive, as some of the ex-paras started pressuring the organizations that had city contracts to let them in on the deal.

> At some point in one of those meetings with the social organizations, JAC leaders, [and] community leaders, the [leaders of the ex-paras said]: "Anyone who's here it's because you're with us. Anyone who's not, it's because they don't want to be with us. And anyone who doesn't want to be with us is against us, and if they're against us we'll throw them in the water." Me, I'll never forget those words. Strong-arm politics.[23]

Then the vacunas returned:

> [The gangsters] are still here in small cells. They're not taking any actions as such, nothing abrupt, but they go out in small groups and they're coming up with a new way of making themselves felt in the community. They go around selling tickets every week, just like *vacunas*. They show up at all the stores with a little ticket and [the owners] have to buy them. So, there, they're coming back with illegal activity.[24]

Another resident described a similar problem: "They have people assault us in the streets, rob us in our houses, steal our motorcycles, and when that happens, then they come by

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[23] "En algún momento en una reunión así, a las organizaciones sociales, a los líderes de junta, a los líderes comunitarios, personajes desde esa dirección: 'Quienes están aquí es porque están con nosotros. Quienes no están, es porque no quieren estar con nosotros. Y quien no quiere estar con nosotros está en contra de nosotros, y si esta en contra de nosotros lo tiramos al agua.' A mi no se me olvidan esa palabras. Una política de mostrar poder." 'Ernesto,' Interview No. 14.

[24] "Ellos siguen estando por ahí en pequeñas células. No tienen acción como tal, tan abrupta, sino que salen en pequeños grupitos, y se gesta un nuevo proceso de hacerse sentir ante la comunidad. Ellos andan vendiendo boletas semanal, al estilo de vacunas, a toda tienda le llegan con una boletica y la tienen que comprar. Entonces ahí están contestando con una acción ilegal." Ibid.

and tell us, 'See how dangerous it is? It's best that you pay us.'"[25] The drug sales also returned: The Government Secretary of Medellín was quoted in the press as saying that, "In Comuna 8, more than anywhere else in the city, we have a problem with the gangs fighting over retail drug sales," and that the city was learning about more and more drug markets there.[26] "There are clashes," Ernesto said, "between gangs and those things. So you're starting to see one death, another death, in other words, isolated deaths, and that's generating between them a new phenomenon that's not going away."[27]

People were hesitant to admit that they knew who was responsible for these acts. Or rather, some of the people I interviewed said that other people in the sector didn't know or didn't want to admit that they knew who was responsible, even though they themselves did. "Nobody wants to say who gives the orders," a former resident who currently works on development projects in Caicedo La Sierra told me.[28] Nobody wanted to say who was behind the selective killings or who was fighting in upper Caicedo La Sierra either, he added. A community leader added that the uncertainty was creating a lot of anxiety in the sector:

> But currently there's a little anxiety, not just here in the barrio or in the comuna, but in Medellín, about what's happening. So the community asks me, "But what's going on?" They've said that to me. "We must be going

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[25] "Ellos tienen a quienes nos asalten en las calles, nos roben en nuestras casas, nos hurten las motos, y cuando eso pasa, entonces vienen y nos dicen: ¿ven cómo hay de inseguridad? Lo mejor es que nos paguen a nosotros." Quoted in Juan Diego Restrepo E., "Con Palizas Se Impone el Control Social en Comunas de Medellín."

[26] "En la Comuna 8, más que en toda la ciudad, tenemos un problema con los combos que se disputan la venta de droga al detal. Hemos detectado muchas casas de vicio." Quoted in Mary Luz Avendaño, "En la Mira de Delincuentes."

[27] "Hay choques … entre bandas y esas cosas. Entonces empieza a ver un muerto, otro muerto, es decir muertes aisladas, y eso genera entre ellos un nuevo fenómeno que no se desaparece." 'Ernesto,' Interview No. 14.

[28] Diego Ríos, Interview No. 4.

back to the time before, when we couldn't walk from one block to another because when we'd least expect it there'd be bullets." Or: "I'm not going to be able to send my kids to school alone. I'm going to have to take them there myself, because anything could happen to them." So there's an anxiety, but the anxiety is because of what I said before, that there are some groups or individuals, because we don't really know who they are, people who want to do some damage to society, to the city. But [it's] for the reason I told you earlier as well: the desire for power.[29]

Of course the desire for power was part of it, but what they were fighting over was access to the sector's illicit markets. And several people I interviewed, even after saying that nobody wanted to say who was responsible for the selective killings, nevertheless repeated the widespread speculation (repeated as well in media accounts) about who it involved. The rising violence was a consequence of the fight between 'Don Mario' Rendón's network and 'Don Berna' Murillo's network, the latter's battle being fought by proxy by 'Job' López and 'Memín' López before their assassination and capture (respectively).[30] But by late 2008, with Murillo, 'Job,' and 'Memín' all out of the picture, it was a fight between Rendón and even lower-level subordinates from the disintegrating Envigado Office. "Since December, Medellín's been having problems with 'Don Mario'," a community leader in La Sierra told me. "They're killing the demobilized paras."[31] (In fact it was rumored that, after 'Job' López's death, one of his aides switched sides and was now helping 'Don Mario' Rendón take control of the area's drug trade.)

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[29] "Pero actualmente hay un poquito de zozobra, no solamente aquí en barrio, ni en la comuna, sino en Medellín, por lo ocurrido. Entonces a mi la comunidad se pregunta, '¿Pero que está pasando?' A mí me lo han dicho. '¿Será que vamos a volver a la época de atrás, donde no podíamos caminar de una cuadra a otra, porque cuando menos pensábamos, bala?' O: 'Mis hijos no voy a poder mandarlos a la escuela solos, porque los tengo que llevar porque les puede pasar alguna cosa.' Entonces hay una zozobra, pero la zozobra es por lo que yo le decía anteriormente, que hay unos grupos o personas, porque nosotros no sabemos en realidad quienes son, que quieren hacerle un poquito de daño a la sociedad, a la ciudad. Pero por lo que yo te decía también: las ganas de poder." 'Flavia,' Interview No. 15.

[30] 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10.

[31] "Medellín desde diciembre viene con problemas con Don Mario. Están matando a los desmovilizados." 'Boris,' Interview No. 8.

Now, since May 2009, with Rendón out of the picture as well, the full local story is simply untold: either it was the case that locals really didn't have any idea who could be behind the most recent wave of killings — all the big names from the previous chapters (plus many others whose inclusion would have needlessly complicated this already complicated story) were all out of the picture as of mid-2009, leaving today's fight mostly to a bunch of mid-level and low-level unknowns — or it was the case that locals really were afraid to admit that they knew who was behind the killings because it had become so dangerous again that saying anything could be deadly.

7.2.3. The Hopes of the Community

Even given the fights over power, the selective killings, the drug trafficking, and the anxiety that by mid-2009 was growing week by week, if one compares the present with what was happening in Caicedo La Sierra ten years ago, one would have to conclude that most residents were living with less worry today than before — although that can change quickly.[32] "It's like a drug market around here. Well, they don't sell it here, they sell it out there, but still," Cristiana said, referring to the drug dealers who lived in the barrio but who, she believed, didn't operate there. Still, she said, "I'm very much at peace, and I don't think anything's going to happen. There have been some things, but as you can see it's just themselves against themselves."[33] (In fact, one police source told a press agency that only 63 percent of the victims of homicides in 2009 were members of

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[32] Ríos, Interview No. 4.

[33] "Por aquí es como una plaza, que no la venden por aquí sino por allá, pero …. Yo tengo mucha tranquilidad y no creo que vaya a pasar nada. Ha habido cosas pero como uno ve que es de los mismos con los mismos." 'Cristiana,' Interview No. 9.

drug gangs: it was not just "themselves against themselves."[34]) She admits it's scary when somebody gets killed, but she goes on with her life. "I don't pay attention to rumors about what's going on with this or that."[35] It seems likely, however, that she would begin paying attention again if those killings reached some unknown "critical mass" in her barrio or if the violence were to touch her family directly.

Young people today, however, seem less interested in the path that leads to more violence, a local school official told me.[36] A community leader also said that young people don't have such a sentimental attraction to the gangs anymore. "Before, they'd get involved with them more, but now it's changed."[37] Another suggested that the community in general, having experience a period of peace, has a strong desire not to regress to more violent times: "When there was so much violence, the community was hit really hard with a lot of resentment, because people who had nothing to do with it passed away."

> So now when all of that ended the community started going out walking around a lot more, getting themselves involved in the story about how these kids now wanted to repair the damage they'd done. So in these seven years there's been a transformation in which the community's progressed a little economically, in education, [and in the fact] that there have been associations formed, organizations that want to get their hands dirty in community work.[38]

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[34] Agence France-Presse, "Venganzas de 'Narcoparamilitares' Disparan Homicidios en Medellín," *MetroLatinoUSA*, 13 July 2009.

[35] "No hacen caso de los rumores de que el que sigue es tal o cual." 'Cristiana,' Interview No. 9.

[36] 'Alicia,' Interview No. 7.

[37] "Antes se metían más con ellos, pero ahora ha cambiado." 'Boris,' Interview No. 8.

[38] "Cuando hubo tanta violencia la comunidad quedó muy golpeada con mucho resentimiento, porque falló gente que nada tenia que ver. Entonces cuando ya acabo todo esto la comunidad empezó a salir mucho más a caminar, a meterse en el cuento de que ya estos jóvenes quisieron reparar el daño que hicieron. Entonces en estos siete años ha habido la transformación de que la comunidad ha progresado un poquito

If one message came through clearly in all of the interviews, it was that the community longed for a *constructive* state presence, not the low-level resources provided through the JACs or the high-intensity police raids of the past, but sustained attention and protection by state actors who understand the importance of respecting the people who lived there. They had been ruled by leftist nonstate armed actors, right-wing nonstate armed actors, and non-political nonstate armed actors, and the experience of living in statelets at war had left them convinced that it was not a sustainable model. They did not necessarily trust state actors, but there were signs that, if nothing else, they were willing to give the state a chance:

> The other issue would be, with regard to the community directly, with regard to the state, governance, the authorities, there has to be — really, the state has to show a real capacity to live [in the community,] approaching all the spaces. I don't see how it's so efficient to have this quantity of police patrolling [just] the main road. There should be a closer relationship … between the community and the authorities. We've seen how hard that is, too, because people still see the authorities as something that represses them. So from there, you'd have to start cultivating other kinds of relationships with the people who are here.[39]

In contrast to how a lot of state authorities were viewed, the increased presence in Caicedo La Sierra of the community police, units of the Immediate Attention Command (CAI: Comandos de Atención Inmediata[40]), seemed to be universally welcomed, at least among those who were not involved in organized crime. In fact, everyone I spoke with

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económicamente, en educación, que ha habido conformaciones de asociaciones, corporaciones que quieren meterle un poquito de mano al trabajo comunitario." 'Flavia,' Interview No. 15.

[39] "Lo otro sería, eso en cuanto a la comunidad directamente, en cuanto al estado, la gobernabilidad, a las autoridades, tiene que haber, realmente, tiene el estado que mostrar una capacidad plena de vivir, abordando todos los espacios. Yo no lo veo tan eficiente de que estén rondando cantidades de policías por una vía principal. Debería haber mas acercamiento … entre la comunidad y la autoridad. También eso lo estamos viendo difícil, porque la gente sigue viendo la autoridad como la que reprime. Entonces desde ahí habría que empezar a gestar otro tipo de relación con la gente que está presente." 'Ernesto,' Interview No. 14.

[40] Sometimes called Immediate Attention Centers (Centros de Atención Inmediata).

agreed that there were too few of them. "That's also a weakness with the police, because they walk around the main roads but nowhere else," one resident said. "The rest [of the streets and alleys] are left very much on their own."[41] That could lead to a fragmentation of control between state and nonstate actors, if the nonstate actors were to decide that controlling the side streets and back alleys would be in their interest; so far they have not, but that could change quickly. Flavia said the community needed a lot more support for security in general. Earlier she had expressed real fear about the witnesses who had testified against her boss, 'Memín' López (see § 6.2.1); clearly there were tensions between them and the people she worked with, and it is likely that she really was in danger. And even though they were the ones who got killed, not she, her point is taken that, with better security for everyone in the barrios, those sorts of disputes would have been much less likely to lead to violence, and there would be much less anxiety about a return to bad times.[42]

Boris, who as a community leader in La Sierra was probably the least hopeful about the future, nevertheless believed that there were three factors that were keeping the situation from getting worse at the moment: "the growth in education, the CAI, and the fact that the community is still working."[43] In other words, education was helping young people envision a life beyond gangs and gang wars; the CAI were giving people a sense of security and somebody other than the ex-paras or other "muchachos" to consult to get help with neighborhood conflicts; and a lot of the community organizations (though not

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[41] "También hay una debilidad de la policía, porque ella camina por las vías principales nada más, y el resto se mantiene muy solo." 'Ernesto,' Interview No. 14.

[42] 'Flavia,' Interview No. 15.

[43] "… el crecimiento de la educación, el CAI y que la comunidad sigue trabajando." 'Boris,' Interview No. 8.

all) were providing essential services without letting themselves get dominated by the ex-paras' own quasi-illicit structures. What might prevent those structures from completely taking over the JACs and the city's contracts in the sector, Boris thought and others agreed, were the fact that the mayor's office was phasing out the practice of giving cash directly to the JACs for city contracts, and that people were starting to view the new ten-year Comprehensive Urban Plans (PUI: Planes Urbanísticos Integrales) as a framework through which to envision what their barrios and their families' lives might look like in the future. The PUIs were funding infrastructure projects that would provide local, manual-labor jobs at least through the planning period. Those were the only kinds of jobs that many people in those barrios were qualified to do, and so having that possibility could give them a broader horizon with which to plan their lives and thereby minimize the anxiety about the future that could be exploited by illicit actors offering quick solutions.[44]

In fact, unemployment was the only factor that everybody I talked to cited as the weakest link in everyone's hopes for sustainable peace. "I think that one of the main problems involving the conflict is the need [for] opportunities, for development, [so they can] live well," Ernesto said.

> Unfortunately, the entire population of these places is really vulnerable. They have really shameful economic levels. Our people's culture isn't "Give me such-and-such" but "Give me a job, help me get a job." So it's really hard, because young people, out of the desperation of hardship, go out in search of whatever opportunity or new income.[45]

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[44] 'Ernesto,' Interview No. 14; 'Boris,' Interview No. 8; 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10.

[45] "Yo pienso que una de las principales problemáticas que conlleva al conflicto es la necesidad de tener oportunidades, para el desarrollo para vivir bien. Desafortunadamente toda la población de estos espacios es muy vulnerable. Tiene unos niveles económico muy lamentables …. La cultura de nuestra gente no es regáleme tal cosa, sino denme empleo, ayúdenme a tener empleo. Entonces eso es complicadísimo, porque

Without legal sources of income, he was suggesting, people would do what they needed to do so they could feed their families. "We all know that the state can't just have a military presence," Danilo said, adding that while people recognized that the state had provided better opportunities for education and other needs, it still needed to help create job opportunities that could contribute more directly to the community and family development.[46] Again, the attitude in the community was that the state would find fertile ground in which to lay down roots should it choose to do so in a long-term, constructive manner: protect them so they could go about their daily lives; give them opportunities and a framework through which they might make long-term plans for their lives; make life safe and predictable, residents and leaders were saying, and the community would have every reason to oppose nonstate armed actors who threatened to disrupt that stability.

I ended some of the heavier interviews with two questions about the future. One of those questions was: What gives you hope that the peace your community has been experiencing might be sustainable? Boris had earlier cited education, the CAI, community work, and the PUI, but in answering this question now, he expressed much more pessimism. The words *hope, expect,* and *wait for* all translate into Spanish as *esperar,* and so while my question asked about *hope,* his response used the same word in the sense of *expectation:* "One is … expecting that they will come for one and kill one," he said, using the local manner of referring to oneself in the third person to express uncomfortable thoughts. He was talking about the fear among many community leaders

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los jóvenes del desespero de la necesidad salen a la búsqueda de cualquier oportunidad o ingreso nuevo." 'Ernesto,' Interview No. 14.

[46] "Sabemos que el Estado no sólo tiene que hacer presencia militar." 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10.

that they might be killed by the ex-paras or others, a fate that many of their colleagues throughout the city had suffered in recent months. Some believed it was just a matter of time. The community leaders had earlier tried to facilitate the reinsertion process in their own barrios, but they just ended up putting themselves and their families at risk for their efforts, and they did not have adequate protection. "We're just really fucking tired of it. At first we thought we had the solution and that we could mediate, but now that one has been burned it's better to just leave it alone, because it's a [crime] syndicate. One is just wasting time with them, because a distinction has to be made [to community members] that I am the facilitator and not [one of them]." With all that has happened, he said, all he can do is "cross one's fingers and see what happens."[47] Others were cautiously optimistic, recognizing that, having lived through a period of peace during which a new generation of young people have had the opportunity to envision a different future, people in the community would make a much stronger effort to prevent a return to the violence of the past, and would be very willing to work closely with whomever could help keep the peace.

At the end of our interview with Ernesto, the community leader who had found out there were strangers interviewing Cristiana and came to investigate, I tried asking him the second question that I was asking people about the future: What would happen if some group other than the state were to appear in Caicedo La Sierra and start offering protection, stability, and opportunities again? Something got lost in my own translation, because he agreed that it would be great to get more support from international

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[47] "Uno está … esperando que vengan por uno y lo maten. … Ya estamos mamados. En un principio creíamos que teníamos la solución y podíamos mediar, pero ahora uno se quema, es mejor dejarlo así porque está sindicado. Se boletea uno con ellos, porque se tiene que diferenciar que estoy de facilitador y no dentro de [ellos]. … Cruzar las manos y dejar que suceda." 'Boris,' Interview No. 8.

nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and investments from abroad. My research

assistant knew what I was getting at, however, and rephrased the question for me: "And if

it weren't a group of international corporations or NGOs, if it weren't so legal, who came

and offered young people a way of making money [for example], do you think the

community could legitimize this group that arrives, because they're solving the

community's problems?"[48] After a brief pause, he answered with equal parts sadness,

resignation, and defiance:

> It could happen. You know, the need is so great that, if there are resources,
> nobody's going to turn down the economic benefit. That's the problem,
> that there are young people without jobs. We've heard it, that they're
> drawing in young people and they're going to pay them 500,000 pesos
> [about $250]. You hear that and right there the enthusiasm starts. I
> personally think that, if that piece of news reaches some high school, all
> the kids will drop out of school. Those things could happen. God, nobody
> wants that to cause new problems with order, but it's very feasible that
> that could happen and that it could be accepted ….[49]

What is interesting is that, while everyone cited unemployment as the main

potential source of instability, their own words and their own history suggested that

unemployment was really just one factor. Unemployment certainly was a problem in

itself: it was causing hunger and anxiety and arguably could have been increasing the

risks of intrafamilial violence (although I have not been able to find reliable evidence to

make this latter judgment with confidence either way). It was the issue that was most

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[48] "Y si no fuera un grupo de corporación internacional o ONGs, que no fuera tan legal, que viniera y ofreciera a los jóvenes una forma de ganar dinero, ¿usted cree que la comunidad puede legitimar ese grupo que llega, porque está solucionando un problema de la comunidad?" In 'Ernesto,' Interview No. 14.

[49] "Puede pasar. Es que la necesidad es tan grande que si hay recursos, nadie se va oponer a un beneficio económico. Ese es el problema, que hay muchos jóvenes desempleados. Nosotros hemos escuchado, es que les están recogiendo los muchachos y le van a pagar de a 500,000 [pesos]. Uno escucha eso y ahí mismo empieza el entusiasmo. Yo personalmente pienso, que si una noticia de esas llega a un colegio, se retiran todos lo pelaos de colegio. Pueden pasar esas cosas. Dios, no quiera que sea generar nuevas problemáticas de convivencia, pero eso es muy factible que pase y que sea aceptado …." 'Ernesto,' Interview No. 14.

salient in their daily lives, so it makes sense that they would attribute any potential for the rise in violence to that particular challenge. But its actual role with respect to the factors that had contributed to a rise in violence in the past had always been more instrumental than fundamental: it contributed to the more generalized problem of unpredictability that has caused them to resent (and illegitimize) whomever was in charge at the time. Without reliable employment, one cannot know where one's next meal is coming from or how one is going to pay the bills. When, on top of that, there has been a deficiency in physical security and public order as well, then their lives have been filled with so much uncertainty that they have been willing to accept help from whatever entity credibly promised a return to order: and that is what has led to violence associated with contests for territorial control and subsequently for the right to rule. In short, unemployment and insecurity have been "bads" in themselves; but they have also been factors of unpredictability, which has been instrumental to illegitimacy, which has activated violent disputes over territorial control.

Physical security and social order provide the context for a predictable life, and the groups that have managed to control statelets in Caicedo La Sierra for any length of time have been those who were able to provide the context for a predictable life. Once that changed, once people no longer knew what to expect on a daily basis — were no longer confident that going to the store or walking their children to school would not result in death, injury, or theft — then the loss of predictability was soon followed by violence leading to the loss of territorial control. Groups with relatively few resources have had to provide more than mere predictability: they have had to attend to the community's values — learn them, promote them, enforce them — and to do so in a way

that was seen as fair or equitable or accessible. Once that changed, once the group in control could no longer use community values to win voluntary support (and since it did not have the resources to barter for that support), its loss of legitimacy, and then its illegitimation, was soon followed by violence leading to its loss of territorial control.

If the state had and were willing to invest the resources into addressing unemployment and poverty in Caicedo La Sierra, and in Medellín's historically violent peripheral barrios more generally, it would have been in a position easily to buy the loyalty of the communities in Caicedo La Sierra. Although there were long-term plans in place to make such investments in the future, adequate resources were not immediately available as of mid-2009 (and, in fact, were probably insufficient beyond then as well). But in mid-2009 security forces were arriving in those barrios in numbers that were alarming to some human rights activists, whose views of the security forces were of people who commit or permit atrocities: they were referring to the recent increase in troops as the "militarization" of the peripheral barrios. However fair or unfair their characterization of the situation, the point is taken that, whatever else the security forces would do there, if the state's goal were to keep violence at *sustainably* low levels, they would need to have a presence that would be capable not only of targeting criminals and other illicit actors but capable as well of protecting residents and providing them a context for a predictable life. But not just *capable* of protecting them: actually protecting them, respecting them, and giving them opportunities to plan out their days, their weeks, and — if, against history, a constructive state presence could be sustained — their futures.

Part II. Analysis and Conclusions

> *... there has never been an example in Colombia of a para-statal security group that has not ultimately operated with wanton disregard for human rights or been corrupted by local economic interests.*
>
> — *Myles Frechette, U.S. Ambassador to Colombia (1994)*[1]

The epigraph above was from a cable written by officials at the U.S. Embassy in Colombia who were concerned about the potential destabilizing effects of the Colombian government's Convivir proposal, which was to allow for the creation of "special vigilance and private security services" in areas where state security forces were too weak to protect people from guerrillas and criminals (see Chapter 5). The cable just as easily could have been referring to the Coosercom program, which allowed demobilized guerrillas to provide security services (see § 4.1.2), or to the Colombian state's reliance on paramilitary groups to maintain public order amid civil war (see Chapters 5-6). In Colombia's recent history, where there has been a legal framework for regulating the behavior of such groups, as in the case of Convivir and Coosercom, the state has never provided the resources or oversight needed to adequately enforce the regulations and laws or ensure that the groups would actually try to accomplish the government program's objectives. Where there has been no such legal framework because the relationships have been illegal, as in the case of *de facto,* off-duty, or official-secret support for the

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[1] American Embassy Bogotá, "Botero Human Rights Letter to A/S Shattuck," 9 December 1994, cable to United States Department of State, published electronically by The National Security Archive, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB217/doc01.pdf (accessed 30 June 2009).

paramilitaries, the state has rarely had the political will or the resources to prevent those

relationships or to mitigate the harms and abuses that inevitably would result from them.

In all cases, even where some short-term objective has actually been achieved (and it

often has not even accomplished that much), it has come at the expense of the long-term

stability and the legitimacy of state actors in the areas under the control of the nonstate

armed actors — not to mention at the expense of the security of unarmed local

populations.

Likewise, the state's management of its various demobilization, disarmament, and

reinsertion (DDR) programs can be described at best as unfulfilled promises and at worst

as unmitigated disasters. The observation, quoted earlier, that "Colombians have acquired

the status of serial demobilizers," is worth repeating:

> The process has become ritualized: cease-fires are declared and
> negotiators assemble in jungle clearings. After violations carried out by
> renegade elements on both sides, insurgents eventually mass in designated
> areas. Amid proclamations before an assembled international press that
> Colombia has, at last, turned the corner in its long history of armed
> violence, weapons are surrendered and peace declared. So far … [this
> history] has merely transitioned, rather than terminated, violence … for
> the same reasons: the state lacks the power and legitimacy to enforce the
> agreements and the resources to integrate demobilized fighters into the
> legitimate economy. As a result, enough bad actors remain to carry the
> violence forward.[2]

The problem is that the state has been negotiating its demobilization frameworks from a

position of weakness (or corruption); allowing the disarmaments to involve mainly

broken and unloved weapons; providing far too few resources for what is perhaps the

most important step, the reintegration of the demobilized and disarmed combatants; and

attending inadequately to the demands of victims, who have far outnumbered combatants

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[2] Douglas Porch and María José Rasmussen, "Demobilization of Paramilitaries in Colombia."

(and many combatants had themselves been victims who took up arms in self-defense or revenge).

Beneath both of Colombia's main traditional approaches for dealing with the problem of violence — arming nonstate actors in an effort to achieve victory, or disarming nonstate actors in an effort to achieve peace — lies an ignorance about how these efforts might affect either the communities in which violence emerges or the dynamics of legitimacy between and among community, state, and nonstate actors. Ignoring either in the past has proven fatal to the long-term success of these and other policies. In Part II of this thesis, I hope to demonstrate that, instead of ignoring them, explicitly accounting for them in policy might improve the chances of long-term success. Chapter 8 describes the patterns of complex violence as they evolved in Medellín between 1984 and 2009. It is intended to answer the first of this study's three research questions: what were the patterns of violence in Medellín? Chapter 9 analyzes the dynamics of the legitimacy or the illegitimacy of nonstate armed actors, community actors, and state actors in Medellín. That chapter is intended to answer the second two research questions: what explains the patterns of violence in Medellín, and what role did legitimacy or illegitimacy play? Finally, Chapter 10 lays out the study's findings and disusses their implications in terms of some general propositions that might be tested in the future for their relevance to theory and policy.

Chapter 8. Complex Violence in Medellín

Medellín had been chosen as a case study of the relationship between legitimacy and violence for two main reasons: First, it was a perfect example of the kind of place where many different kinds of policy problems involving violence were active: terrorism (car bombings, drive-by shootings, massacres), insurgency (guerrillas, urban militias), paramilitaries (vigilantes, death squads, social cleansing), transnational crime (drug and arms trafficking), organized crime, human rights abuses, gang warfare, humanitarian emergencies, and so on. Second, it had experienced a dramatic decline in most forms of violence in just a few short years — a phenomenon so rare that some were calling it the "Medellín Miracle" — making it both an important case to study (what explains the Medellín Miracle?) and a practical case to study (an outsider could live there safely). It turned out, however, to be an even more interesting place to study than expected: during my ten months of field research, it became clear that violence was rising again. The study therefore became a question of what has caused the patterns of violence to change there in the 25 years that violence has been the city's most salient policy problem.

Before one can explain any changes in the patterns of violence in Medellín, however, one needs to begin by characterizing those patterns, and that is what this chapter endeavors to do: describe Medellín's complex violence.

Violence, for the purposes of this study, is any behavior that causes one or more human beings death, bodily injury, physical pain, psychological trauma, suffering, or fear. Violence is manifested in two main ways: physically and psychologically. *Physical*

violence is any behavior that involves physically touching the victim — whether directly (beating, striking, shoving, etc.) or indirectly (throwing, launching, initiating, etc., as with a weapon, fire, energy, sound waves, etc.) — in a way that causes the victim pain, injury, death, trauma, suffering, or fear. *Psychological violence* is any behavior that does not involve physically touching the victim but that nevertheless causes the victim to experience trauma, suffering, or fear. In other words, both manifestations of violence can result in psychological reactions — trauma, suffering, and fear — but only physical violence can result in pain, injury, or death as well.

In addition to these two *manifestations* of violence, all violence takes place in a particular *context* that can affect both the severity of the victim's psychological response and, often, the brutality of the violent act itself. That context has to do with the relationship between victim and perpetrator, the motivations underlying the act of violence, or both. This implies three levels of analysis: the individual level, the interpersonal level, and the collective level.

Taking place at the *individual* level is *self-inflicted violence,* which involves only one person, who is both perpetrator and victim. Its most common physical manifestations are self-mutilation, suicide, and suicide attempts. Self-inflicted psychological violence often derives from mental illness and can include drug abuse and addiction, participation in extremely risky behaviors such as erotic asphyxiation and anonymous promiscuity, eating disorders such as anorexia, or self-neglect that leads to infectious disease or unsustainable weight loss or weight gain.

Violence at the *interpersonal* level involves one or two perpetrators acting against one or more victims with whom they either are intimately related (as family members,

life partners, close friends, etc.) or are passing acquaintances or strangers. *Intrafamilial violence* is interpersonal violence that takes place inside the home or among close relatives or acquaintances (including spousal abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, pedophilia, date rape, etc.), while *communal violence* involves one or two perpetrators acting against one or more victims whom they may or may not know, and it may take place in someone's home, on the street, at a commercial property, or in some other public area (this includes most categories of common, rather than organized, crime: robbery, assault, rape, etc.). Note that this usage of the term *communal* differs from that used by some conflict researchers who use *communal conflict* or *intercommunal conflict* in a way that is similar to how I use *collective violence.* To avoid confusion, I will usually use the terms *interpersonal-communal* or *intrafamilial-communal* violence, but even without the modifiers the reader should keep my intended meaning in mind throughout this work.

Violence at the *collective* level involves one or more perpetrators, who are members of an identifiable group, acting against one or more victims for social, economic, or political reasons. Collective violence is *social violence* if the group is a social (ethnic, linguistic, religious, etc.) group, formed for reasons of affection, common interest, common history, or identity (such as youth gangs, street gangs, civic associations, ethnic mobs, etc.) and if the act of violence is committed to enforce respect, express pride in the in-group, express disdain for an out-group (such as a competing gang or a different racial or ethnic group), to defend or acquire territory for the purpose of social control, or to punish members for violating in-group rules, among other reasons. Collective *economic violence* involves any group formed for the primary purpose of making money, whether from the sale of goods or services (legal or illegal) or by theft or

fraud, which includes most organized crime groups and other criminal conspiracies: mafias, drug traffickers, money launderers, assassins for hire, crime rings, racketeers, and otherwise legitimate business managers using violence to coerce or enforce a cartel or monopoly arrangement or to take or protect assets (as in the forced disappearance of trade-union organizers, or the forced displacement of peasants and the expropriation of their land). Finally, collective *political violence* involves acts committed by one or more members of a group that makes or purports to be making decisions about political goods (e.g. they are doing the job they think a government should be doing), which may include agents of states and governments (police, military, and other security forces) whether acting in their official capacity or not, or may include nonstate or illegal organizations such as paramilitaries, vigilante groups, self-defense groups, militias, or guerrillas. Acts of political violence can include war, assassination, forced displacement, imprisonment, and the forced disappearance of political opponents and human-rights defenders, among other acts. Any given act of collective violence can count as more than one type, such as forcing guerrilla sympathizers off their land for political reasons but expropriating their land for economic reasons.

This framework — two "manifestations" in six "contexts" at three levels — is my modification of a framework developed by the World Health Organization for its study of violence as a public-health problem.[1] The modified framework is discussed in detail in Appendix B; the reader is encouraged to consult that discussion before proceeding. By breaking down and describing the manifestations and contexts of violence, the framework described there and used here is designed to make a study of complex violence tractable.

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[1] Etienne G. Krug, et al., *World Report on Violence and Health*.

Complex violence, as discussed in the introduction of Appendix B, involves multiform armed actors, in networked relationships, with shifting loyalties, and with diverse motives; *complex urban violence* is complex violence that takes place in cities.

This framework was used to guide data collection on complex violence in Medellín, although it was not possible to obtain data for most of the categories of violence. For that and other reasons, this study focuses its analytic attention primarily on interpersonal-communal violence and on the three forms of collective violence, with most attention to their physical manifestations, since quantitative data are available, but some attention to their psychological manifestations as well, to the degree that qualitative data could be derived or inferred. Future work should expand this analysis to include all categories and both manifestations. Even with these limitations, however, the use of this framework made possible a richer description of the patterns of violence in Medellín than had previously been available from other sources.

8.1. Patterns of Violence

This study was not a study of the "decline" in violence in Medellín in the 2000s, nor a study of the "rise and fall" of violence since 1984. Rather, it was a study of the changes in the overall patters of violence in Medellín over five periods of time since 1984. *Patterns of violence* are the changes in either the manifestation of violence (the different physical and psychological forms) or the context of violence (the relationship between victim and perpetrator) over time, either quantitatively (e.g. a decline in homicide rates) or qualitatively (e.g. a shift to displacement instead). A quantitative change is the number or severity of incidents of violence or of the results of violence,

such as the amount of fear people report, within the populations under study. A qualitative change is a shift in the form that violent acts take within that population, such as the shift in emphasis (during the 2003-2007 period when homicides declined) away from physical violence and towards psychological violence.

In an effort to understand both the national context and the local details of the violence taking place in Medellín, I tried to obtain data (both quantitative and qualitative) for all twelve categories of violence described in the framework not only for Medellín itself but for Colombia as a whole and for a small sector within Medellín called Caicedo La Sierra. Quantitative data, however, were not available for all twelve contexts (self-inflicted, intrafamilial, communal, social, political, and economic, in both their physical and psychological manifestations) at all three levels of analysis (Caicedo La Sierra, Medellín, and Colombia) across all 25 years of the study period (1984-2009), as would have been ideal. Nonetheless, this chapter is the first to publicly review in one place all of the quantitative data that actually are available for the city of Medellín, that were reasonably reliable, and that were made available by their private owners or could be found in the public domain. In some cases where quantitative data did not exist (or could not be obtained), qualitative data were found or inferred. These qualitative data did not allow for observations about relative magnitudes of violence across categories, but they did in some cases make possible general observations about yearly trends within each category of violence (i.e. whether it rose, fell, peaked, or hit a minimum in any given year) and about shifts between and among different categories over time.

Time-series data within each study period were desirable because with time series one can describe trends in each form of violence rather than settle for static descriptions.

For example, rather than saying that more than 30,000 people were murdered in Medellín during the 1992-1998 period (an average of about 240 murders per 100,000 inhabitants per year) or that about 620 people committed suicide (an average of about 90 people per year) during the period, the time series enables one to observe that the homicide rate declined by more than half during the seven-year period, while the suicide rate fluctuated widely. For those instances when time-series data were not available within time periods, some useful inter-period comparisons could still be made using, for example, data from the censuses of 1983, 1995, and 2005. Sometimes the patterns had to be detected indirectly. For example, it was clear that, with the demobilization of the paramilitary blocs in Medellín in the early to mid-2000s, political violence in the city was largely replaced by economic violence, as new reports and government investigations demonstrated that many of the former narco paras continued their involvement in organized crime. Combined, the quantitative and qualitative data that are described in the sections that follow, while still unsatisfying as a comprehensive description, nevertheless provide a richer understanding of the overall patterns of violence in Medellín than had been available from any other source.

In many cases, it is not clear from the data whether a particular crime was an instance of interpersonal violence or collective violence. Rape is frequently used as a weapon of war (i.e. collective-political violence), but data for rapes even where available rarely identify the perpetrator or his motives, so it is not certain what portion are interpersonal rapes and what are collective rapes; finding that out requires that one look beyond raw number to the stories behind them. Homicide is an even better example of this challenge: of the more than 40,000 homicides in Medellín during the 1990s, the data

do not show, for example, how many were domestic incidents by jealous spouses (interpersonal-intrafamilial violence), how many were robberies gone wrong (interpersonal-communal violence), or how many were casualties of wars among street crews (communal-social violence). This complicates efforts to analyze patterns — and indeed demonstrates why it is necessary to study not only forms of violence beyond homicides but the context in which all of those forms of violence were taking place.

8.2. Homicide Data

Nonetheless, since aggregate data on homicides are the most readily available and widely discussed data on violence in Medellín, it makes sense to begin with a discussion of patterns in homicides before reviewing the rest of the data. The quantitative data come from five main sources: the Secretaría de Gobierno de Medellín (the office of the Government Secretariat), the administrative and record-keeping arm of the city of Medellín; the Fiscalía General de la Nación, the national public prosecutor's office; the Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE), the Colombian census bureau; the Policía Nacional, the national police force, which has subunits in the country's departments and cities; and the Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses, the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Sciences (most commonly called simply Medicina Legal), which among other things operates the country's morgues. The Secretaría de Gobierno and the Fiscalía build their data sets from the same source, public denunciations and prosecutions of homicide crimes, and have figures for Medellín for all years in the study period (both for homicides and homicides per 100,000 inhabitants); neither agency releases data disaggregated by barrio. DANE

Table 8-1. Correlation Coefficients among Five Measures of Homicides

	Homicide Rate	City Records	Forensic Reports	Police Reports	Census Data
Homicide Rate	1.000	–	–	–	–
City Records	0.983	1.000	–	–	–
Forensic Reports	0.988	0.992	1.000	–	–
Police Reports	0.998	0.998	0.995	1.000	–
Census Data	0.994	0.998	0.993	0.998	1.000

Source: Author's calculations based on data from Secretaría de Gobierno (homicide rate and city records), Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses (forensic reports), Policía Nacional (police reports), and Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE, census data).

derives its data from multiple governmental sources (primarily Medicina Legal) and it has national-level data through 2006 and city-level data between 1990 and 2006. The Policía Nacional's dataset is not of homicides but of homicide reports, data from which are available electronically from January 1999 through May 2009; it does not make city-level data available at the barrio level, but does release data by *comuna,* or ward (the four barrios that make up Caicedo La Sierra are part of Comuna 8). Medicina Legal's data are based on forensic analyses of corpses that enter the country's morgues, and data for Medellín are available between 1988 and the present, disaggregated by date, time of day, and street address of death, making it possible to derive barrio-level data for almost the entire study period.[2]

The police reports tend to show the highest level of homicides relative to the other measures (presumably because more homicides are reported than bodies are found or murders prosecuted), but all of these homicide measures have correlation coefficients

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[2] In searching for data, I prioritized obtaining city-level over national-level data. My attempts to get national-level data from the Fiscalía, DANE, Medicina Legal, and the Policía Nacional had not succeeded by the time this thesis was submitted. Barrio-level data from Medicina Legal were derived by Maria Victoria Llorente of the Centro de Estudios sobre Desarrollo Económico (CEDE, the Center for Economic Development Studies) of the Universidad de los Andes in 2006 and are used here with her permission (I derived the barrio-level data for 2007 and 2008).

exceeding 99 percent, except the homicide rate, whose correlations are only slightly

lower (see Table 8-1, p. 312), and the chart of the figures for Medellín show clear

agreement in the annual trends in data (see Figure 8-1). The data show clear peaks

in homicides in 1991 and 2002, two years in which important urban wars were at turning

points, and a valley in 1998, when the national paramilitary federation decided to go to

war against guerrillas and leftist militias in Medellín, leading to the unsteady increase that

reached its peak four years later. The figures are a bit contradictory across sources in the

2005-2007 period, but it is clear that after 2005 something was changing in the city ('Don

Figure 8-1. Five Measures of Homicides in Medellín, 1984-2008
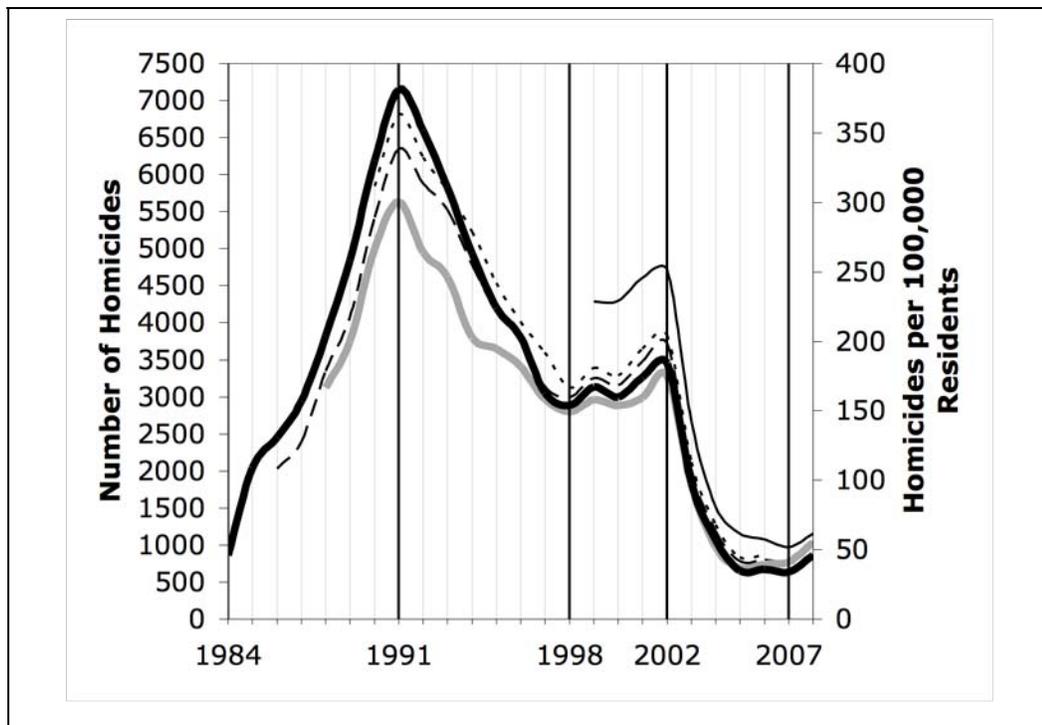
Sources: Secretaría de Gobierno Municipal de Medellín, Subsecretaría de Orden
Civil, Unidad de Convivencia Ciudadana (homicide rate and city records); Instituto
Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses (forensic reports); Departamento
Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE, census data); and Policía
Metropolitana del Valle de Aburrá de la Policía Nacional (police reports).

Figure 8-2. Homicides in Medellín, by Month, 1987-2009
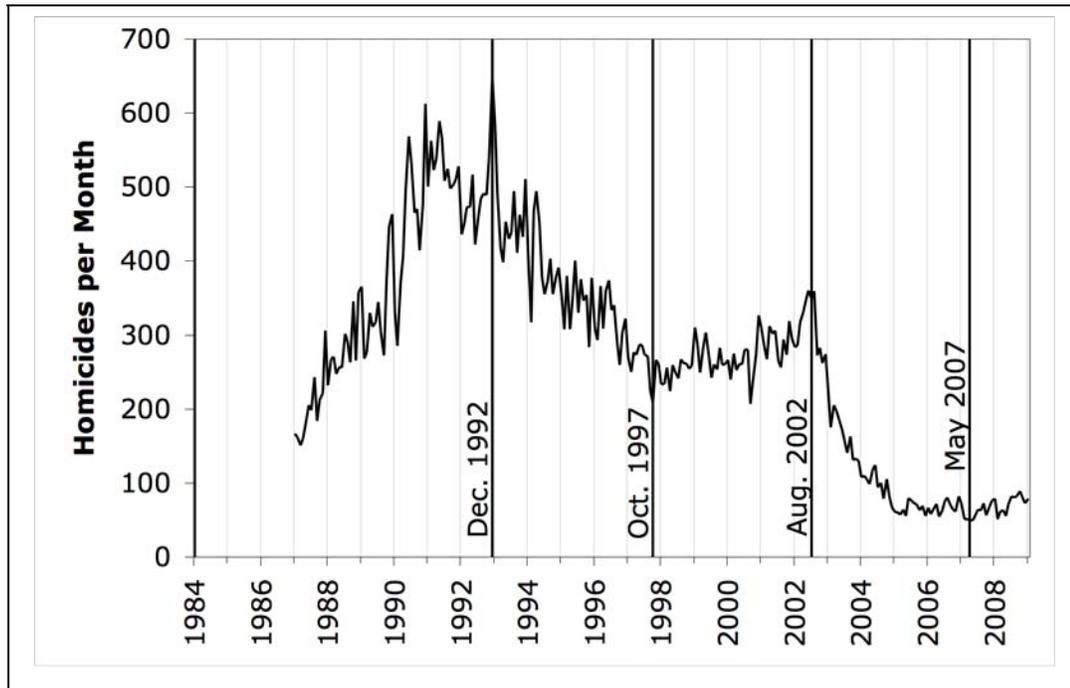
Sources: Secretaría de Gobierno Municipal de Medellín, Subsecretaría de Orden Civil, Unidad de Convivencia Ciudadana (January 1987 to December 2005); Policía Metropolitana del Valle de Aburrá de la Policía Nacional, adjusted to 75 percent of their reported value (January 2006 to January 2009). Because data from the Secretaría de Gobierno average 75 percent of the value of the data from the Policía Nacional during the years in which data are available from both (1999 to 2005), the data from 2006 to 2009 have been adjusted for greater visual accuracy.

Berna' Murillo, the country's most important organized-crime boss, who dominated Medellín's underworld as well, was arrested that year), and that beginning in 2007 homicides were undeniably moving upward again, signaling at least a partial end to the Medellín Miracle.

To get a better sense of what events might have driven these trends it is instructive to look at the monthly homicide data that are available (see Figure 8-2). Whereas the annual data show 1991 as the peak year for homicides in the city, the month with the highest number of murders was actually December 1992, a few months after

Pablo Escobar, then the nation's top drug boss, escaped from prison and waged war against the state from his home base in Medellín, and a month after the national government declared a state of emergency due to the increase in violence both from drug gangs and leftist guerrillas, including those operating in Medellín. In 2002 the most violent months were June and August, with 360 and 359 homicides reported, respectively, a period in which the last of the guerrillas and leftist militias were on the verge of being defeated. With the monthly data, it is much less obvious what events were more closely associated with the valleys, since there were no dramatic downward spikes indicating some qualitative change, only fluctuations. The data suggest that the 1998 to 2002 period — the war between paramilitaries and guerrillas — began in October 1997, but there is no historical reason for that particular month to stand out as a low point in murders, aside from the trivial observation that a few months later the war began. (Likewise in September 2000: homicides suddenly but temporarily declined to just below that of October 1997, a brief period of relative peace amid war.) The same can be said for the most recent period: homicides were clearly falling until around 2005, when they fluctuated before beginning to rise again in 2007: the low point was May 2007, but again there is no reason that this particular month should be the most peaceful of the period. A possible explanation is that, because there were dozens of micro-conflicts taking place throughout the city throughout the period, and each micro-conflict had alternating periods of intensity and relative peace, there probably were some months when, simply at random, a number of micro-conflicts were going through periods of relative peace at once.

Figure 8-3. Comparison of Homicides across Levels of Analysis

Four barrios of   – – Las Estancias   —— La Sierra
Caicedo La Sierra: ---- Villa Liliam   —— Villa Turbay

Sources: Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses (four barrios,
Caicedo La Sierra, and Medellín); Departamento Administrativo Nacional de
Estadística (DANE; Colombia).

A comparison of homicide trends in Medellín with those at different levels of

analysis demonstrates that possibility and the more general observation that

disaggregated data paint more accurate pictures of lower-level dynamics (see Figure 8-3).

Before 1990, annual homicide figures were rising in Colombia nationwide and in

Medellín, but they were rising as well in Caicedo La Sierra and in the two most violent of

the four barrios that make up Caicedo La Sierra, Las Estancias and Villa Liliam, which

are both more populous and closer to the city center than the other two barrios. Likewise,

all four levels of analysis (national, city, sector, and barrio) show clear downward trends

in homicides beginning in 2002 as well. The period between 1990 and 2002, however,

shows more disagreement across levels: Medellín's homicide rate declined steadily

beginning in 1991 until its ascent began in 1998, whereas Colombia's declined only until

1995 when it fluctuated for a few years before beginning its relentless ascent in 1997.

While Medellín and Colombia both experienced two major spikes in violence during the

study period, Caicedo La Sierra experienced four, in 1990, 1994, 1999, and 2002,

representing the militia-gang wars, the militia-militia wars, the militia-paramilitary war,

and the paramilitary-paramilitary war, respectively (see Chapter 5 for a less simplistic

characterization). Consequently, the overall patterns in the top two levels of Figure 8-3

look very different from those in the bottom two levels. This largely reflects the fact that

homicides in Caicedo La Sierra never made up more than 2 percent of the homicides in

the city as a whole, so its dynamics stand out, whereas Medellín's share of Colombia's

homicides was much higher, averaging about 12 percent. But Medellín's homicides

started out in 1990 with a 21 percent share of Colombia's, falling to an average of about

14 percent between 1992 and 1998, to 10 or 11 percent between 1998 and 2002, and

down to 4 percent beginning in 2004 (the share of homicides is uncertain beginning in

2007), which partly explains the divergence in the visual pattern between Medellín and

Colombia over time. While Medellín and Colombia both experienced spikes in homicides

in 2002, for example, Medellín had 42 percent fewer homicides in 2002 than it had in

1991, whereas Colombia actually had a few thousand more in 2002 than in 1991,

suggesting that while Medellín's homicide problem was bad, it was worse in other parts of the country by that point in the city's history — and within a few years, it would become one of the least deadly of Colombia's major cities.

Before moving on to the other forms of violence in Medellín, some historical context is in order, to demonstrate why 1984 was chosen as the beginning of the study period (see Figure 8-4, p. 319). That year, the homicide rate in Medellín was lower than it had been during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when smugglers of cars, domestic appliances, gems, and other non-narcotic goods had begun making more money smuggling marijuana and cocaine (and therefore fighting to control the trade). But it was higher in 1984 than in the late 1970s, when the Medellín Cartel had already consolidated control over the city's illicit economy and some of its leaders were trying to achieve legitimacy as businessmen and political leaders. While the upward trend in homicides began in 1976, it was between 1984 and 1985 — the year the cartel's leaders went into hiding and launched a war against the state — that the rapid and relentless climb in deadly violence really began in Medellín. The frameworks and terms used throughout this work are a social scientist's attempt to impose order upon chaos. The reality of collective and interpersonal-communal violence in Medellín is too messy to simply categorize different groups according to some academically acceptable standard. The groups are not static, they are not designed; they emerge from individual decisions and path-dependent facts about the constrained social world their members inhabit. They might be a group of people one day, and crime ring for a month, then just a bunch of potheads again; one or two of them might take a contract to assassinate someone, then use the money for a party with his boys; they might have an agreement with an outside

Figure 8-4. Homicide Rate in Medellín, 1967-2008
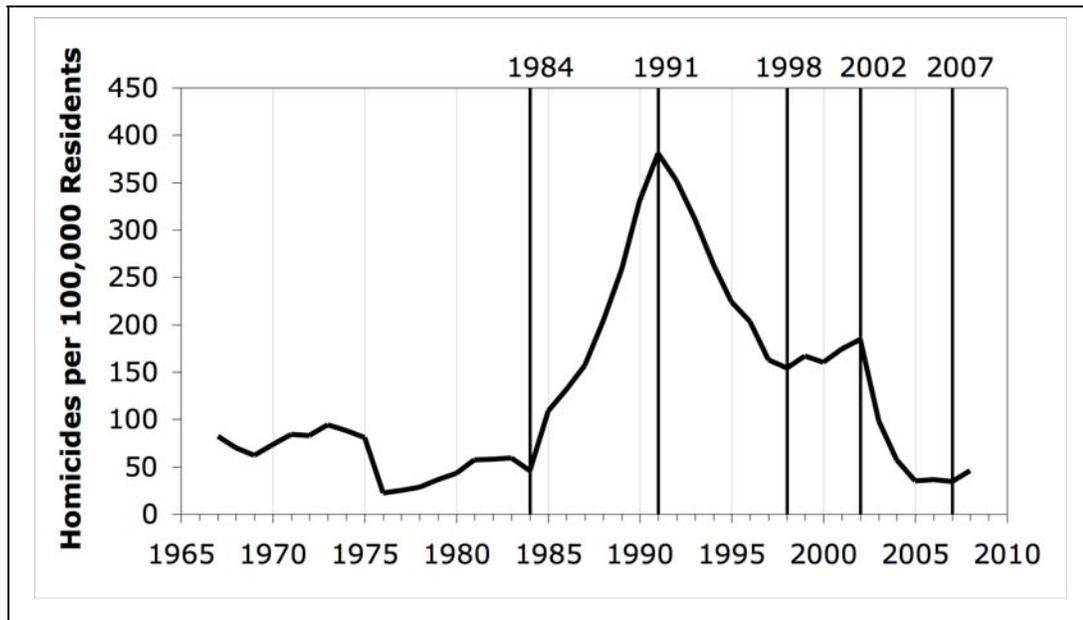
Source: Secretaría de Gobierno Municipal de Medellín, Subsecretaría de Orden Civil, Unidad de Convivencia Ciudadana.

group that provides them money or weapons in exchange for intelligence, but then turn around and betray that group as soon as they look weak enough that they can get away with it. Then the charismatic leader could overdose or get a girlfriend, and everyone just drifts apart, maybe joining other gangs, maybe even fighting each other in the future. It's happened that way a thousand times.

8.3. Self-Inflicted Violence

Reliable data on self-inflicted violence in Medellín and at the national and barrio (neighborhood) levels is difficult to come by beyond the aggregate number of suicides per year, especially before 2000, but even after that date it is difficult to find even qualitative data about trends in self-inflicted *psychological* violence, such as levels of

Figure 8-5. Suicides in Medellín, 1990-2006
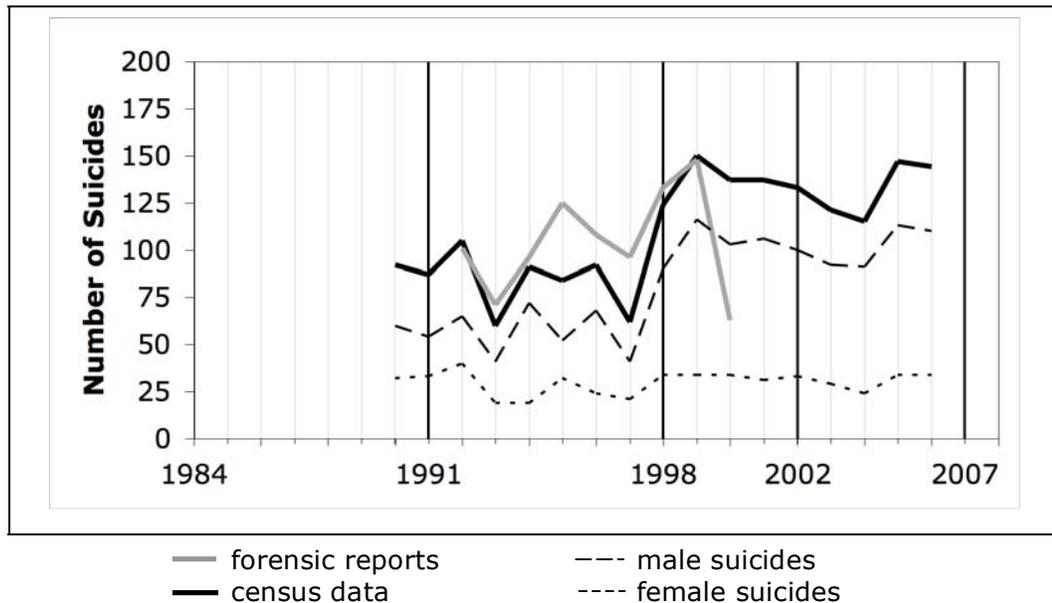
Sources: Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses (forensic reports); Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE, census data, male suicides, and female suicides).

substance abuse. For example, annual data for the number of people committing suicide in Medellín during the period 1992-2000 from two difference sources (DANE and Medicina Legal) show some similarities (e.g. 1992, 1994, and 1999 differ by fewer than 5 cases), but they differ significantly in the middle of the period: between 1994 and 1995, suicides fell from 91 to 84 according to DANE but rose from 96 to 125 according to Medicina Legal.[3] The correlation between them for the entire period is just 39 percent, but if 2000 is excluded (when Medicina Legal's figure is less than half of DANE's, 63 to 137, suggesting a major discrepancy in measurement), it is a much more respectable 85 percent; still, because data are not available from both sources for most years in the study

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[3] DANE data from DANE; Medicina Legal data from Rubén Darío Manrique Hernández, "Características del Suicidio al Final del Siglo XX en Medellín," ["Suicide Characteristics at the End of the 20th Century in Medellín,"] *Revista CES Medicina* 14, no. 1 (2000): 53.

Figure 8-6. Trends in Suicides versus Homicides
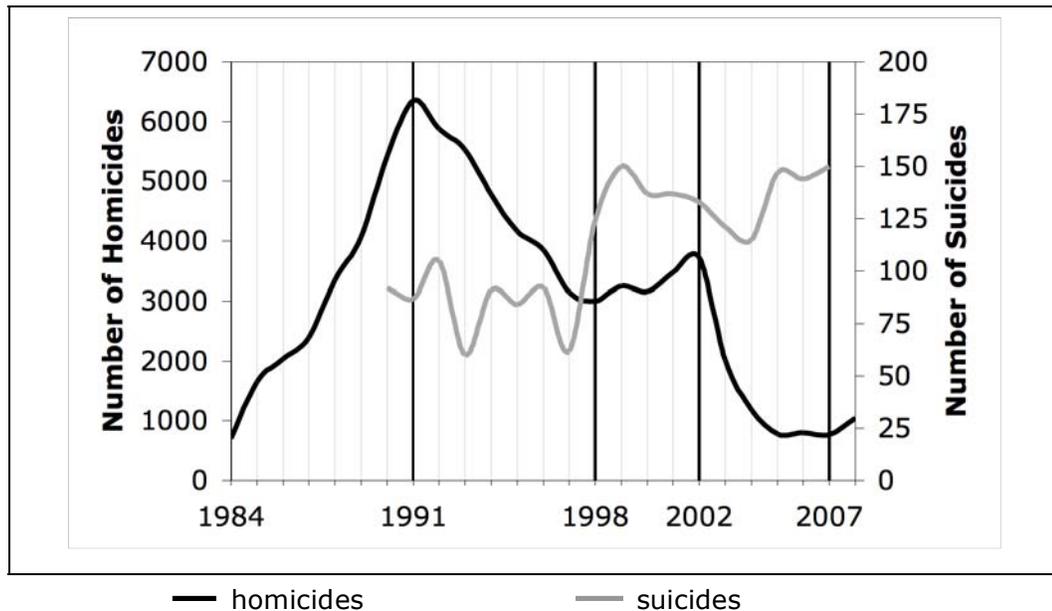
— homicides   — suicides

Sources: Secretaría de Gobierno Municipal de Medellín, Subsecretaría de Orden Civil, Unidad de Convivencia Ciudadana (homicides, 1986-2008; figures for 1984-1985 estimated by author from rate data and population); Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE: suicides).

period, not much can be concluded from these data.

Nevertheless, some general observations can be made about the overall trends in physical self-inflicted violence. First, according to both of the above data sources and other available accounts, suicides fluctuated during the 1990s, with significant declines in 1993 and 1997 but with dramatic increases in 1998 and 1999.[4] Second, in the early 2000s, suicides either fluctuated or fell slightly, remaining near the same high level they had risen to in 1999.[5] Finally, the increase in suicides in the late 1990s is attributable almost entirely to an increase in suicide among males; suicide among females fluctuated

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Carlos Palacio-Acosta, et al., "Characteristics of People Committing Suicide in Medellín, Colombia," *Revista de Salud Pública* 7, no. 3 (2005): 243.

during the 1990s, mirroring that of males, but stabilized beginning in 1998, remaining flat

while male suicides skyrocketed (see Figure 8-5, p. 320).

An interesting observation, given the data that are available and assuming for the

moment that they are reliable, is what seems to have been inverse relationship between

suicides and homicides: during the periods in which homicides were rising, suicides

showed an overall negative trend, whereas those when homicides were falling, suicides

had a positive trend. The correlation coefficient between suicides and homicides ranges

from -0.64 for the Colombian census bureau's homicide figures to -0.56 for the Secretaría

de Gobierno's homicide figures. Data are likely to be more reliable in the future, as the

city began a wide-ranging project during the administration of Sergio Fajardo to collect

data on hundreds of indicators for the quality of life. One component of that system is the

Medellín Cómo Vamos (MCV: How We're Doing in Medellín) project, and in MCV's

analysis of suicides during the 2004-2007 period, when the homicide rate was

plummeting, it found suicides rising from 4.2 people per 100,000 residents in 2004, to 5.4

in 2005, and 6.3 in 2006, falling again in 2007 to 5.5, an overall increase of 30.9 percent

during a period when the homicide rate fell 19.9 percent.[6] While these figures are

inconsistent with DANE's figures, which found a slight drop in suicides between 2005

and 2006, the overall pattern of suicides moving contrary to homicides nevertheless

generally holds. The question of what explains this contrary motion is left to future

research; an initial search for an explanation came up dry, and so this study has had to

focus its explanatory efforts on interpersonal-communal and collective forms of violence.

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[6] *Cómo Vamos en Seguridad: Informe de Indicadores Objetivos—Seguridad, 2004-2007 [How We're Doing on Security: Objective Indicators Report—Security, 2004-2007]* (Medellín, Colombia: Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2008), http://www.medellincomovamos.org.

While self-inflicted physical violence is reasonably well documented, psychological variants are not. Two additional areas for potential future research, therefore, merit brief mention: trends in substance abuse, (data might be garnered from staff at treatment centers), and trends in risky behavior (such as the "kamikaze kids," Medellín's equivalent of suicide bombers: young males who joined hit squads fully expecting to die during an assassination attempt). Both areas would provide potentially useful information about patterns of self-inflicted psychological violence.

8.4. Interpersonal Violence

To adequately describe patterns of interpersonal violence — violence involving one or two perpetrators (who are not part of a larger group) acting against one or more victims whom they may or may not know — would require reliable data on one form of violence that is notoriously underreported, intrafamilial, and on another that is generally well tracked, communal. I address these in turn.

8.4.1. Intrafamilial Violence

Very little reliable data are available regarding patterns of violence taking place inside the home or among close relatives or acquaintances, including spousal abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, pedophilia, date rape, etc. The data that are available are often contradictory, represent only a snapshot in time (i.e. no time series), or provide inadequate information about the magnitude of the problem. For example, in the department of Antioquia it was found in 1995 that about 95 percent of victims of abuse within the home were women or girls, and in 1998 that about 93 percent of victims of

spousal abuse were wives, but the study citing these figures provided neither magnitudes nor trends.[7] A public-health survey in Medellín in 2003 and 2004, however, found that men and women were about equally likely to be either a victim or a perpetrator of psychological violence or of physical violence that causes no serious injury, although women were about twice as likely as men to be victims when the physical violence caused an injury. The conclusion of that study was therefore not that some men were violent against some women and others weren't, but that some couples were violent to each other while others weren't.[8] (The author of that study, initially puzzled by these results, said he then consulted experts on the matter in other countries and it turned out that these counterintuitive results were, in fact, consistent with findings on intrafamilial violence in many parts of the world.[9]) The two studies — the one finding mostly female victims, the other finding a rough equality — were done at different time periods and at different levels of analysis, but those differences alone are unlikely to account for such a large discrepancy in the findings; more likely they used different methods or assumptions, which makes it very difficult to say anything productive about the main patterns of intrafamilial violence. For that reason, this study did not include interpersonal-intrafamilial violence as part of the dependent variable *violence* in the explanation of patterns. The remainder of this section, therefore, focuses mainly on describing, rather than explaining, what data could be found.

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[7] Rafael Rincón P., *Antioquia, Fin de Milenio: ¿Terminará la Crisis del Derecho Humanitario?*, 249.

[8] Luis Fernando Duque, *La Violencia en el Valle de Aburrá: Caminos Para la Superación*, 52.

[9] Luis Fernando Duque Ramírez, personal communication (Interview No. 19), 13 May 2009.

The public-health survey on violence in Medellín and the Aburrá Valley found that 25.7 percent of people in Medellín had been victims and 24.4 percent had been perpetrators of psychological violence with their partner during the previous year, while 9.0 percent were victim and 7.2 percent were perpetrator of physical violence without a weapon, and 1.8 percent were victim and 1.4 percent were perpetrator of physical violence that caused injury. The lifelong figures were 15.3 percent victims and 13.1 percent perpetrators of unarmed physical violence, 4.1 percent victims and also 4.1 percent perpetrators of injurious physical violence, and 31.0 percent victims and 29.3 percent perpetrators of psychological violence at some point in their lives.[10] (Psychological violence is not the term used in this survey, but rather verbal abuse, which is likely a much weaker standard than I use: most instances of verbal abuse probably would not cause the kind of trauma or harm that would make it count as true psychological violence. I leave the exercise of teasing out the violence within the broader category of verbal abuse to future research.)

The percentages of children reported as having been abused by a parent are as follows: 6.1 percent in the past year and 8.4 percent in their lives were victims of unarmed physical violence, 1.3 percent in the past year and 2.5 percent in their lives were victims of injurious physical violence, and 6.1 percent in the past year and 7.2 percent in their lives were victims of psychological violence. Of adolescents aged 12 to 15 surveyed about mistreatment by one or both parents at some point in their lives, 63.0 percent reported that a parent had hit them with some object, 19.4 percent reported having been injured by a parent, 5.4 percent kicked or bitten, 1.8 percent attacked with a firearm or

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[10] Luis Fernando Duque, *La Violencia en el Valle de Aburrá: Su Magnitud y Programa Para Reducirla*, 201.

knife, 1.3 percent burned, and 1.1 percent had required medical attention after having been attacked by a parent. In Comuna 8, between 8.4 and 9.4 percent of this age group reported having been a victim of violence by one or both parents at some point during their lives.[11]

One of the difficulties of finding good data in Medellín is that between 81.3 and 98.3 percent of all incidents of physical violence not involving a weapon, between 97.5 and 98.5 percent of all incidents of psychological violence, and between 88.8 and 92.4 percent of all incidents of sexual violence (either attempted or successful) were never reported to the authorities when the perpetrator was the victim's intimate partner (e.g. spouse), parent, child, sibling, or other family member; only about five to eight percent of intrafamilial violence involving a weapon were reported to authorities.[12] In the past, it has been dangerous to report it. There was a time when staff at a local high school in Caicedo La Sierra would report such abuses to the authorities, an administrator told me, but the mothers would deny that they had been abused or that the children had been abused, and then accuse the school of siding with the "enemy" — and in a war zone, that accusation can be dangerous. "You have to be very careful."[13] One staff member at that school did tell me, however, that "there is a lot of intrafamilial violence in these barrios" and that she had once met with city authorities to encourage them provide better protections for those who reported it. She said she knew of cases where a man of the house would work during the week, but after drinking until drunk on the weekends would

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[11] Ibid., 205.

[12] Luis Fernando Duque, *La Violencia en el Valle de Aburrá: Caminos Para la Superación*, 51.

[13] 'Alicia,' Interview No. 7.

try to rape his daughter; somebody would call the police to report it "but they [the police] never protect confidentiality … so it's better not to get involved."[14]

A staff member at the city's Office of the Family told me, however, that during the last ten years not only has there been a growing awareness of the problem and of the rights of victims, but also the system for reporting intrafamilial violence has improved substantially. As a consequence, she said, reports of intrafamilial violence have risen over the past decade (although she could not provide figures to support this claim).[15] Of course, rising reports amid a changing reporting system cannot be considered an indicator of any underlying trend. So the problem remains: approximate magnitudes of intrafamilial violence can be identified, but how those magnitudes have changed over time cannot be discerned with the data I was able to obtain.

Risk factors, however, have been identified. One study found that the risk factors for committing intrafamilial physical violence that left no serious injury included unemployment and the perpetrator's belief that there was a lot of violence in the community; risk factors for intrafamilial violence leaving injuries were the perpetrator's approval of the use of violence to defend one's community (including social cleansing), a history of having been abused, a cynical attitude about corruption in public officials, and frustration with his or her own personal and professional achievements.[16]

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[14] 'Cristiana,' Interview No. 9.

[15] Soraya Betancur, personal communication (Interview No. 20), 18 May 2009.

[16] Luis Fernando Duque, *La Violencia en el Valle de Aburrá: Caminos Para la Superación*, 51.

8.4.2. Communal Violence

Interpersonal-communal violence involves one or two perpetrators acting against one or more victims whom they may or may not know, and it may take place in someone's home, on the street, at a commercial property, or in some other public area. This form of violence includes most categories of common crime: robbery, assault, rape, etc. (Organized crime would be a form of collective violence, discussed in the next section.) Besides data for homicides, I was not able to get good crime data before 1999, and of the data that were made available since then, it is not entirely clear what trends are implied by them beyond the few key observations made here. First I discuss the observations that can be made about the homicide data, and then those regarding other crime data. Homicide data, as noted earlier (§§ 8.1-8.2), includes not only those murders committed in the context of common crime or personal disputes (interpersonal violence) but also those committed by hit squads, militias, paramilitaries, social-cleansing groups, drug gangs, and other groups (collective violence). Very little good data are available to tease out the relative magnitudes of communal versus collective homicides, let alone how those magnitudes have changed over time.

But enough hints exist to make some reasonable general observations. One study, by Giraldo Ramírez, of the period between 2003 and 2005 — only one of the five periods I studied — found that "the homicide rate shows a directly proportional relationship with the intensity of the armed conflict,"[17] but he did not specify what that correlation implied: Who was doing the killing? Was the decline in homicides due entire to a decline in

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[17] Jorge Giraldo Ramírez, "Conflicto Armado Urbano y Violencia Homicida: El Caso de Medellín," ["Urban Armed Conflict and Homicidal Violence: The Case of Medellín,"] *Urvio: Revista Latinoamericana de Seguridad Ciudadana* No. 5 (2008): 99.

collective violence during that period, or did communal violence also fall as the rule of law was reestablished once the collective violence was under control? Jurgen Brauer, Alejandro Gómez-Sorzano, and Sankar Sethuraman studied homicides in Colombia between 1946 and 1999 and were able to separate out the "permanent" homicide rate from the "cyclical" murders, the latter being associated with periods of unrest in the country. For the post-1991 period they discovered an increase in the permanent (i.e. non-cyclical) component of homicides, which they explained by suggesting that "the increasing dollar value of the drug traffic may have pushed up the slope of the permanent murder series …, perhaps reflecting entangled political and economic interests."[18] This is relevant to the Medellín case because of the very close correlation between homicides at the city and national levels during the 1990s — the correlation coefficient is 0.85[19] — plus the fact that Medellín was the epicenter of the drug trade in the country. But do Brauer et al's findings suggest that murders associated with common crime in Colombia (i.e. economically motivated interpersonal-communal violence) were beginning to displace collective-political violence, or that collective-economic violence (i.e. the organized drug trade) was beginning to displace collective-political violence? In other words, what share of the murders was communal and what was collective, and how did that ratio change over time?

Beyond these general studies, several hints can be found within some of the data that are available. (And in some that are not available: one police-intelligence source told

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[18] Jurgen Brauer, Alejandro Gómez-Sorzano, and Sankar Sethuraman, "Decomposing Violence: Political Murder in Colombia, 1946-1999," *European Journal of Political Economy* 20, no. 2 (2004): 447.

[19] Author's calculation based on homicide data for Colombia and Medellín between 1991 and 1999 from the Colombian census bureau, Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE: Department of National Statistics Administration).

a press agency that only 63 percent of the victims of homicides in 2009 were members of

drug gangs, suggesting that a significant minority of murders were not directly related to

the organized drug trade: at least a third were interpersonal-communal murders.[20]) One

hint comes from a Colombia-wide study by Saúl Franco Agudelo, who found higher rates

of violent deaths in regions of the country with higher indicators of impunity.[21] Another,

looking at Medellín specifically, comes from a study of violence that spanned three of the

five periods I looked at. Marleny Cardona et al studied homicides in Medellín between

1990 and 2002, when 85.8 percent of all murders took place in barrios classified as

"middle," "middle-low," "low," or "low-low" on the city's socioeconomic scale; most

such barrios are on the city's periphery, where most of the armed conflicts took place. In

89.7 percent of all murders in the city, there was only one victim involved in the

homicide event in; in 93.0 percent of those cases, nobody else was even injured. In other

words, most of the homicides seemed to be neither military casualties nor civilian

casualties ("collateral damage") in urban warfare, nor instances of indiscriminate

violence due to terrorism. This possibly suggests that what was happening was not

primarily organized violence but rather a more diffuse phenomenon, small-scale attacks,

primarily one-on-one, not necessarily centrally directed. In only 15.4 percent of cases

could a motive for the murder be identified, but the most common motives that could be

identified were revenge (7.0 percent of all cases) and armed robbery (4.5 percent); the

motives underlying the rest of the cases (84.6 percent in total) were unknown, which

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[20] Agence France-Presse, "Venganzas de 'Narcoparamilitares' Disparan Homicidios en Medellín."

[21] Saúl Franco Agudelo, *El Quinto, No Matar: Contextos Explicativos de la Violencia en Colombia*, cited in Jaime Arturo Gómez Correa, et al., "Estado del Conocimiento Sobre la Violencia Urbana en Antioquia en la Década de los Noventa," 175.

makes it difficult to identify the most important causes of homicides more generally. (Unfortunately, the Cardona et al study also did not try to tease out trends over time. How did the ratios of single-victim versus multiple-victim homicides, or of interpersonal versus collective motives, differ between periods? The authors claimed that the "characteristics of homicides in Medellín have remained unchanged since the 1980s," but did not specify what, exactly, that meant: Did the relative proportions of motives for murder not change, or just the characteristics of the victims, types of weapons used, etc.?)[22]

While by no means conclusive, these hints are strongly suggestive that much of the violence in Medellín was associated not only with a war among competing factions but also with a breakdown in the rule of law, a dynamic in which political, social, or religious authorities were incapable of preventing violence, punishing violence, or instilling norms against violence during the study period. This is consistent, for example, with the work of Francisco E. Thoumi, who, in his analysis of the necessary, sufficient, and contributing conditions involved in the emergence of narcotrafficking, argued that Colombia, unlike other places with similar economic, demographic, and political characteristics, has a culture and a social order that instills few significant self-generated behavioral controls: "the rules of law are weak, social capital is poor, and solidarity and trust are lacking" — all elements, he argued, that would be necessary for such a violent industry to emerge.[23] Those elements are present in Medellín, distilled into their very

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[22] Marleny Cardona, et al., "Homicidios en Medellín, Colombia, Entre 1990 y 2002: Actores, Móviles y Circunstancias."

[23] Francisco E. Thoumi, "Introduction"; see also Francisco E. Thoumi, "The Colombian Competitive Advantage in Illegal Drugs: The Role of Policies and Institutional Changes."

essence, as Duque observed: "In the culture of illegality, the feature most associated with severe violence is that norm of Antioquian culture: "Make money honorably, m' boy, but if that's not possible, make money."[24] In his public-health studies, Duque found that among the strongest risk factors for an individual's engaging in most forms of violence in Medellín was a willingness to break certain legal, moral, or political norms, including those against the use of violence, and that in Medellín a very high percentage of the population were so willing: 75.2 percent approved of the use of "extreme" violence (that is, murder) to defend one's family or to get some economic or political benefit, 44.9 percent approved of the use of extreme violence to defend one's community, and 51.7 percent approved of earning money by illegal means. In East Central Medellín, the zone where Comuna 8 and therefore Caicedo La Sierra is, 15.6 percent approved of murder for familial self-defense or political or economic benefit, 17.1 percent approved of murder for community self-defense, and 17.6 percent approved of earning money illegally (although these figures probably do not reliably reflect the views of those in Caicedo La Sierra, since the East Central zone includes the downtown district, which has different dynamics from the city's residential zones and tends therefore to bias data that are aggregated at the zone level).[25] When asked about the conditions under which the use of violence was legitimate, 36 percent of respondents in Medellín said that violence is

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[24] "En la cultura de la ilegalidad, el rasgo más asociado a la violencia severa es esta norma de la cultura antioqueña: 'consiga plata, mijo, honradamente, pero si no es posible, consiga plata.'" Luis Fernando Duque, *La Violencia en el Valle de Aburrá: Caminos Para la Superación*, 50. This same observation is made, and a variant of this adage is quoted, in Alonso Salazar J., *No Nacimos Pa' Semilla*, 196.

[25] Luis Fernando Duque, *La Violencia en el Valle de Aburrá: Caminos Para la Superación*, 90. It is odd that the authors of that study decided to ask, in a single question, about the use of violence to defend one's family "or" to get some economic or political benefit: it would have been far more informative to separate out those two issues, as more people would likely be willing to kill in familial self-defense than to kill simply to make money. This is even odder considering that the question about community self-defense did not have the "or" clause attached.

legitimately used for educational purposes (as either an "eye for an eye" response to aggression or as corporal punishment for children), 29 percent considered violence legitimate to protect one's family or society (including killing home invaders, killing in self-defense, torturing to extract information, and killing as capital punishment), and 23 percent considered violence and intimidation to be legitimate ways to deter attacks from others or to express anger toward others. The internal barrier to violence, in other words, was already low in Medellín, so wherever or whenever external controls ceased to function, one would expect violence to rise there.

In short, what seemed to be the case in Medellín, according to these studies and to substantial anecdotal evidence, was that during the study period there was a base level of interpersonal-communal homicides (the "permanent" murder rate of the Brauer et al study of Colombia), which is sort of the background noise of crime in any place in the world and which was probably higher in Medellín than elsewhere due to the structure of norms regarding legality and illegality. But during periods when conflicts flared up in the city (or to be more precise, in micro-territories within the city), the "cyclical" murders, the temporary increases in homicides, had two components: collective, deriving directly from the conflicts; and interpersonal-communal, deriving indirectly from the conflicts. The direct component derived from military or terrorist actions, as two or more groups vied for control (over territory or resources) and engaged in collective violence against each other and each other's supporters. The indirect component derived from both the private exploitation of the larger conflict (as civilians falsely denounced their private adversaries as agents of the enemy, as a way to have them killed or displaced by one of the fighting groups) and from a further breakdown in the rule of law, as the dominant

Figure 8-7. Trends in Common-Crime Reports versus Homicides
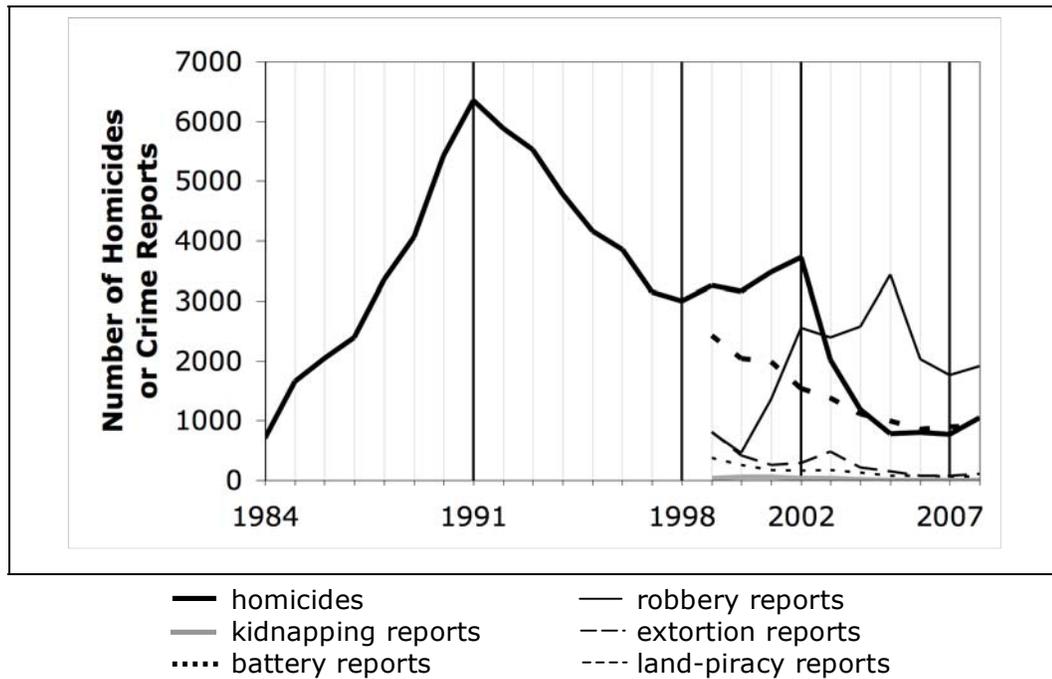
Legend:
— homicides
— robbery reports
— kidnapping reports
—‑· extortion reports
····· battery reports
---- land-piracy reports

Sources: Secretaría de Gobierno Municipal de Medellín, Subsecretaría de Orden Civil, Unidad de Convivencia Ciudadana (homicides, 1986-2008; figures for 1984-1985 estimated by author from rate data and population); Policía Metropolitana del Valle de Aburrá (kidnapping, battery, robbery, extortion, and land-piracy reports, 1999-2008). Kidnapping reports are hard to see on this chart, but they peaked at 58 in 2000 and fell until 2003, then plummeted to single digits.

power shifted resources and attention to defensive and offensive operations and away from maintaining general order in their micro-territories. That inattention to order created an atmosphere of impunity (or perhaps further impunity) for common crime, enabling and exacerbating existing cultural tendencies to solve private conflicts through violence. Thus was the rise of collective homicide accompanied by a rise in interpersonal-communal homicide as well.

Given these studies, the data, and anecdotal evidence, we can say with reasonable certainty that interpersonal-communal murders generally rose and fell with collective murders over all five study periods, but what about forms of violence other than

homicide? It is clear that during the first study period, 1984-1992, all forms of violence

rose together; I have found no source claiming otherwise and many sources confirming

that observation (see Chapter 3). Evidence is mixed for the second study period, 1992-

1998, when homicides were generally falling, but given the extremely rapid increase in

all forms of violence during the first period, it seems only logical that they had to have

fallen, or at least to have fluctuated, during the second period; little more can be said

about it beyond that. For the third study period we have crime data to show that, while

homicides were rising, other forms of violence were generally falling — or at least

reports of other forms of violence were falling, which indicates either that the underlying

violence was actually falling or that the violence was fluctuating or increasing but a

climate of fear, a lack of trust in authorities, or some other factor increasingly prevented

people from reporting those crimes. In the fourth study period, as the homicide rate began

to plummet, crime reports either rose slightly or their declines slowed in 2003, but after

that they generally continued to fall through 2007. Almost all forms of violence,

however, began to rise again in 2008, the beginning of the fifth study period. In short, in

three of the five, and probably in four of the five, study periods, non-fatal forms of

violence, in both their physical and psychological manifestations, tended to rise and fall

with homicides, or, to be more precise, the wave of homicides that peaked in 1991 was

accompanied by a wide range of non-fatal forms of violence, while the wave that peaked

in 2002 was primarily a homicide phenomenon (see Figure 8-7, p. 334).

The Medellín Cómo Vamos surveys for 2006, 2007, and 2008 found that between

9 and 11 percent of residents had been the victim of some kind of crime in the previous

12 months; 64 percent of those were street robberies or attacks, although it is not

specified whether these were violent crimes or, for example, pickpocketing. (Pickpocketing is extremely common: almost everyone, it seems, has had a cell phone or wallet snatched in Medellín, including both my wife and me. But it is not a form of violence, and so its presence in crime data makes that data useless as an indicator of violence.) The trend from 2006 to 2008 was a steep decline in reporting of the crime to authorities: In the 2006 survey, 52 percent of respondents who said they had been the victim of a crime in the previous year said that they had reported that crime to the police; in 2007, that figure fell to 43 percent, and in 2008 it was down to 36 percent. In 2006 and 2007, the most common reason given for not having reported the crime was either not having evidence or not knowing whom to report it to; in 2008, the main reason given was not trusting the authorities. Given that 2007 was the year homicides and other forms of crime began to rise in the city, these findings suggest that we should be cautious with the conclusions we draw from any of the crime data based on voluntary reporting, as any decline in crime reports might be was due more to a declining trust in authorities than to an underlying decline in crime. Still, this caution is offered based on a time series of only three years, during a period when it was not entirely clear which direction homicide and crime rates were really heading.[26]

Looking in a little more detail one finds that the two main indicators of physical interpersonal-communal violence (battery reports and kidnapping reports) are strongly positively correlated with four different measures of homicides, at least during the periods when the crime data were available to measure the correlations (1999 to 2008).

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[26] *Encuesta de Percepción Ciudadana 2008 [Public Perception Survey 2008]* (Medellín, Colombia: Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2008), http://www.medellincomovamos.org.

Table 8-2. Crime Report Correlations with Different Homicide Measures

Homicide: Crime:	City Records	Forensic Reports	Police Reports	Census Data
Battery	0.88	0.89	0.90	0.85
Kidnapping	0.85	0.85	0.87	0.81
Extortion	0.74	0.76	0.76	0.67
Land Piracy	0.65	0.67	0.66	0.55
Robbery	−0.52	−0.55	−0.53	−0.63

Source: Author's calculations based on data from Secretaría de Gobierno (city records of homicides, 1986-2008), Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses (forensic reports of homicides, 1988-2008), Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE, census data on homicides, 1990-2006), and Policía Nacional (police reports of homicides, battery, kidnapping, extortion, land piracy, and robbery, 1999-2008).

Since the crime data on battery and kidnapping are based on voluntary reporting of incidents, one would expect that any external factor that affected willingness to report — fear of retaliation, trust in authorities, etc. — would have affected *all* of the crime-report data, including homicides, and so one would expect those data to be highly correlated with each other. For that reason, it is important to cross-check crime-report data against not only homicide *reports* but also against homicide data from sources that do not depend on voluntary reporting (or do not depend entirely on voluntary reporting; see § 8.1 for a discussion of the sources of homicide data). Doing that, one still finds strong correlations: battery reports (physical attacks that leave injuries) have correlation coefficients with four different measures of homicides ranging from 0.85 to 0.90, and kidnapping reports (a form of physical violence, since it involves physical contact) have correlations with the homicide measures of between 0.81 and 0.87.[27] This provides evidence in favor of the observation that several different physical forms of violence generally moved together (see Table 8-2).

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[27] See source note in Table 8-2.

Reliable indicators of psychological interpersonal-communal violence are harder to come by. In terms of the absolute and relative magnitudes of physical versus psychological forms of interpersonal-communal violence, Duque's surveys from 2003 and 2004 found that 24.7 percent of survey respondents in Medellín had been the victim of a threat (interpersonal-communal psychological violence) and 15.1 percent had been the victim of a physical attack without a weapon (interpersonal-communal physical violence) during the previous year. But this says little about how those magnitudes changed over time.[28] Two of the three available crime-data indicators for psychological violence have positive correlations with homicides, although somewhat less strong than the physical forms have: extortion (mostly the notorious *vacuna* system, or protection rackets) has correlations ranging from 0.67 to 0.76, while land piracy (usually, armed robbery of delivery vehicles) ranges from 0.55 to 0.67. The exception is robbery, which has a negative correlation with all of the homicide data, ranging from –0.52 to –0.63.[29] But none of these psychological indicators can be considered indicators for interpersonal-communal violence: vacunas and kidnappings tend to be perpetrated primarily by organized criminals and so would more appropriately be considered instances of collective rather than communal violence, while the robbery data include pickpocketings along with armed and otherwise coercive robberies, and so that figure, dominated by nonviolent crimes, cannot be considered an indicator of violence.

In short, the crime data and other evidence suggest that physical communal violence, psychological collective violence, and both collective and communal homicides

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[28] Luis Fernando Duque, *La Violencia en el Valle de Aburrá: Su Magnitud y Programa Para Reducirla*, 188.

[29] See source note in Table 8-2.

all rose and fell together, at least during the last three study periods, and probably at least during the first study period as well. It is probably the case that psychological communal violence (i.e. interpersonal threats) also rose and fell with these other forms, but the evidence is not conclusive. What all of this implies is that the spikes in homicides experienced in the city were generally accompanied by spikes in other forms of physical and psychological violence in both their communal and collective forms: while the peaks and valleys in these waves of violence do not match up perfectly, one may nevertheless speak coherently of a "rise in violence" and a "decline in violence" without fear of contradicting too much of the available evidence.

The most significant observation that emerges from this analysis is that most of the violence throughout the study period was interpersonal-communal, even during the peaks when the highest-profile forms of violence were collective-political (e.g. police massacres of young people in peripheral barrios, assassinations of Patriotic Union party members, wars between militias and paras), collective-social (e.g. street-gang turf wars, "social cleansing" death squads), and collective-economic (e.g. organized crime, drug wars). The spikes in collective violence created a context in which the rule of law was too weak to control interpersonal-communal violence, and those who engaged in the latter often used that broader context to their own advantage, either by recruiting or deceiving collective-violence organizations to carry out personal vendettas, or simply by taking advantage of the environment of impunity.

8.5. Collective Violence

The terminology to describe the types of violent groups that have emerged in Medellín is as varied and as difficult to define as the groups are themselves: some people use *banda, combo, gallada,* and *pandilla* more or less interchangeably, meaning *street gang;* others use both *combo* and *oficina* to refer to a mafia cell or other small organized-crime structure; still others use *bandas* and *combos* interchangeably, to refer either to street gangs or mafia cells; most claim a *combo* is a gang that is less organized than a *banda,* while some claim just the opposite. The terminology, however, matters less than the observation that the illicit landscape in Medellín was complex and not easily described, despite the false order that academics and historians have attempted to impose upon it.

In this study, the false order I attempted to impose upon it was as follows: I used the terms *gang* or *crew* to describe a nonstate group of people who use violence or commit crimes. A *crew* or *street gang* is a group of people who associate primarily for social (e.g. identity) reasons and are less formally structured and have less strict membership requirements than gangs; most people who use the term *combo* mean it as a synonym for *crew.* A *gang* tends to have a more formal structure (which does not necessarily imply it was hierarchical) and more stringent membership requirements, and its members tend to associate for both social and economic reasons or for primarily economic reasons. It might be associated with organized crime (organized-crime gang), narcotics trafficking (drug gang), or assassination-for-hire (assassin gang or hit squad), or it might be affiliated with nobody else (criminal gang). Most people who use the term *banda* mean it as a synonym for *gang.* I use the term *militia* to describe a nonstate group

either with political aspirations or whose stated goal is to maintain order and protect communities; the term is most often associated with leftist politics in Medellín, but there have been right-wing paramilitary militias as well, not to mention non-political community self-defense or civil-defense groups (variously called *autodefensas, encapuchados, capuchos,* or vigilantes). I use the term *paramilitary* or *para* to describe those militias — sometimes called *bloques* or blocs — that were affiliated with the national paramilitary association, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC: Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia), or one of its affiliates.

This categorization, as loose as it is, does not do justice to the fluid nature of illicit activity and collective violence in Medellín over the past 25 years. Some gangs and crews evolved into militias in the late 1980s (see Chapter 3). Most militias devolved into gangs in the early 1990s (see Chapter 4). The paras at the end of the 1990s came in two flavors: those with purely political aspirations (political paras) and those with links to organized crime and narcotrafficking (narco paras, criminal paras, or simply gangs) (see Chapter 5). After the paramilitary demobilizations of the early 2000s (see Chapter 6), there were, realistically, no more truly political paras in Medellín, only criminal gangs formerly associated with paras, some with a vague, and at best secondary, antisubversive ideology that was clearly dominated by economic interests (see Chapter 7). Indeed, many groups that had been formed for primarily political reasons (e.g. leftist militias, right-wing paramilitaries) or primarily social reasons (e.g. self-defense, vigilante, or social-cleansing groups) also acted in ways that were indistinguishable from the behavior of criminal gangs and organized crime bosses.

Still, we can make some general observations about trends in collective violence in Medellín. Of the three types of collective violence, social violence was associated most strongly with crews, street gangs, and self-defense groups (whose goals revolved primarily around identity or social order); political violence, most strongly with militias and paras (whose goals were territorial control and political power); and economic violence, most strongly with criminal gangs, organized criminals, oficinas, hit squads, and narco paras (whose main goal was to make money: even if they participated in social or political violence, they were mainly hiring themselves out to the highest bidders). These associations were far stronger in the later study periods than they were early on, however: the militias of the 1980s and early 1990s engaged in all three forms of violence (trending toward more economic violence in the end), the paras of the late 1990s and early 2000s were less focused on social order and social cleansing than on political and economic goals, and the post-para criminal gangs of today hardly care about politics or social order, just money.

Teasing out the relative proportions of groups involved in social versus political versus economic violence is not easy, but some hints exist regarding the aggregate number of groups engaged in collective violence. Good numbers are hard to come by before the mid-1990s, but by 1995 it was estimated that there were 156 such groups operating in the city, a number that surely was approximate (it came from a gangster-sponsored informal census) and that may have been either higher or lower than the number ten years earlier.[30] (There were probably more gangs in the mid-1980s than the mid-1990s, since the late 1980s is known to have been a period of consolidation; see

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[30] "Esos territorios se convirtieron en zonas vedadas para el resto de la comunidad. Traspasar sus fronteras podía costar la vida." Semana, "Paz de verdad," ["Real peace,"] 8 May 2000.

Chapter 3.) By the end of the 1990s, a different source estimated, there were about 8,000

people, most between the ages of 15 and 25, who were members of somewhere between

180 and 220 different gangs involved in "criminal activities such as assassination-for-

hire, kidnapping, extortion, bank robbery, vehicle theft, etc., whether on their own

initiative or under contract to criminal, guerrilla, or self-defense organizations."[31] The

number of gangs, according to still another source, was about 200 in 2003, 150 in 2004,

and 100 in 2005 while the total number of illicit armed actors in Medellín went from

about 7,000 in 2003 to about 4,000 in 2005.[32]

Because these figures come from different sources whose methods are not

transparent, it is impossible to know the degree to which they are comparable across time

periods. However, these figures are not necessarily inconsistent with the qualitative

history told in Part I. Given the qualitative and quantitative evidence available, therefore,

it would not be too much of a stretch to cautiously suggest that, very roughly speaking,

there were probably about 200 gangs associated with collective violence in Medellín

around 1990, about 150 around 1995, about 200 around 2000, and about 100 around

2005, figures that roughly correspond to the trends in homicides. (Other estimates of

groups associated with different forms of collective violence are not consistent with these

figures; see the next three sections.) Even if there is a rough correlation between

homicide rates and number of gangs or gang members, what cannot be known is whether

the gangs were a generator of homicides or the homicides were a generator of gangs.

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[31] "… actividades criminales como el sicariato, el secuestro, la extorsión, el asalto a bancos, el robo de vehículos, etc., bien por su iniciativa o bien porque son contratados por organizaciones criminales, guerrilla y autodefensas." Luis Fernando Duque, *Antecedentes y Evolución del Programa de Convivencia Ciudadana de Medellín*, 20.

[32] Jorge Giraldo Ramírez, "Conflicto Armado Urbano y Violencia Homicida: El Caso de Medellín."

Perhaps homicides and gang formation were elements of a feedback loop driven by security dilemmas, in which people formed gangs in self-defense out of fear of rising homicides, but the defensive posture was mistaken for offensive intention, triggering conflict and further homicides, which increased fear, which triggered further gang formation, and so on. But this is only speculation to be considered for future research.

In the public-health study discussed in the previous section, Duque suggested that some of the risk factors for violence can be explained by the possibility that many crimes committed with a weapon were probably perpetrated by members of gangs, militias, or paramilitaries. If that is the case, then the presence of a weapon in the commission of a crime might be a rough indicator of collective violence, and Duque's survey might therefore provide some clues regarding the approximate magnitude of collective violence in Medellín. Asked about their lifelong experiences with violence, 42.9 percent of residents surveyed reported themselves as having been physically attacked with a weapon (although the type of weapon or the nature of the attack is not specified) and 38.0 percent as having been threatened with a weapon at some point in their lives. On the perpetrator's side of such incidents, 6.3 percent of survey respondents said that they had threatened somebody with a weapon, and 3.6 percent had physically attacked somebody with a weapon. In other words, a little more than 40 percent of the population of Medellín have been victims, and a little less than five percent have been perpetrators, of *physical* collective violence, while a little less than 40 percent have been victims and a little more than five percent have been perpetrators of *psychological* collective violence — or, to keep it simple, about 40 percent of Medellín residents have been victims and about five percent have been perpetrators of collective violence at some point in their lives. (By the

same logic, Duque's survey would suggest the rough magnitude of the problem of

interpersonal-communal violence: 15.1 percent had been victims and 17.0 percent had

been perpetrators of one or more physical attacks at some point during the year before the

survey [physical manifestation], while 38.4 percent had been victims and 3.9 percent had

been perpetrators of one or more "severe" threats without a weapon at some point in their

lives [psychological manifestation].)[33]

The next three sections briefly review the general trends in social, political, and

economic violence in the city.

8.5.1. Social Violence

Collective-social violence is perpetrated by one or more members of a social,

ethnic, linguistic, religious, or other such group formed for reasons of affection, common

interest, common history, or identity, including youth gangs, street gangs, civic

associations, ethnic mobs, and so on. Such violence is committed to enforce respect,

express pride in the in-group, express disdain for an out-group (such as a competing gang

or a different racial or ethnic group), to defend or acquire territory for the purpose of

social control, or to punish members for violating in-group rules, among other reasons.

Little data are available to quantify the problem of social violence. The only data sets I

was able to acquire were the People's Training Institute (IPC: Instituto Popular de

Capacitación) a research and advocacy organization whose definitions and methods were

not at all transparent ("homicides due to social intolerance," 1988-1997), and by

Colombia's medical examiner, the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Sciences

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[33] Luis Fernando Duque, *La Violencia en el Valle de Aburrá: Su Magnitud y Programa Para Reducirla*, 188.

(Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses) whose standards were also

not transparent ("homicides with a social-cleansing motive," 1998-2004). Both provided

data for all of the department of Antioquia, so there were no disaggregated figures

available for Medellín. Nevertheless, taken together, those figures had a correlation

coefficient of 0.40 with homicides in Medellín, and a look at the chart of the two figures

does show some common movement (see Figure 8-8, p. 347). [34]

The exception is for the year 1997, when homicides associated with social

cleansing spiked from 73 in 1996 to 204 in 1997 (removing that outlier, the correlation

coefficient with homicides is 0.69[35]). It is hard to know what to make of the outlier,

especially given the magnitude reported by Medicina Legal the following year. Either

something happened somewhere in Antioquia in 1997 that pushed the social-cleansing

figure to astronomical heights, or there was some kind of measurement bias in the IPC

study. In Colombia, many advocacy organizations that collect data on violence against

the populations they represent have a tendency to report that the year leading up to the

publication of any given report, and especially their annual reports, had been the "worst"

year in memory: the figures are almost always "bad," the trend is almost always "worse,"

and the methods that lead them to come to these conclusions are almost always opaque.

IPC is usually much more reliable than most of its peers, however, so I am hesitant to

characterize the outlier as an anomaly of its data or the organization as having a deficit of

integrity. The most likely explanation is that, as the Metro Bloc prepared to take over

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[34] Author's calculations based on Base de Datos del Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC), published in *Guerra, Paz y Derechos Humanos en Antioquia [War, Peace, and Human Rights in Antioquia]* (Medellín, Colombia: IPC, 1998), for 1988-1997, and Medicina Legal for 1998-2004.

[35] Ibid.

Figure 8-8. Social Cleansing in Antioquia versus Homicides in Medellín
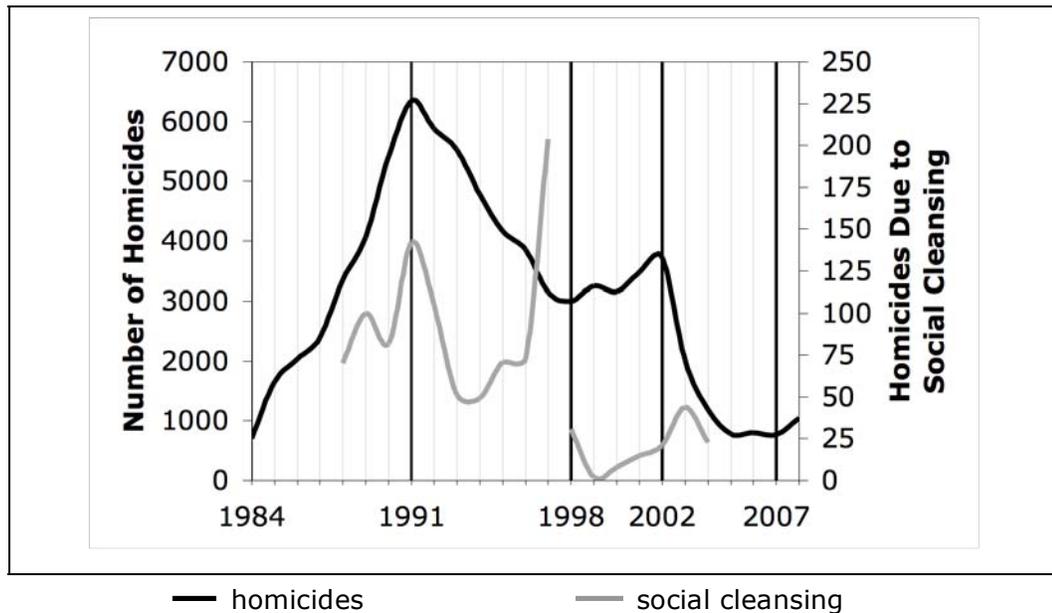
Sources: Secretaría de Gobierno Municipal de Medellín, Subsecretaría de Orden Civil, Unidad de Convivencia Ciudadana (homicides, 1986-2008; figures for 1984-1985 estimated by author from rate data and population); Base de Datos del Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC), published in *Guerra, Paz y Derechos Humanos en Antioquia [War, Peace, and Human Rights in Antioquia]* (Medellín, Colombia: IPC, 1998) (homicides due to social intolerance, 1988-1997); Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses (homicides with a social-cleansing motive, 1998-2004).

Medellín in 1997, it entered surrounding villages and some of the city's barrios and engaged in social-cleansing campaigns as a way of ingratiating itself to the communities fed up with the abuses of the militias (see § 5.1.1). This almost certainly accounts for much of that spike, but 1997 seems a little bit too early, and an almost-tripling of social cleansings seems a little bit too high, for that to be the full explanation, so until better data are acquired, this spike will have to remain at least partly unexplained.

Nevertheless, what can be observed from this data are otherwise fairly consistent with anecdotal evidence. Social cleansing rose during the first study period (1984-1991) as militias targeted the "social undesirables" who were posing a threat to Medellín's

peripheral communities, then fell at the beginning of the second study period (1991-1998) as the militias consolidated their control, but then fluctuated and rose as the militias became corrupted and started overreaching in their social-cleansing campaigns around mid-decade, and as members of the community, and later the paras, responded with social-cleansing campaigns of their own — with some militants now defined as socially undesirable. During the third study period (1998-2002), the distinctions among social cleansing, political violence, and economic violence became increasingly fuzzy, which might account for the rise in social cleansing beginning in 1999 (e.g. paras targeting socially undesirable, drug-dealing militants; see Chapter 5). As the fourth study period (2002-2007) got underway, all forms of violence began to fall, and it looks like social violence might have done so as well, even though there are no data available after 2004. I have not found any evidence that social cleansing has begun to rise during the wave of violence that began in 2007, but absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

Another form of social violence is perpetrated by street crews, but unfortunately there are even less data for that than for social cleansing. One study found that, during the fourth study period, the number of street crews (combos) fell from 6,300 in 2003, to 5,900 in 2004, to 4,000 in 2005, a 37 percent decline in three years, which tracks very well with the decline of the homicide rate.[36]

8.5.2. Political Violence

Collective-political violence involves acts committed by one or more members of a group that makes or purports to be making decisions about political goods; for example,

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[36] Jorge Giraldo Ramírez, "Conflicto Armado Urbano y Violencia Homicida: El Caso de Medellín."

they are doing the job they think a government should be doing. Such groups might include agents of states and governments (police, military, and other security forces) whether acting in their official capacity or not, or might include nonstate or illegal organizations such as paramilitaries, vigilante groups, self-defense groups, militias, or guerrillas. Acts of political violence can include war, assassination, forced displacement, imprisonment, and the forced disappearance of political opponents and human-rights defenders, among other acts. While economic violence has been the most pervasive form of violence in Medellín (see next section), political violence is what has been studied the most.

Yet much of the writing is polemical in nature, and most of the data are simply untrustworthy, gathered and published by advocacy organizations whose every incentive is to find ways to claim that the problem they track is getting worse every single year. For anyone trying to argue that some aspect of life in Colombia has improved or is improving, this population is the toughest audience imaginable, because they do not trust that things have not been manipulated only to *seem* to be improving: One might say: "Homicides have fallen." And the response would be: "Disappearances are up." One might insist on the facts: "Actually, reports of disappearances are also down." And the response would be: "But they're higher in Colombia than in other countries. "Okay, but massacres have fallen." "No, they've risen." "But only because the definition of *massacre* has been expanded from five people killed at a time, to four, to three, as the actual number of massacres has fallen."[37] "But human rights violations against trade unionists have increased." "Actually, attacks against them have fallen." "But threats

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[37] Andrés Ballesteros, et al., "The Work of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch: Evidence From Colombia," working paper, *Documentos de CERAC* 003639 (Bogotá: Centro de Recursos para el

Figure 8-9. Trends in Political Violence versus Homicides
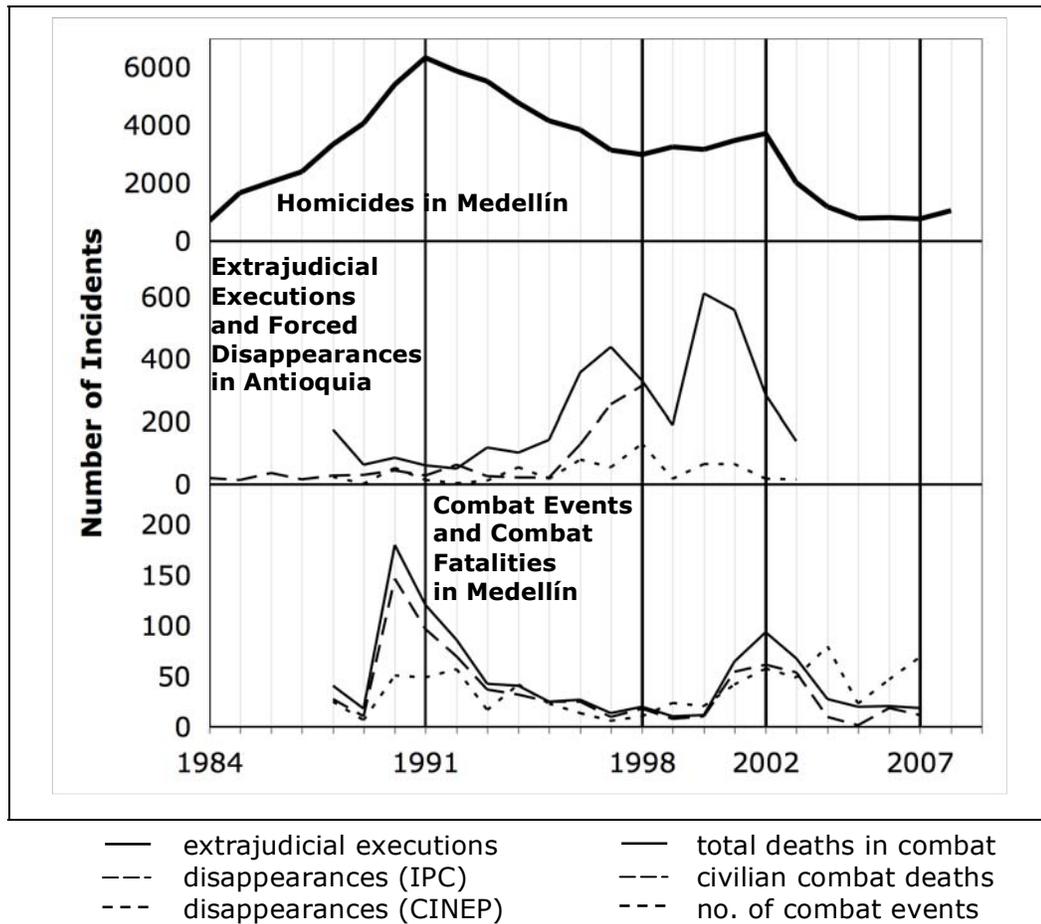
Sources: Secretaría de Gobierno Municipal de Medellín, Subsecretaría de Orden Civil, Unidad de Convivencia Ciudadana (homicides, 1986-2008; figures for 1984-1985 estimated by author from rate data and population); Banco de Datos de Derechos Humanos y Violencia Política, CINEP (Diciembre 2004) (extrajudicial executions and disappearances, 1988-2003); Base de Datos de Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC) (disappearances, 1986-1998); Centro de Recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos (CERAC) Base de Datos de Conflicto (CCDB-CERAC V.8.) (combat events, civilian deaths in combat, and total deaths in combat).

Análisis de Conflictos, 1 February 2007), http://ideas.repec.org/p/col/000150/003639.html (accessed 22 August 2009).

against them have skyrocketed." "What counts as a threat?" "Well, attacks against trade unionists are still higher in Colombia than elsewhere." And so on. I've had many informal conversations like this with otherwise reasonable people in Colombia.

Still, the times series that are available, and that had been collected with reasonably consistent and transparent definitions and methods, tell a story that is consistent with the story developed in Part I of this study. Groups perpetrated political violence by attacking each other or by attacking each other's supporters or innocent civilians. Figure 8-9 (p. 350) compares the time series for homicides in Medellín (top panel) with some indicators for violence against each other (bottom panel) and some indicators for violence against civilians (middle panel).

The indicators for political violence against civilians — forced disappearances (two different indicators, with a correlation coefficient of 0.79 between them) and extrajudicial executions — are for Antioquia as a whole, because none were available for just the city of Medellín. What stands out most in these figures is the relentless rise in extrajudicial executions (selective killings of civilians outside of the formal justice system) beginning in the mid-1990s, as well as the less dramatic overall increase in the two measures of forced disappearances. Some of these were perpetrated by death squads (the 1993 spike was probably attributable to the Pepes; see § 2.1.3), state security forces, and leftist militias or guerrillas. But the dramatic increase in executions and disappearances was due mainly to the activity of the paramilitaries, who nevertheless, in late 2001, after their long pattern of human rights abuses had earned them the official ire of the United States, made an active decision to lower their profile and switch from a paramilitary to a "parapolitical" strategy (see § 6.1.1); hence the major decline in 2002.

The indicators for political violence between and among the different armed actors themselves — combat involving guerrillas (and leftist militias), state security forces, or paramilitaries — are for battles that took place within Medellín's city limits: combat events, total combat fatalities, and the "collateral damage" of such combat (the proportion of combat fatalities in which the victims were civilians). What stands out here is how well the patterns of combat match the patterns of homicides more generally, with clear peaks in 1990 and 2002. Since the number of total combat deaths is only a tiny proportion of total homicides (3.3 percent in 1990; 2.5 percent in 2002), this is very strong evidence that the interpersonal-communal murders that made up the majority of the homicides in the city during study period were enabled by a breakdown in the rule of law brought about by what seems to be mainly collective-political violence — although it should be noted, as it is in the next section, that what has seemed on the surface to be political violence since around 2000 has in fact been largely economic in nature due to the changes in Colombia's political landscape during the 1990s.

8.5.3. Economic Violence

Collective-economic violence involves any group formed for the primary purpose of making money, whether from the sale of goods or services (legal or illegal) or by theft or fraud. This includes most organized crime groups and other criminal conspiracies: mafias, drug traffickers, money launderers, assassins for hire, crime rings, *oficinas,* racketeers, and otherwise legitimate business managers using violence to coerce or enforce a cartel or monopoly arrangement or to take or protect assets. The forced disappearance of trade-union organizers, and the forced displacement of peasants and the

subsequent expropriation of their land, are two examples of economic violence. On the surface they are political acts undertaken in the context of counterinsurgency, but in many cases the counterinsurgent justifications have not withstood scrutiny, especially as the perceived threat of Communism fell with the Soviet Union beginning in the early 1990s: union organizers have been targeted not because of their presumed or suspected subversive sympathies but because unions are threats to corporate profits; peasants in guerrilla territory have likewise been ejected from their lands not because of their presumed or suspected support for guerrillas but because those doing the ejected wanted their land.

Collective-economic violence has been the most visible form of violence in Medellín throughout the entire period under study: the first period was characterized by economic violence from narcotrafficking gangs and hit squads associated with the Medellín Cartel; the second period, from militias that had been corrupted by the opportunities provided by narcotrafficking and the sale of security services; the third, from the Office of Envigado and the narco paras of the Cacique Nutibara Bloc; the fourth, from the narco paras who had never demobilized and from a minority of the paras who demobilized but then returned to narcotrafficking; and the fifth, from the latest generation of narcotraffickers, including those once associated with the narco paras. This has also been the form of violence most commonly cited as reason for concern. One recent survey found that 37 percent of residents considered the greatest source of insecurity in their barrios to be drug trafficking and 25 percent said the greatest threat were street muggings, both associated with collective-economic violence; 17 percent cited the presence of "pandillas" or street crews, but unfortunately the survey did not

characterize what type of gangs these are, so it cannot be concluded whether they were engaged in primarily social or primarily economic violence.[38]

Illicit nonstate actors today are primarily engaged in economic violence, which suggests that they're not interested in territorial control. Again, anti-union violence in the past had been a species of political violence because it took place in the context of an insurgency whose goal was to impose Communism over Colombia, but it was also economic violence then, because wealthy corporations used Communism as an excuse to get rid of challengers to their profits. In other words, anti-guerrilla violence, of which the perpetrators considered anti-union violence to be a species, had primarily political objectives and secondarily economic objectives. Today, anti-guerrilla violence is mostly over control of markets. still both economic and political, but the emphasis has changed such that it is primarily a species of economic violence: during the 1990s, the guerrillas became primarily economic actors, and during the 2000s the main anti-guerrillas, the paras, either demobilized or became primarily economic actors as well.

The most significant long-term trend observed over the 25-year study period was a gradual "corruption" of collective-social and collective-political violence by collective-economic violence: the implicit ratio of economic violence to political or social violence has increased over time, although due to the paucity of reliable data, this ratio has not been able to be quantified. This has come about as violent organizations dedicated to illicit profits (primarily narcotrafficking mafias and hit squads) infiltrated and corrupted violent organizations dedicated to social order (e.g. community self-defense groups), political change (e.g. anti-guerrilla paramilitaries), or both (e.g. urban militias). The illicit

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[38] *Encuesta de Percepción Ciudadana 2008.*

organizations dedicated to profit were non-ideological: they would work with whatever

guerrilla or paramilitary group was in control of whatever territory or micro-territory, as

long as it could help them make money. As Brauer et al argued:

> One might therefore argue that the character of Colombia's 'political'
> violence changed during the 1990s, i.e., that although it was cloaked in
> terms of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary language, the observed
> violence is linked to the economics of the drug traffic. … Revolutionaries
> and counterrevolutionaries become bandits who defend their respective
> territories and interests with murder. If this is correct, the war in Colombia
> in the 1990s was essentially an economic war over access to and
> exploitation of natural resources, not unlike those we observed in Africa in
> the 1990s (e.g., Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola).[39]

To conclude from this, however, that Medellín's violence — or that Colombia's violence

— has been generated only from conflicts over access to illicit resources is to ignore a

substantial body of evidence regarding the role that community actors, and not just state

and nonstate armed actors, have played in the violence. Community members were not

only victims or collaborators in violence, but also perpetrators, enablers, denouncers,

informants, pacifiers, supporters, financiers, and recruits. Understanding the roles played

by nonstate actors and state actors, but not by community actors, therefore misses a

significant part of the story, a story that Part I told and that Chapter 9 will explain.

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[39] Jurgen Brauer, Alejandro Gómez-Sorzano, and Sankar Sethuraman, "Decomposing Violence: Political Murder in Colombia, 1946-1999," note 10.

Chapter 9. Legitimacy and Illegitimacy in Medellín

Legitimacy is worthiness of support or a right to loyalty. To claim that something

is legitimate is to give a moral or normative reason ("it is right") to obey, support, accept,

imitate, comply with, or refrain from opposing it within some bounded range of activity

or experience. To say that one should offer such support, or that something is worthy of

such support, is different from saying that one merely does offer such support: support

can be externally motivated as well — it can be coerced or purchased, for example — but

loyalty and self-motivated support are what make, for example, a social relationship or a

governance structure legitimate, stable, and sustainable.

Illegitimacy is not merely the absence of legitimacy but a worthiness of

opposition: to say that something is illegitimate is to give a moral or normative reason to

ignore, disobey, reject, or oppose it, actively or passively. An obligation of disobedience

or a duty to oppose would both be based on an assumption or an argument that that which

is to be disobeyed or opposed is illegitimate. Legitimacy and illegitimacy do not

necessarily reside on a continuum; they are related but distinct phenomena: one a

worthiness to support, the other a worthiness to oppose. The absence of one does not

imply the presence of the other. For that reason, *delegitimation,* the process in which a

worthiness of support is lost, should be considered a separate, although perhaps prior,

process from what I call *illegitimation,* the process in which a worthiness of opposition is

conferred.

A proper analysis of legitimacy should begin by identifying or defining the *conferee* and the *referee.* The *conferee* is the entity upon which or upon whom legitimacy is or is not to be conferred. Legitimacy may be conferred upon a *role* (within a social, political, economic, or cultural structure or relationship), a *policy* (see next section for definition), a *distribution* (of wealth, power, prestige, status, etc. across a defined set of individuals or groups), or a *structure* (which entails roles, policies, and distributions). Identifying the conferee answers the question: *legitimacy of what?*

The *referee* is the person who is judging the degree to which the conferee is or is not legitimate. Referees include both *outsiders* and *insiders.* Outsiders are people who neither are members of nor are affected by the role, policy, distribution, or structure in question, such as authors of academic papers about legitimacy in other places. Insiders are people who are part of the structure or relationship in question, are affected by the actions of the entity occupying the role, or are affected by the policy or distribution; insiders can be members of *high-status* or *low-status* groups. Identifying the referee answers the question: *legitimacy according to whom?*

Life is lived at multiple levels simultaneously, and legitimacy, being a human phenomenon, is a multi-level phenomenon. A proper analysis of legitimacy, therefore, should identify indicators across multiple level of analysis. Identifying such indicators answers the question: *legitimacy by what criteria?* In other words: what criteria does the *referee* use to judge the degree to which the conferee is or is not legitimate? In different studies of legitimacy, various criteria have been used to identify either some set of *causal indicators* (also called composite or constitutive indicators), which are understood to collectively constitute a measure (index, scale) of legitimacy; or some *effect indicator*

(also called a *proxy* or substitutive indicator) that is understood to measure some phenomenon that comes about as a consequence of the presence of legitimacy and can therefore stand in as a measure of legitimacy.[1]

This study asked three questions: *What were the patterns of violence in Medellín? What explains the changes in the patterns of violence in Medellín?* And, *What role did legitimacy and illegitimacy play in those changes?* The first question was answered in Chapter 8. The second two are related and are discussed in the present chapter. The third question was meant to go beyond those works that study conflict as something that takes place mainly between and among armed actors, whether agents of the state or of nonstate entities; such works ignore the role played by members of the communities where the violence takes place. Community members are not only victims or collaborators in violence, but also perpetrators, enablers, denouncers, informants, pacifiers, supporters, financiers, and recruits. Understanding the roles played by nonstate actors and state actors, but not by community actors, therefore misses a significant part of the story.

To get an accurate picture of the role of legitimacy, I took two approaches. First, I modified and expanded a framework I had previously developed for analyzing legitimacy. The intention was to overcome the greatest weakness of legitimacy research: measurement validity. Most authors who attempt to measure legitimacy acknowledge that they cannot be certain that it is legitimacy and not something else that they are measuring. Those who assert that legitimacy resides primarily in individual belief acknowledge the difficulties of recall and other biases inherent in measuring opinions.

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[1] Kenneth A. Bollen and Richard Lennox, "Conventional Wisdom on Measurement: A Structural Equation Perspective"; Kenneth A. Bollen, "Latent Variables in Psychology and the Social Sciences"; Bruce Gilley, "The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy."

Those who assert that legitimacy resides primarily in group behaviors acknowledge the difficulty of determining whether certain behaviors derive from belief rather than coercion. And those who assert that legitimacy resides in the objective characteristics of the structure under study acknowledge that their outsider judgment of the system's legitimacy may well differ from that of insiders. Yet these authors draw the data or observations that underlie their studies of legitimacy from only one or, at best, two of these levels of analysis (micro, meso, or macro). The framework I designed is intended to be used to look for evidence at all three levels and, by doing so, to provide a higher degree of certainty about what is being measured: if individuals say they believe some structure to be legitimate, and groups act as if they believe that structure to be legitimate, and that structure has characteristics that suggest it operates legitimately, then it is very difficult (albeit not impossible) to argue that legitimacy is not at work in that structure; but if one of those levels does not agree with the others, that suggests that something other than legitimacy is at play (coercion, for example). Furthermore, this framework does not measure only proxies for legitimacy, nor does it measure only causal indicators: rather, it measures both a proxy variable and six causal indicators. This framework is discussed in detail in Appendix C (§§ C.3-C.7); the reader is strongly encouraged to review the discussion in that appendix to be sure the terms are understood precisely as used in the analysis that follows.

Second, I tried to obtain or derive data for as many of these variables as possible across all three levels of analysis (individual, group, and system) by exploring published works and opinion polls and interviewing experts and residents about violence, legitimacy, governance, and territorial control in Medellín and a sector in East Central

Medellín called Caicedo La Sierra. This was an effort to understand both the

microdynamics and the multi-level dynamics of legitimacy. Using the framework

described in Appendix C to organize the analysis, I tried to find evidence related to the

legitimacy or the illegitimacy of community actors, nonstate actors, and state actors. I

was not able to extract data for all seven indicators for all three types of actor at all three

levels of analysis for all 25 years of the study period. However, this study was the first

even to attempt such a systematic analysis of the dynamics of legitimacy amid the

complex violence of Medellín. As such, its findings provide a richer explanation of the

causal mechanisms among territorial control, governance, legitimacy, and violence in

Medellín than had previously been found (or sought), and therefore provides a sound

foundation upon which future research on the dynamics of complex urban violence may

be based.

The study of extreme cases — cases with extremely high or extremely low values

on the study variables — can help to illuminate more general relationships between and

among the phenomena under study.[2] Medellín is an extreme case of high violence, high

both in its level of violence (it had the highest murder rate in the Western Hemisphere in

1991 and again in 2002) and in its level of complexity (in terms of the variety of actors,

their shifting motivations, and the instability of their alliances). But Medellín is also an

extreme case of instrumental social relations: social capital and trust among strangers are

extremely low, and the tendency for expediency or exploitation to be used to achieve

short-term results at the expense of long-term relationships is extremely high; it's the

kind of place for which Immanuel Kant must have imagined his hypothetical Kingdom of

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[2] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 47; Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 24.

Ends as a corrective.[3] As such, it can be argued that, if a role for legitimacy can be found in an explanation for violence and stability in a place such as Medellín, then legitimacy can be said to at least partly explain something about violence and stability more generally. Does legitimacy — or its opposite, illegitimacy — add anything to our understanding of violence in Medellín that cannot be adequately explained by incentives? If so, what does that imply for theorists of legitimacy or, more importantly, for policy makers charged with reducing violence in complex environments?

The analysis proceeded as follows. First, I identified a set of proxy (effect) indicators, at three levels, for legitimacy and illegitimacy (and in some cases for neutrality). This step was useful as a quick first cut at an analysis because of the small number of variables that needed to be evaluated.

Second, I identified a set of causal indicators, also at three levels, and also for legitimacy and illegitimacy (and neutrality wherever possible). This step supplemented the analysis of the proxy variables, and was necessary because proxies can take on the same value whether they are caused by legitimacy or by some other phenomenon, such as coercion or fear, making it impossible to determine which of those phenomena actually generated the proxy. Identifying causal indicators — measures of phenomena that are known to contribute to the emergence of legitimacy — helps determine whether legitimacy was involved: if the sorts of things that are known to cause legitimacy are present, and if the value of those causal variables are congruent with the value of the proxy variables identified earlier, then that gives a pretty good reason to believe that

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[3] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals,* trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper & Row, 1967 [1785]; reprint 1958).

legitimacy was involved. (See § C.7 for a discussion of how proxy and causal variables can be measured.)

Third, I determined whether each indicator was congruent across all three levels of analysis. This step helped to tease out the degree to which legitimacy was involved relative to other potential explanations: a higher degree of congruence suggests higher legitimacy and offers higher confidence in the judgment about legitimacy's involvement.

Fourth, I determined whether the referee indicators were congruent between high-status and low-status insiders. This step helped to account for the possibility that support came simply as a result of expedience (i.e. people benefit) rather than as a result of congruence between conferee attributes and referee values; higher congruence between high-status and low-status groups suggests higher legitimacy.

Finally, I reversed the direction of the analysis so that the conferees (nonstate armed actors, § 9.3.1) became the referees, and the referees (community actors, § 9.3.2) become the conferees. This step, reflecting the observation that legitimacy is a two-way street, helped to account for the possibility that low-status groups' support derived from adaptive preferences: if low-status residents (as referees) consider the power of nonstate armed actors to be legitimate, but the nonstate armed actors (as referees) do not consider the power of the low-status residents to be legitimate, then this lack of congruence suggests that the low-status residents had a reason to adapt their preferences (thereby indicating lower legitimacy), whereas congruence suggests they did not have a reason to adapt. (A final section in the analysis, § 9.3.3, briefly considers the role of state actors in the dynamics of legitimacy, but does not dwell on that role since it was so limited until late in the study period.)

One can claim with confidence that legitimacy was involved if: the things that legitimacy causes are present; the things that cause legitimacy are present; both sets of things are present and congruent at three levels of analysis; both sets of things are present and congruent across two levels of status; and both sets of things are present and congruent in two directions. If this is the case, then one can still argue that legitimacy had nothing to do with the support or stability that is observed, but the burden of proof at that point will have shifted to the person making that claim. And if one can find this in Medellín, an extreme case of instrumental social relations, then one can still argue that there does not exist a role for legitimacy in support or stability more generally, but again the burden of proof will be on the person making that argument.

9.1. Proxy Indicators

One can imagine any number of *public-attributes proxy* indicators for the legitimacy of the nonstate armed actors who controlled micro-territories or statelets in Medellín, but the most direct proxy is probably the extent of internal repression or coercion: If the nonstate armed actors believed that they had the support of the residents of the areas they controlled, then they would have no reason for repression or coercion. If they believed they had little or no internal support (low legitimacy or neutrality), their behavior would tend to be coercive. And if they believed there was a chance of internal rebellion (illegitimacy), their behavior would tend to be repressive. Those groups to whom local residents voluntarily contributed money, supplies, and volunteers, therefore, would be considered more legitimate than those who raised resources through the *vacuna* system (extortion rackets), who in turn would be considered less illegitimate than those

who regularly killed or displaced internal adversaries or sealed off the borders to outsiders (out of fear that insiders who wished to rebel would seek help from outsiders who wished to control the area).

Closely related, of course, would be a *group-behavior proxy* that measures acts of support by residents, such as voluntary participation in programs sponsored by the armed actors or voluntary contributions to the armed actors' budget. The degree to which these behaviors were voluntary would be partly indicated by the amount of punishment visited upon those who did not participate or contribute (a public-attribute measure), but it is the group behavior itself that is the indicator of legitimacy. Non-participation, a reluctance to contribute, and protests against some aspect of the armed actors' leadership would indicate neutrality or low legitimacy, while acts of sabotage or theft against the armed actors' resources and attacks against the armed actors themselves (or their supporters) would indicate illegitimacy.

Finally, an *individual-belief proxy* might measure the way residents expressed support, opposition, or indifference (verbally or in writing). Expressing pride in a family member or a friend who had become a member of the armed actor's organization, expressing satisfaction with their leadership or with the overall direction that their barrio was taking, or expressing a generally favorable impression of the armed actors themselves would all count as proxy indicators for a belief in their legitimacy, while low values on these expressions would indicate low legitimacy or neutrality. Disowning family and friends who joined the armed actors, and expressing disgust with the way things were going or disdain for the armed actors themselves would be proxy indicators for illegitimacy.

9.2. Causal Indicators

Because proxy indicators are effects indicators and can therefore have multiple causes (legitimacy being only one potential cause in this case), using proxies alone does not enable one to identify which cause was active in any given instance. Participation, for example, is a proxy for legitimacy since one of the things that legitimacy does is encourage participation. But other things can encourage participation, too — some reward for participating, some punishment for not participating — and so it would be helpful to identify indicators for other phenomena that cause legitimacy but that do not cause those other things.

These indicators used in this analysis were based on criteria derived from a review of the literatures on legitimacy across several academic and policy disciplines, including political science, sociology, psychology, philosophy, organizational studies, and military doctrine (see § C.6 for a discussion). This review revealed what writers have said over the centuries about what sorts of things make people more likely to offer or withdraw voluntarily support or loyalty: law, tradition, leadership, effectiveness, consent, norms, and so on. These criteria are sometimes called the "sources" or "factors" of legitimacy, and the problem with many such lists and typologies is that they have provided neither a "thick" enough nor a "thin" enough account of the sources of legitimacy: not thick enough because they cannot be used as a field guide to any particular population's reasoning about legitimacy, and not thin enough because they cannot be used as a general guide to human reasoning about legitimacy.[4] For the framework used in this study (see Appendix C), I opted to develop a thinner account to

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[4] Michael Walzer, *Thick and Thin*; Bruce Gilley, "Thick Or Thin? An Empirical Intervention."

demonstrate the very human reasoning that underlies judgments and behaviors about what counts as right or wrong, as worthy or unworthy to support, as a duty to comply or to oppose. By doing so, I was able to capture and incorporate into a single, simple framework the broad range of sentiments and motives underlying the sources identified in the existing literatures. This framework provides a more useful starting point from which the particular, complex, messy details of the dynamics of legitimacy in the real world can later be uncovered. If nothing else, it provides a baseline for the types of questions that should be asked for any study of legitimacy: no fewer questions than are suggested by the framework, but no limits to the questions that can be asked beyond that.

The six criteria that I ended up identifying as basic, "thin" causal indicators for legitimacy are: transparent, credible, justifiable, equitable, accessible, and respectful. *Transparent* and *credible* describe the most basic criteria that motivate people to support a conferee, because together they make life predictable: people want to know, for example, what the rules are and know that they can be enforced non-arbitrarily, even if they don't agree with the rules, and even if they don't benefit from the rules. These two "predictability" criteria do not actually confer legitimacy; they are more like contributory or background conditions, necessary but not sufficient, that make it possible for people to live their daily lives and plan out personal projects within the given constraints. To put it another way: predictability will not generate legitimacy (and voluntary support), but its significant absence will almost certainly generate illegitimacy (and active opposition). The *justifiable* criterion tends to be the central component of legitimacy, as it captures the values people hold most dear — their judgments about what is right (in accord with valuable norms or rules), good (in accord with valuable outcomes), proper (in accord

with valuable processes), and admirable (representative of their values) — and therefore worthy of their support or loyalty. The *equitable* criterion reflects ideas about fairness: people want to be assured that inequalities are justified and that, if they have less of something that someone else has, it is for a good reason. The *accessible* criterion captures much of the literature on consent as the basis for legitimacy, but goes beyond what many authors consider to be a strictly democratic basis; regardless of the specific system of consent or public reason, what people want is some assurance that they have a voice, some say in how the things that affect them operate. Finally, the *respectful* criterion captures the literature on human dignity and pride: consistently disrespectful treatment, even if everything else is justified, equitable, and accessible, tends to create tension with people's desire and ability to be loyal or offer support.

These six criteria together represent a rather thin conception of legitimacy: everybody can agree in principle that, for example, the rules regulating political and social relations should be transparent, credible, justifiable, equitable, accessible, and respectful. Actually measuring legitimacy, however, is a matter of measuring what these adjectives mean in a real-world context. What they mean will differ depending on whether the conferee is a role, a policy, a distribution, or a structure. Table C-2 in Appendix C lists each of these criteria and suggests how the basic questions might be formulated based on the type of conferee (it does not list structure, because structure encompasses roles, role-holders, policies, and distributions); for conceptual completeness, it additionally includes a generic proxy indicator. This framework and these criteria guided the identification of causal indicators, which are discussed presently.

9.2.1. Transparent

Did the nonstate armed actors in control of territory let internal residents know the terms of engagement: how they were going to govern; what the rules, the reasoning behind the rules, and the consequences of breaking the rules were; and so on? Efforts to communicate (honestly) with the community and to explain their reasoning, in language the community can understand (whether written or oral), would count as a high level of transparency and would indicate stronger legitimacy; weak efforts to communicate and explain, or doing so incomprehensibly, would be lower transparency and indicate weaker legitimacy; and deception would indicate opacity and no legitimacy or illegitimacy. These are *public-attributes* indicators. A *group-behavior* indicator of legitimacy by transparency might be residents' compliance with the armed actors' rules and commands (since one cannot comply unless one knows what it is that one is complying with), whereas an indicator for low legitimacy or even illegitimacy might be conscientious objection. An *individual-belief* indicator would simply be the residents' ability to accurately state the rules, the reasoning, or the governance objectives of the armed actors, or a statement that they believe they know what the rules and so on are.

9.2.2. Credible

Were the nonstate armed actors capable of carrying out their promises and obligations? Were their rules enforceable and enforced? Did they govern in a way that enabled residents to carry out daily activities and engage in long-term planning? A history of success in implementing their policies (i.e. outcomes accord with their stated objectives) and effectiveness in creating a predictable living environment would be signs

of credibility and *public-attributes* indicators of legitimacy by credibility, whereas a history of failure would indicate the opposite. Evidence that residents actually do go about their daily activities or engage in some degree of long-term planning might work as *group-behavior* indicators of credibility (legitimacy), whereas evidence that they live "for the moment" or that they habitually disobey orders and break rules might indicate an absence of credibility (neutrality or illegitimacy). *Individual-belief* indicators for credibility might include the fact that people talk about the future (especially if they express hope for the future) or express confidence (or even fear) that the armed actors can do what they say they will do (legitimacy), while indicators for a lack of credibility might be reports by individuals that they do not trust the armed actors, have no hope for the future, or believe that you can get away with breaking the rules (neutrality) or that the armed actors habitually lie or that they will probably be out of power soon (illegitimacy).

9.2.3. Justifiable

Did the nonstate armed actors enforce, promote, embody, or otherwise behave in accordance with the community's sense of the right, the good, the virtuous, and the admirable? Or did they transgress the behavioral or symbolic norms of the community?

To measure this, it helps to know a little something about the range of things that the community in question actually values, because the best *public-attributes* indicators will be those that measure the degree of congruence between those values and the structure, behavior, or identity of the armed actors. What traits or virtues are most important to the most influential community actors, or which do they consider most admirable: loyalty, courage, equanimity, bombast, charisma, integrity, empathy,

diligence, creativity, generosity, humility, self-confidence, prudence, boldness, etc.? Do they value material success above all else? Do they root for the underdog or for the proven winner? Do they tend to be more authoritarian or libertarian in their internal social relations? More "conservative" or more "liberal" (in the local interpretation of those terms)? To what degree is pluralism valued? What roles do religion and tradition play, and what roles do people think religion and tradition should play? Do people idolize the same historical figures and role models and merely interpret what they represent in different ways, or do different subgroups idolize different figures entirely? How strong are nationalist or tribalist sentiments, in-group favoritism, out-group prejudices, or bigotry in general? How easily is disgust expressed? What sorts of careers or spouses do parents aspire for their children to have? What are their views of equality (see *equitable,* below)? To what degree is dissent permitted? To what degree is freedom of expression valued? What are the most important manners and folkways and how strictly do community actors insist upon their observance? Do they recognize other ways of life as being valuable (if perhaps locally inappropriate) or do they judge them as simply being wrong? With this information, and with an effort on the part of the analyst to keep his or her own values out of the analysis, one can make a judgment about the degree to which the nonstate armed actors accorded with residents' values and beliefs (legitimacy) or antagonized their most deeply held convictions (illegitimacy).

The best *group-behavior* indicators for the *justifiable* criterion might measure the presence of or participation in demonstrations of support (legitimacy), protests (low or no legitimacy), or outright rebellions (illegitimacy) in which the language of morality, religion, values, or virtue played a prominent role. *Individual-belief* indicators might

measure attitudes toward those group behaviors or, in the absence of such behaviors, might analyze the language people used to refer to the nonstate armed actors and what they did or represented. For example, what epithets did they use to express disapproval (e.g. in the United States, calling a politician "French" is considered an insult), and did they use words and phrases like *moral, immoral, disgusting, admirable, hero, good for us, bad for us, inspiring, holy, righteous, evil,* and so on to describe the nonstate armed actors or their actions or policies?

9.2.4. Equitable

Did the distribution of influence, respect, and well-being among the residents living in the nonstate armed actors' territory accord with the residents' views of merit? Things can be unequally distributed without there being any adverse influence on the level of legitimacy, as long as that inequality was not unjustified according to the standards of the community. A *public-attribute* indicator should not measure simple inequality, as that would miss the point of inequity: what matters is not the degree of inequality but the degree of *locally unjustified* inequality, which is to say, inequity. Still, equity is difficult to measure directly, so it is probably necessary to combine public-attribute measures of equality — wealth is usually the most accessible measure, but one can also consider the degree of social or economic mobility — with *group-behavior* indicators, such as demonstrations and protests that used the language of identity, justice, privilege, or pride, or with *individual-belief* indicators, such as statements about the degree to which people believed they either had or could get what they deserved, perhaps derived from an analysis of how low-status individuals explained their own status.

9.2.5. Accessible

Did residents have (or believe they had) influence over the nonstate armed actors'
policies and policy outcomes? Evidence that policy processes allowed for some degree of
public participation, even if it was as simple as allowing residents to ask for help in
resolving a conflict or hosting community meetings at which people could air grievances
or request assistance, might work as *public-attributes* indicators of legitimacy by
accessibility. The best *group-behavior* indicator is simply the level of actual
participation: public demonstrations of support (legitimacy), protests (low legitimacy or
neutrality), or acts of sabotage or rebellion (illegitimacy). But others can be imagined:
Did people regularly approach the armed actors seeking help? In electoral systems, did
people vote? *Individual-belief* indicators might measure the degree to which people
reported feeling empowered, disempowered, or marginalized.

9.2.6. Respectful

Were residents' identities, values, opinions, membership in the community, and
input into policies treated as being valuable? The habitual humiliation or denigration of
residents or some subgroup of residents is a clear *public-attribute* causal indicator of
illegitimacy, whereas treating people according to the community's manners indicates
legitimacy. The way people acted toward each other in the street is a *group-behavior*
indicator of the degree to which people thought they are treated with respect: if residents
had taken to making threatening demands for respect in the street, that suggests they
believed they were not getting enough respect from either higher-status community
members or from the nonstate armed actors who controlled their territory (neutrality or

illegitimacy), while a culture in which people were generally civil to one another on the streets might indicate that they did not feel they were habitually disrespected. Finally, *individual-belief* indicators that people felt respected might include statements about the degree to which they felt they were treated with dignity or recognized as valued members of the community, or the degree to which they believed the nonstate armed actors had created an environment that was elevating and civil.

9.3. Analysis

To answer the question about the role that legitimacy or illegitimacy played in the changes in the patterns of violence in Medellín, I took the steps described in the previous sections and tried to obtain or derive data for as many of the framework's variables as possible across all three levels of analysis (individual, group, and system) by exploring published works and opinion polls and interviewing experts and residents about violence, legitimacy, governance, and territorial control in Medellín and the sector Caicedo La Sierra. I tried to find evidence related to the legitimacy or the illegitimacy primarily of nonstate armed actors and secondarily of community and state actors. I was not able to find quantitative or qualitative data for all of the framework's indicators for all three types of actor for all five study periods, but keeping in mind the framework's questions as I read the literature, interviewed subjects, and analyzed what data I could find gave the overall analysis a sound basis upon which to build judgments about the microdynamics and multi-level dynamics that are reported in the sections that follow.

9.3.1. Legitimacy of Nonstate Armed Actors

A few years ago I was at a restaurant in Washington, D.C., with a group of people. I was discussing my research with a friend of a friend, a Ph.D. student in political science who late in the conversation told me he considered the field of Policy Studies in general, and the subject of my research in particular, to be a joke: Policy Studies because it produces analysis and not theory, and my research because, as he put it, "there's no such thing as the legitimacy of anything other than states." He was wrong. He would have been wrong had he said it during the 1990s, when nonstate actors were barely getting any press, but he was definitely wrong when he said it in the mid-2000s, when even a cursory reading of power dynamics in Afghanistan and Pakistan would have demonstrated that tribal actors rather than state actors were the leaders who commanded loyalty in the Pashtun areas where Osama bin Laden (and other nonstate actors about whom the United States was suddenly concerned) was now believed to be hiding. The same observation can be made regarding rural Colombia, where the dynamics of power and loyalty have long centered more around local strongmen than around state representatives. Sanho Tree, a drug-policy analyst, once told me that whenever he travels far from Colombia's city centers to its more remote regions, such as the borders with Venezuela or Ecuador, he likes to pose a particular question to locals: What makes you "Colombian"? That is, in what aspect of your identity do feel that you are part of this country called "Colombia"? Almost invariably, he said, he gets the same response: soccer. "They're Colombian because they root for Colombian soccer teams. That's a very thin basis for legitimacy."[5] State actors, in other words, are not always the most salient

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[5] Sanho Tree, personal communication, 14 April 2008.

players in Colombian politics. The next chapter argues that policy makers today have no choice but to pay close attention to the behavior, power dynamics, and, yes, legitimacy of nonstate actors; for the present purposes, I consider the point proven.

To what degree were nonstate actors in Medellín worthy of the support of the people who lived in the micro-territories they controlled? The power that nonstate armed actors in control of territory have, by the definition of *control* (see Appendix A), is the power to prevent governance and therefore the power to define who governs and how they will govern. The question, then, is whether those in Medellín had exercised that power in a way that could be considered worthy of supporting. Proxy indicators for this revolve around the extent to which the nonstate armed actors resorted to internal repression and coercion against residents to keep themselves in power: the habitual killing and displacement of internal adversaries and excessive border enforcement (i.e. the automatic killing of strangers and harsh punishment against insiders seen with outsiders) would tend to indicate that they were not considered worthy of voluntary support, that is, that they were illegitimate; excessive coercion, especially vacunas, would tend to indicate neutrality or low legitimacy; and the absence of anything above minimal levels of both would tend to indicate higher legitimacy, as would evidence of residents' voluntary contributions of money, supplies, and volunteers. Which groups had these features, and when? For the causal indicators, one can ask: Which groups acted in a way that was transparent, credible, justifiable, equitable, accessible, and respectful? Which groups did residents believe — and which groups did residents act like they believed — were transparent, credible, justifiable, equitable, accessible, and respectful?

To answer these questions, I drew on the cases presented in Part I to review the strategies and behaviors employed by the various crews, gangs, militias, and paramilitaries that have sought to win territorial control or local access to global illicit markets and the reactions of community actors to those strategies and behaviors.

The poor hillside barrios on Medellín's periphery had started out as nearly "ungoverned" but relatively stable areas. There was violence and crime, but they were at a level that most residents could tolerate and address within existing social structures. Evidence suggests that their tolerance was due to the strength of community's social institutions — there were usually a church, some schools, reasonably strong families, and nosey neighbors — and those social institutions had the ability to maintain a respectable degree of social control, despite the scant presence of state institutions (such as police) or other armed actors willing and able to maintain order. In short, control was maintained by the community.

But as the population of Medellín's hillside slums grew with people displaced from the country's conflict in rural areas, the tenuous social order that existed among the populations that lived there was challenged beyond its capacity to continue to instill effective social controls: the influx of outsiders into those communities, including outsiders with different sets of values and mores, simply put too much pressure on their social institutions. Many young people without jobs or social recognition formed street crews and gangs, fought each other, often attacked members of their own communities, and in general both emerged from and contributed to the breakdown in social order in the city's periphery. Violence skyrocketed, as did behaviors deemed offensive or deviant according the socially conservative standards of many longstanding members of those

communities. By the end of the 1980s, one might say that social control lost ground to

territorial control under the law of the jungle: the criminals, crews, and gangs who

emerged amid the overcrowding fought over micro-territories and local access to global

illicit markets, and they clearly had the capability to prevent at least some forms of

outside governance and self-governance. But as rulers of the barrio they were completely

illegitimate in the eyes of the barrio communities: Young people who lived where those

gangs controlled became known as the "No Future" generation; visitors were feared and

sometimes killed upon arrival; and deviant behavior (according to the socially

conservative norms of most residents) was unopposed and so proliferated. The peripheral

barrios came to be characterized by an extreme of unpredictability, instability, and

insecurity — not to mention growing violence — and the residents considered the way

the gangs controlled them to be very worthy of opposition: there was a terrified demand

for a return to social control.

When the M-19 guerrillas set up "peace camps" in some of those barrios, they

were welcomed by many as the only force both willing and able to confront the growing

insecurity and social deviance (see § 3.1.1). These peace camps offer a fairly typical

example of a strategy of legitimation. The M-19 "sponsored community sancochos

[parties at which a traditional stew is made], retreats, or other activities to win the

community's affection, they organized commissions to solicit cash donations from the

business community … [and these] donations were made without major reservation, since

the M-19's camps had offered security and recreation to these forgotten sectors." The

street crews and gangs, who had found themselves opposed by most residents, lost their

control over territory (and many lost their lives) to the peace campers, who had won the support of some residents (most residents remained neutral).

But when the M-19 left the barrios that they had briefly controlled and governed, some of its members who had stayed behind formed new groups that operated more like the gangs they had been organized originally to counter, and "the donations that at first were given willingly became obligatory payments or *vacunas*." The punishments for not paying for the new gangs' protection "services" became increasingly repressive. One gang that had been founded by former M-19 peace campers, Los Nachos, once punished a small-business owner who had not paid his vacuna by setting one of his buses on fire — with three teenagers who worked for him still inside.[6] Without guidance from leaders with a political program, and with growing access to opportunities to make easy money, the former peace campers abandoned their legitimation strategy, and so abandoned their legitimacy.

The urban militias that formed during the late 1980s and early 1990s (to combat both the earlier type of street crew and the later, more capable gangs whom the peace camps had trained) emerged in those barrios by an explicit strategy of legitimation, as the M-19 had before them. These early militias were successful because they created statelets (see § A.1) — they acted as "a state inside the state" — and governed in a manner consistent with their legitimacy-building strategies. They provided security to communities suffering from a severe breakdown in social order; they achieved a great

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[6] "... cuando los campamentos realizaban un sancocho comunitario, una retreta y otra actividad para ganarse el afecto de la comunidad, organizaban comisiones para solicitar la colaboración en especie a los negocios del sector. ... El aporte del comercio se daba entonces sin mayores reparos pues los campamentos del M-19 habían ofrecido seguridad y recreación a estos sectores olvidados. Cuando los jefes del M-19 salieron de El Popular, los aportes que en principio eran de buena voluntad se convirtieron en cuota obligatoria o vacuna ...." Gilberto Medina Franco, "Una Historia de las Milicias de Medellín (Historia Sin Fin)," 24.

deal of social support as a result of this security and the social work that followed; and they were explicitly dedicated to encouraging and promoting the communities' own moral values within the poor barrios they controlled.[7]

The militia that formed in upper Caicedo La Sierra, the November 6 and 7 Militia (M-6&7), was a fairly typical case in point. M-6&7 started out with a good deal of support from most community actors based on a relationship of legitimacy. I base this conclusion on an analysis using the framework described in this chapter. With respect to the public-attributes causal indicators, M-6&7 made its rules known (transparent), demonstrated its capability to enforce them (credible), became advocates for the communities' own moral values (justifiable), allowed people to approach them to resolve conflicts and disagreements (accessible), and by most accounts treated most community members with dignity (respectful), at least at first. (The barrio's low-status members — the so-called disposable people — certainly were treated very unequally, but I found no reliable information to support any claims about how *inequitably* they or other members of the community felt the militants had acted.)

Most group-behavior and individual-belief causal indicators pointed to M-6&7's relatively high legitimacy as well (relative to other nonstate armed actors who had controlled that and other territories on Medellín's periphery):

- *Transparent.* Residents (both high-status and low-status) seemed to know the rules, and high-status residents usually (and low-status residents most of the time) generally complied with them.

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[7] Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Ana María Jaramillo, "Crime, (Counter-)Insurgency and the Privatization of Security."

- *Credible.* At all status levels, people would express confidence in the militias' ability to maintain stability and enforce the rules, and they demonstrated that confidence by actually going about their daily activities within the constraints of those rules.

- *Justifiable.* Most residents, even those who disagreed with the militias' politics, would say they generally approved of the way the militias ruled, not only with respect to security but also with respect to the way they addressed what most community members considered dangerous or deviant behavior (such as drug sales and prostitution); many young people talked about their dreams of joining the militias, an indicator of their admiration for them; and a lot of people (high- and low-status alike) participated in militia-sponsored community activities such as festivals, although I did not find much more evidence about participation than that.

- *Equitable.* I found some weak evidence regarding the degree to which the militias were considered equitable, mainly in the form of anecdotes about how even mothers whose children were socially cleansed or violently punished for breaking curfews supposedly agreed that their children deserved their punishment; and low-status residents did not generally protest their status, but I could not find much verbal evidence to determine whether that was due to fear of punishment or to a belief that they could be better off if only they would try harder (i.e. that their status was not the fault of the militias).

- *Accessible.* Residents of all statuses clearly believed the militias were accessible, because they constantly approached militants with requests to

solve problems or provide some benefit, such as a job or housing. (I could not find reliable individual-belief evidence for this criterion.)

- *Respectful.* In the street people were generally civil to each other, indicating by their behavior that the militias had created a generally respectful environment. (I could not find reliable individual-belief evidence for this criterion either.)

Meanwhile, there continued to be many barrios that the militias never took control over. Those barrios remained in the hands of crews, crews confederated with larger gangs, or those larger gangs themselves, usually with funding from narcotrafficking or assassination contracts. A lot of those gangs were inconsiderate or abusive to their neighbors, able to maintain control of their barrios mainly by virtue of their economic and military power (i.e. they were able to buy off, displace, or kill any significant source of opposition). But many others took a lesson from the golden era of the militias (pre-1991) — that legitimacy lowers the costs of territorial control — and "were vigorously promoting communitarian causes to win the support of the population":

> They learnt self-discipline and started to impose some basic regulations on criminal activity (you shall not steal in your own barrio, etc.). Other groups — opposed to both the gangs and the militias — appeared, but they too seemed to have learned that to maintain territorial control they had to offer security, some kind of self-discipline, and a constructive, communitarian set of activities.[8]

This dynamic could be seen in lower Caicedo La Sierra, where no militia had ever emerged to take control, either because they never tried to take control of some blocks or because where they tried they failed because the gangs that were there were too well armed. The most significant of these well armed gangs to emerge was La Cañada, whose

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[8] Ibid.

strength derived mainly from the economic resources it was able to bring to the fight. La Cañada was not founded with any political or social program; rather, it grew based on its ability to win economic resources from the illicit economy, primarily through contracts from, and drug sales for, the Medellín Cartel. La Cañada did enjoy some degree of support from the community, which derived from the fact that they did protect favored residents against rival gangs and the militants from above, and took some other steps to keep the community happy. "If the people from the community are happy, you can manage things better," one resident said, since it gives people a reason to act as informants; plus, in a community where a lot of people have already suffered, he added, further harming them would risk turning them into informants for the gang's rivals.[9]

La Cañada's control, therefore, derived primarily from its military strength (it could win acquiescence through coercion) and its economic strength (it could win support through barter), and only secondarily from any relationships of legitimacy: from these public-attributes proxies we can conclude that it had low legitimacy at best. I could not find a good group-behavior proxy, and in terms of individual beliefs, I could find only evidence that a lot of young people, at least, admired the gangsters. So the proxy indicators across levels did not match up well, suggesting that what legitimacy they had was weak or that what support they had was coerced or purchased.

The causal indicators painted an even more mixed picture. La Cañada did a reasonably good job of making its rules and expectations known, and people generally complied (transparent). The gang certainly was capable of enforcement, and people (both high-status and low-status residents) generally went about their business within the

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[9] "Si la gente de la comunidad está contenta usted maneja mejor las cosas." 'Danilo,' Interview No. 10.

constraints those rules imposed (credible). But La Cañada did not explicitly work to embody or promote community values (for example, they permitted drug use, which most in the conservative communities could not approve of), even if they did engage in some social cleansing of the type that at least the high-status residents seemed to support; I found only weak anecdotal evidence regarding the views and behaviors of low-status residents for the *justifiable* criterion. I could not find good evidence for any of the *equitable* indicators, but several residents mentioned that they thought the gangsters were respectful and accessible (e.g. they could be asked to resolve conflicts in the community).

By comparison to the legitimacy of M-6&7 in Upper Caicedo La Sierra, therefore, La Cañada had relatively low legitimacy, or possibly neutrality, in Lower Caicedo La Sierra. Rather than maintaining its territorial control primarily through a strategy of legitimation (actively making itself worthy of the community's support), it seemed implicitly to be engaging primarily in a strategy of illegitimacy-avoidance (working merely to avoid triggering a moral obligation of opposition), by contrast to M-6&7, whose strategy was explicitly one of legitimacy-building.

The fact that both M-6&7 and La Cañada could maintain control for relatively extended periods in their respective territories demonstrates that, at least in the short term, having legitimacy according to the community is a useful, but neither a necessary nor a sufficient, condition to winning or maintaining territorial control. Beyond Caicedo La Sierra, the nonstate armed actors who were able to maintain control over their own micro-territories or statelets for any extended period were those who had access to needed resources (through local resource extraction or from external backers) and who stayed within certain bounds of behavior with respect to their community (illegitimacy-

avoidance). The later, more capable gangs who successfully controlled statelets (as opposed to the earlier small-time gangs who had merely controlled micro-territories) were flush with cash from narcotrafficking and *sicariato* (hired assassination), while the militias who successfully controlled statelets (even those who enjoyed modest support from rural guerrillas) had to depend mostly on local sources of funding.

This analysis suggests that, at least in Medellín, legitimacy has lowered the costs of territorial control while illegitimacy has raised the costs of territorial control. One would therefore expect a resource-poor organization to succeed only if it engaged in a strategy of legitimation, whereas a resource-rich organization could succeed with merely a strategy of illegitimacy-avoidance; that is exactly what was observed with respect to the relatively resource-poor M-6&7 (legitimacy-building) and the relatively resource-rich La Cañada (illegitimacy-avoidance).

This conclusion is strengthened by observing how the militias fell (see Chapter 4) and how the paramilitaries rose (see Chapter 5). Both in Caicedo La Sierra and Medellín as a whole, the relatively resource-poor militants failed in their legitimation strategies and illegitimized themselves by failing to maintain predicable living environments or by transgressing what was morally acceptable to the communities (hypocritically allowing drug use again, for example). Two things raised the costs of the militias' territorial control and led ultimately to their inability to hold on. First, during the 1990s they faced growing pressures from state and nonstate armed actors; as long as they had internal support, they could use what resources they had for external defense. Second, however, their own behavior within their statelets sparked a backlash against their rule, and so they had to use their resources for internal defense as well.

On just about every indicator, the militias first delegitimized and then illegitimized themselves. Consider one proxy for legitimacy: internal repression, in this case in the form of social cleansing. At first welcomed as the only available mechanism for maintaining a defensible social order, these social-cleansing campaigns — the killing of people who engaged in deviant behaviors — meant that, over time, more and more people in the communities were suffering the loss of a family member or a friend to social cleansing. Moreover, the militias kept expanding the types of behavior that they judged as deviant: from dangerous behaviors (e.g. drug selling and treason) to merely disapproved-of behaviors (e.g. homosexuality and poor parenting). In both public attributes (repression) and individual beliefs (expressions of disgust with their behavior), proxies for the militias' legitimacy were showing rapid declines through the mid-1990s.

Other indicators suggested their illegitimation as well. With the lure of easy money from narcotraffickers, and the radicalization and fragmentation brought about by the militias' growing pains, the militias' own behavior was "characterized by the resort to summary executions, arbitrary rule, the community's ignorance about civil and military decisions, [and] the resort to murder as a tool for resolving conflicts within the group."[10] They were becoming unpredictable, and their conflict-resolution methods were seen as increasingly unjustifiable. "Even worse, the negotiation process [that led to the Santa Elena Accords] weakened the broad social support for the militias. As soon as they abandoned their military activities, they forfeited the power that allowed them both to

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[10] "Este periodo, entre 1991-1994, se caracteriza por el recurso a las ejecuciones sumarias, la arbitrariedad, el desconocimiento de la comunidad para la toma de decisiones militares y cívicas, el recurso al homicidio como instrumento de resolución de conflictos al interior del grupo." Arleison Arcos Rivas, "Ciudadanía Armada," 108.

control the gangs and to promote their cherished moral order,"[11] a devastating loss of credibility that accelerated their delegitimation and ultimately resulted in illegitimacy. Their loss of support (neutralization) was reflected in part in their poor showing in subsequent elections: they simply "did not recognize the enormous gap between their imagined constituency, the manual workers, with their complex political culture, and their own rather obscure, revolutionary insider frame of reference."[12] Their ultimate illegitimation was reflected in the communities' willingness, beginning in the late 1990s, to give the paramilitaries a chance.

In short, the main indicators of the militias' illegitimation were: an increased reliance on repression (a proxy indicator); declining levels of transparency, credibility, and accessibility (causal indicators); and their failure to continue "to promote their cherished moral order" and their disconnect from community perspectives (in both cases reflecting the *justifiable* causal indicator).

The paramilitaries' Metro Bloc displaced these militias, beginning in the late 1990s, by using a combination of military force, deal-making, and a weak version of the same legitimation strategies that the militias themselves had used a decade earlier to displace gangs from some of the same barrios (see § 5.1.1): they offered security against abusive strongmen, removed low-status social groups from the community, provided some benefits to supporters and neutral community members, outlawed the sale and use of drugs, and threatened death or displacement to anyone who offered opposition instead of compliance. Where they were particularly effective were in barrios where armed actors

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[11] Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Ana María Jaramillo, "Crime, (Counter-)Insurgency and the Privatization of Security."

[12] Ibid.

already operated with the support of the community and could simply be coopted into

Metro, as was the case with M-6&7 under the leadership of Jason and Édison, who had

effectively staged a coup against the founding militants of M-6&7 who had turned

abusive (see § 5.2). When Metro approached them, Édison was already acting as *de facto*

mayor of upper Caicedo La Sierra, was well liked and respected in the community, and

had a reputation for usually being respectful to residents and fair in his judgments; the

name change did not affect those relationships. These are all strong causal indicators of

legitimacy: equitable and respectful treatment, transparent and justifiable rules, accessible

leaders, and a credible manner of rule.

More generally, however, whatever support the rest of the paras enjoyed during

the late 1990s and at the turn of the millennium derived mainly from their effectiveness

in defeating the hated militias and driving them out of the city, rather than from any

warm relations with community actors, who knew, despite the paras' public protestations

to the contrary, that the units that made up the Cacique Nutibara Bloc were simply the

same drug gangs who had already been working with the Envigado Office. To the degree

legitimacy played a role, it was their legitimacy according to state actors outside of the

barrios they controlled, rather than according to community actors inside. Diego Ríos,

who had grown up there, told the story of a city investigator who came to Comuna 8 to

respond to a citizen's complaint during this period: when the investigator met the woman

who had called, the first thing he asked her was whether she had brought the issue up

with 'Job,' 'Don Berna' Murillo's top aide in that sector. "Imagine that," Ríos said: "A

city detective asking a citizen if she'd taken her complaint to the criminal! Who's really

in charge here?"[13] The state actors knew who they were working with (transparent), and

they worked with them because they seemed to share their antisubversive political

outlook (justifiable) and knew that they were effective (credible). (For more on state

actors' historical support and legitimation of paramilitaries, see the introduction to

Chapter 5.) Community actors generally appreciated Cacique Nutibara's credibility but

did not necessarily offer the higher degree of support that some Metro block units might

have enjoyed.

Even after the paramilitaries demobilized, they did not return to their communities

as common residents. Demobilized paras continued working in the barrios as community

leaders under the same military-like structures they had operated through during their

armed control over the barrios, but they were publicly coy about the degree to which they

continued to be involved in illegal activities such as drug trafficking, extortion rackets,

and forced disappearances (see Chapters 6 and 7). One resident of West Central Medellín

complained that, at least under militia rule, people knew who was dangerous:

> In this barrio, with the paramilitaries, the law of silence reigns. You could
> say we were better off with the guerrilla, because they acted openly. You
> could get killed in a shooting, but at least you knew where the bullets were
> coming from. With the paramilitaries everything happens in secret. We do
> not know exactly who is responsible for the disappearances.[14]

Similar sentiments were expressed in East Central Medellín: that a lot of mid-level

paramilitary commanders were active, but "nobody wants to say who's in charge" or

admit to knowing who was responsible for the selective killings.[15] Since the most basic

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[13] Diego Ríos, Interview No. 4.

[14] Quoted in Ralph Rozema, "Urban DDR-Processes."

[15] "Nadie quiere decir quién manda." Diego Ríos, Interview No. 4.

requirement for a conferee's legitimacy is that the referees know who the conferee actually is, it would be difficult to argue that the paras' rule was legitimate, either according to the residents who lived there or according to the public attributes of their rule. Their secret control over the places they lived was, almost by definition, illegitimate.

To summarize the analysis: The indicators for the legitimacy of the peace-camp guerrillas, of the early-period militias, and, to a lesser degree, of certain paramilitary units associated with the Metro Bloc, all seemed to point in the same general direction and were generally congruent with one another across levels of analysis and status groups, suggesting moderate to *relatively* high levels of legitimacy (although not very high in absolute terms). By contrast, the indicators for the legitimacy of most street crews and gangs, the militias during their corrupted late period, and the paramilitaries associated with Cacique Nutibara were much less consistent across levels and groups, suggesting relatively low levels of legitimacy or more likely neutrality, which implies that phenomena other than legitimacy were most likely behind whatever support or territorial control they enjoyed.

Of course, these indicators were not static. Most people, most of the time, remained neutral toward all of the armed actors, considering them neither legitimate nor illegitimate but merely a fact of life, someone to cooperate with when expedient or to oppose when necessary. But active and morally motivated voluntary support, and active and morally motivated voluntary opposition, still did wax and wane in different places at different times as different armed actors emerged, took control, governed well or poorly, were challenged, and ultimately fell.

The indicators for illegitimacy were highest for those groups who faced credible challenges to their control and then could not hold on much longer. This observation enables us to abstract from the specific situations in the micro-territories and statelets to a general observation about the role that illegitimacy played in the city's complex patterns of violence: When those in control of territory governed in a manner characterized by a lack of transparency and credibility — when they acted unpredictably and their manner of governance made life intolerably unpredictable for residents — they made it very likely that the people they governed would decide that they should be opposed. This illegitimation raised the cost of territorial control, making feasible a contest for control by rivals and thereby triggering collective-violent conflicts (accompanied by interpersonal-communal violence), which complicated efforts to govern in a manner that could make life predictable, which further raised the costs of territorial control, which further alienated residents, and so on, as the cycle repeated until the territory was lost to a different armed actor. In short, illegitimacy has been an "intervening" phenomenon in the city's cycles of violence.

9.3.2. Legitimacy of Community Actors

The analysis of the previous section summarized the dynamics of the legitimacy and illegitimacy of Medellín's nonstate armed actors, both according to community actors' beliefs and behaviors and according to the armed actors' public attributes. If we were to reverse that analysis, making the armed actors the referees of the legitimacy of the community actors, then we would discover the degree to which these dynamics were symmetrical (a two-way street). That is the purpose of this section.

It might not be readily apparent what it would mean for a *community* or for *community actors* to be legitimate under the framework developed for this study. It is more familiar to speak of communities as the referees (those who confer legitimacy upon, for example, a government) and not as the conferees (those upon whom legitimacy is conferred). So it is worth going through the framework step by step to demonstrate. As it was stated earlier, to claim that something is legitimate is to give a moral or normative reason to obey, support, accept, imitate, comply with, or refrain from opposing it within some bounded range of activity or experience. What was the "bounded range of activity or experience" here? What did they demand (obedience, support, imitation, etc.) and of whom did they demand it? And who were "they"?

To begin with, "they" were the people who lived in the peripheral barrios where most of Medellín's violence took place. We could consider them collectively (i.e. residents of barrios designated as "middle low" or below on the city's socioeconomic scale); we could disaggregate them by zone, comuna, barrio, or Community Action Board (JAC) jurisdiction in the official city-planning documents; or we could disaggregate them by their own local spatial identification, that is, by how locals identify where they themselves live, for example by neighborhood (a few streets or city blocks) or by gang territory (areas controlled by a nonstate armed actor). For the present analysis, I focused more or less on gang territory; in Caicedo La Sierra, for example, the main division was between *los de arriba* ("those from above," who lived in M-6&7 or Metro Bloc territory) and *los de abajo* ("those from below," who lived in the territory of the networks of La Cañada and the Cacique Nutibara Bloc). As conferees, the communities

in question could be considered social structures, with roles, rules (however implicit), and distributions of goods and status.

What did they demand, and of whom (i.e. to which referees) did they demand it? Given that this was a study of violence and that most of Medellín's violence was associated with contests over territorial control (and the resultant breakdowns in social order and the rule of law; see Chapter 8), the relevant referees were primarily the nonstate armed actors who controlled their territories and secondarily the state actors whom many residents believed *should* be in control of their territories. Given that this was a study of legitimacy ("worthiness of support"), the relevant "support" that the community demanded of them was, at minimum, non-interference with their daily lives and personal projects, which, due to the low quality of life in these areas, generally revolved around efforts to get adequate food, water, shelter, and a source of income. Beyond that minimum, what they more commonly demanded was protection against violence and an environment in which they could secure those essential services themselves; at a somewhat higher level they demanded actual assistance to secure those services and to defend the social order in accordance with their own values.

In other words, the communities claimed that they had a right *to be governed* and that those who had managed to take control of their territory by force of arms had a corresponding duty *to govern,* and not merely to control, them. (For an extended discussion of the difference between control and governance, see Appendix A.) Was this demand to be governed a legitimate demand? Were the people making this demand making it legitimately? This section addresses these questions, but they are only part of

the story; the rest of the story involves the question of what power the community actors actually had.

Studying the legitimacy of the power of community actors turns on its head the traditional way of thinking about political authority, in which power is held to be legitimate to the degree it accords with the values, preferences, or interests of "the governed" and, once legitimized, those in power have certain rights that "the governed" have a duty to respect. Theories of democracy are theories about rule by the people, in whom power is said ultimately to be held. Yet the "power of the people" is rarely, if ever, questioned in the theoretical literature on democratic legitimacy: the power of the *demos* is assumed to be legitimate, whereas the power of leaders, oligarchs, aristocrats, dictators, kings, appointees, elected officials, and so on is assumed to be the power that needs to be legitimized. Because it is an assumption, theorists of legitimacy do not always bother putting much effort into demonstrating that citizens have a right to the power they have and that political leaders therefore have a duty not to undermine that power.

In the real world, however, leaders, oligarchs, aristocrats, dictators, kings, appointees, elected officials, and so on do not necessarily share the assumptions of Western, liberal, democratic theorists about the legitimacy of the power of the people: to them, their own power is legitimate — even dictators and their closest followers convince themselves of their own legitimacy — whereas the legitimacy of other centers of power is something to be demonstrated. Those of us who study legitimacy, democracy, or politics, therefore, should *demonstrate,* rather than assume, that the power of the people is a legitimate power; otherwise, we cannot hope to influence such leaders.

What power do "the people" have? (Joseph S. Nye's definition of power as the ability to influence outcomes should suffice here.[16]) The epigraph by Niccolò Machiavelli at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates two potential sources of power that communities might have to influence outcomes: the implicit threat of taking up arms against unloved leaders, and the availability of "foreigners to assist them" when they so decide to take up arms.[17] In Medellín, communities did organize self-defense and vigilante groups to remove armed actors from their barrios on many occasions, and any number of outside armed groups ("foreigners") made themselves available to assist them. However, not all of the communities actually had the capability to overthrow locally unloved leaders or the capability to ally themselves with powerful outsiders.

But all people and all communities do have an even more basic power, and those in Medellín were no different: *the power to define for themselves the way of life that is worth taking up arms to defend.* People can be coerced to mouth their support for someone else's preferred way of life (and to repress their own). But the power to silently define for oneself the way of life that is worth taking up arms to defend is a power than cannot be taken away.

To what degree did community actors have a right to that power? To what degree did community actors exercise that power legitimately? I evaluate these questions based on proxy and causal indicator for legitimacy according to public attributes of the communities in question, according to the behavior and beliefs of the various high-status

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[16] Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics,* 1st ed. (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 1.

[17] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince,* trans. Luigi Ricci and Eric Reginald Pearce Vincent (New York: Mentor/Penguin, 1935 [1513]), 108.

and low-status nonstate armed actors (insider referees) who until the mid-2000s

controlled the territories where the community actors lived, and according to the behavior

and beliefs of the high-status and low-status state actors (a second set of insider referees)

who tenuously controlled that territory beginning in the 2000s.

Some proxy indicators for community legitimacy can be derived by analogy to the

proxies used in the analysis of nonstate armed actors' legitimacy and illegitimacy (see

previous section). In that analysis, the proxy for illegitimacy was a high degree of internal

repression, which was assumed to indicate that the armed actors who had the power to

rule did not believe that they had effectively made their case to residents that they also

had the *right* to rule or, at least, that their rule was worthy of support: repression by

conferees is an expression of fear of, or contempt for, referees. Is there something similar

that might indicate that community actors in Medellín did not believe that they had

effectively made their case to other actors in Medellín that they had not only the power to

define their own way of life but also the right to define their own way of life or that their

way of life was worthy of support? Or to put it more simply: to what degree had

community actors made their case that their way of life was worth defending?

When armed actors believe that they have effectively made their case for a right

to rule, then they trust that residents of their statelets will not rebel; likewise, when

community actors believe they have effectively made their case for a right to define their

own way of life, then they trust that others will not try to undermine that right. Mistrust

or fear of strangers, then, might be a reasonable public-attribute proxy indicator for

illegitimacy, while social capital might be a (weak) proxy for legitimacy. And, in fact, a

prominent feature of Medellín's social landscape was low social capital and a profound

lack of trust in others, especially of strangers; during periods of high violence this lack of trust has often translated into fear of strangers or outsiders, especially in the peripheral barrios. (These features are sometimes masked by another important feature of the social landscape: their strong sense of hospitality toward the strangers with whom they interacted, which is not by any means a mutually exclusive feature; it is entirely possible to be kind and gracious toward someone whom you fear or do not trust.)

The other two levels of proxy indicator (group behavior and individual belief) measure the insider referees' judgments. Four categories of insider referee are relevant here: high-status nonstate armed actors (e.g. the founders or leaders of militias, gangs, and paramilitaries who set policy or give commands), low-status nonstate armed actors (e.g. their lowest-ranking members and assorted hangers-on), high-status state actors (e.g. those who set policy or give commands), and low-status state actors (e.g. those who implement policy, carry out commands, or otherwise provide support to high-status state actors). If these referees voluntarily supported the community actors' right to define their own way of life, then they would have participated in or otherwise contributed to the community's defense of that way of life (a group-behavior proxy) or would have expressed their support for the community's self-determination of that way of life (an individual-belief proxy). Non-participation, a reluctance to contribute, or noncommittal comments about community rights would indicate low legitimacy or neutrality toward the community, while the theft of community resources, attacks against community actors, and expressions of disdain for the communities would indicate a judgment that the communities' way of life was illegitimate. By these indicators, the evidence regarding the community actors' legitimacy is mixed.

It was generally the case that the nonstate armed actors who most considered the community they controlled legitimate were those who had grown up in those same communities. That is because in most cases they had formed those groups specifically to defend their families, their neighbors, and their streets in the first place. It should be noted, however, that this legitimacy did not always run both ways: a street crew formed by young people to defend their community might believe their community had a legitimate right to define its own way of life (i.e. the nonstate actors were the referees who conferred legitimacy upon community actors), but members of the community did not always return the favor by considering the street crew's exercise of control over their barrio to be legitimate (i.e. the community actors were the referees who did not confer legitimacy upon nonstate actors). All else equal, this asymmetry suggests a weakness in the overall dynamics of legitimacy in those communities. Legitimacy did run both ways in some cases, however. In places controlled by groups such as M-6&7 and the Metro Bloc (see previous section), the group in power legitimized, defended, and spoke well of the community's rights, and the communities returned the favor by more or less legitimizing their rule.

A general observation can be made as well, then, that the referees who considered and treated the communities under their control as legitimate were the same groups who actually made an effort to govern them and not just to control them: the peace campers, the early-period militias, and some of the Metro Bloc units that had emerged from the communities themselves (rather than those units that had been imposed on the communities by outsiders), such as Metro's La Sierra unit (see § 5.2).

Beyond those groups, most of the nonstate armed actors, most of the time, controlled their territories in a way that suggested neutrality at best or contempt at worst for the community actors' right to define their own way of life. Many, though not all, of these were outsiders who came in to control territory, or insiders who allied themselves with outsiders who wanted to control that territory. (The most important exception was the peace campers, the guerrilla outsiders who entered communities through an explicit, and successful, strategy of legitimation.) The indicators that in the last section acted as public-attributes proxies for these armed actors' illegitimacy (according to community actors) operate in the present section as group-behavior proxies for the community actors' illegitimacy (according to the armed actors): the fact that the armed actors demanded vacunas and engaged in extensive internal repression (i.e. public-attribute indicators of the armed actors' illegitimacy according to the community) suggests something about those armed actors' views of the legitimacy of the communities they abused, namely that they considered the communities' right to define their own way of life to be not worth defending — that is, to be illegitimate (i.e. group-behavior indicators of community actors' illegitimacy according to the armed actors).

The trend over time suggests that nonstate armed actors increasingly recognized the value of publicly affirming the legitimacy of community actors, and so they increasingly paid lip service to community rights and publicized their own efforts to govern. Their deeds, however, generally continued to be fairly abusive.

The evidence for community legitimacy according to state actors was equally mixed. Some low-status state actors, such as some police officers not part of the community-police units, would express contempt for members of the community, while

others would simply follow orders to raid the community, having no opinion about their way of life whatsoever. But other low-status state actors, such as the social workers, community police, and public-school teachers who were regularly sent to work in those communities were some of city's strongest advocates for those communities' rights, indicating high legitimacy. Similarly, some high-status state actors, especially during the first half of the study period, ordered raids and massacres or expressed contempt for residents of the peripheral barrios, characterizing them as animals or lumping all community members together with the gangsters among them.

The trend over time, however, was toward stronger legitimacy as measured by high-status state actors' public statements and activities. For example, top city officials increasingly recognized the communities' right to self-determination, to the point where Mayor Alonso Salazar in the early 2000s instituted a participatory budgeting process that enabled the communities to develop and the city to fund their own plans for development. This suggests an overall increase in the legitimacy of community actors according to state actors — a stabilizing trend that policy makers should take note of. (The legitimacy of citizens according to their political leaders is a topic taken up again in Appendix A.)

Does this overall analysis suggest that the communities of the peripheral barrios were mostly illegitimate during most of the study period — that they did not have the right, even though they technically had the power, to define the way of life that they considered worth defending, or that they exercised that power in a way that could not be considered worthy of the state and nonstate actors' support until later in the study period?

If the proxy indicators discussed in the previous paragraphs were the only indicators evaluated, then the answer would have to be that the communities did begin

the study period as largely illegitimate in these respects but over time became less so, and may even have begun to enjoy some neutrality or low legitimacy according to most of the nonstate and state actors who wanted to control their territories or the resources available in their barrios.

There is some danger in this interpretation, however. Recall that the problem with relying on proxy indicators to evaluate a latent phenomenon such as legitimacy is that proxies cannot help determine whether that latent phenomenon, and not some other phenomenon, is what had generated the value on the proxy. In this case, community actors' mistrust of strangers might not have derived from a fear that their own illegitimacy might cause armed actors to want to harm them; it might have derived instead from a general cultural tendency of mistrust. Likewise, the harsh treatment the nonstate armed actors showed the communities might not have derived from a view that the community's exercise of its power to define its way of life was not worth supporting; it might have derived instead from simple greed or class hatred. And the recent good treatment by high-status state actors might not have derived from a strengthening belief in the community's right to self-determination; it might have derived instead from a simple desire for votes.

Therefore, causal indicators must be sought to supplement the analysis.

Any outsider evaluation of the transparency and credibility of what community actors said they wanted is going to have to grapple with a number of local cultural tendencies. While people in Medellín are extremely gracious and hospitable, even they themselves admit that, as a general cultural tendency (i.e. usually, but not all people and not all the time), they tend to treat promises and commitments very casually. I myself

was offered several paid assignments that never materialized, and no fewer than six potential research assistants who said they would work for me never started the job; in most of those cases, we had agreed upon specific starting dates and salaries, and they had seemed to indicate enthusiastic interest in the topic (and the salary). There is a tendency toward conflict-avoidance as well. Not knowing an answer is not always considered a good reason for not giving an answer, if giving an answer will help the speaker avoid witnessing the listener's disappointment; offers of help to friends and strangers seem often to be made just to enjoy hearing expressions of gratitude, regardless of the speaker's intent to follow through when needed. There are culturally appropriate methods that locals use to get others to follow through on their commitments, but several independent sources told me (or demonstrated to me) that it involves acting superior to someone or making someone feel very uncomfortable. Moreover, social relations tend to be highly instrumental, and so loyalties and alliances, beyond a very tight circle of family or friends, tend to be highly unstable.

Work does nevertheless get accomplished in Medellín, and people do still work together on community projects, so I would not want to conclude that most of the community actors under study suffered a complete deficit of transparency or credibility. But there was clearly a deficit, and that deficit might have been one factor in the difficulty the community had getting support from nonstate armed actors and the state: being unreliable and unpredictable would tend to weaken one's potential for relationship-building.

Did those referees of the communities' legitimacy — the state and nonstate actors — think and act as if the communities suffered these deficits? Surprisingly, not always. It

is probably fair to say that, for most of the study period, most of the city's gangs, paramilitary units, and city workers were simply too uninterested in engaging the communities for it to matter; to them, the communities were neither legitimate nor illegitimate, merely neutral. But some important state actors, most notably the JAC leaders (who were from and were elected by the communities they represented), and some important nonstate actors, especially those who emerged from the communities whose territories they controlled (such as M-6&7, Metro Bloc, and, to a much lesser degree, La Cañada), already knew the communities well enough that the transparency and credibility deficits were not much of an issue: they already knew what most community members envisioned for their lives, they already knew how to engage and mobilize community members to work toward achieving that vision when needed, and they often did so successfully. In other words, they treated the communities, in word and deed, as if the communities were transparent, credible, and accessible.

Moreover, some of these referees — including many of the early-period militias, Metro Bloc units, JAC leaders, later elected officials, and community police officers — actually shared or promoted the communities' own visions, or tried with some success (in the case of the peace campers and early-period militias) to influence it: they treated the communities, in word and deed, as if their views were justifiable or accessible.

The analysis of these referees suggests a congruence between individual beliefs and group behaviors with respect to the *transparent, credible, justifiable,* and *accessible* criteria. This congruence between two of the three levels of analysis — individual belief, group behavior, and public attribute, with the latter in this case being the incongruent level — offers weak evidence in favor of legitimacy: significant, perhaps not decisive,

but certainly not dispositive either. On balance, it is probably fair to say that this set of referees considered the communities legitimate and treated them accordingly.

By now it should be clear that a pattern is emerging. Some groups merely controlled territory: they had the capability to prevent others from governing (the definition of control) but did not themselves try to govern, or if they did try, they governed very little or very poorly. Other groups controlled territory but also tried to govern, even if they did not always do it well or with great success. Clearly this is a continuum and not a dichotomy: some governed more, others less, some governed well, others less well, and so on. I do not want to go too far beyond my evidence base and claim too much about the general relationship between legitimacy and governance; I simply want to make an observation that in Medellín the groups who tried to govern also tended to support community actors and their way of life (as shown so far in this section), and the community actors they supported tended to support them as well (as shown in the previous section).

The causal indicators for some of the criteria for legitimacy on balance support this observation. Regarding the group-behavior and individual-belief indicators: the groups who tried to govern (call them the "governors"), in comparison to those who tried merely to control (call them the "controllers"), seemed more likely to talk and act as if they believed the communities they were trying to govern had *transparent, credible, justifiable,* and *accessible* views about how they wanted to live their lives, and that the communities were generally *respectful* toward them (I discuss the *equitable* criterion below). Regarding the public-attributes indicators: in the places that these "governors" controlled, even if the communities' views about how they wanted to live their lives were

not (from a public-attributes perspective) necessarily *transparent,* at least their demands

were reasonably *credible* (in the sense that they *could* be complied with: "leave us

alone," "don't govern us arbitrarily," "protect us against violence," "help us attain

essential services," etc.); their views were also reasonably *justifiable* (in the sense that the

underlying values were usually not inconsistent with the governors' own values) and

reasonably *accessibl*e (in the sense that they were generally open to the governors'

leadership on questions of community development); and for the most part the

community actors were *respectful* toward the governors, despite the always-lingering

trust issues discussed earlier. Inequities, on the other hand, were quite rampant: There

was always a lot of talk about human rights and equality in the communities under study

(despite some clear gender biases), but in practice most people still held very strong in-

group biases that amounted to very unequal and, compared to their stated beliefs, very

inequitable treatment.

At the end of the study period, an important question can be asked: Were the

agents of the state acting more as "controllers" or as "governors" of the peripheral barrios

that had long been the main generators (and victims) of violence in the city? On balance,

it seems fair to conclude, most state actors seemed sincerely to be making an effort to be

governors. After the paramilitaries demobilized, the city took advantage of the peace that

followed to improve development (e.g. libraries, public transportation), security (e.g.

community police and occasional military patrols), and participation (e.g. participatory

budgeting) in those barrios. Those efforts seemed to reflect an underlying belief in the

legitimacy of those communities as members of the larger city community and worthy of

the city's support — a refreshing contrast to the general attitudes and behaviors of the early study period.

This is exactly what it means for a community to have legitimacy according to state actors (or to nonstate actors for that matter). Given that legitimacy is a worthiness of support or a right to loyalty, we can ask: To what degree do those in power consider different communities within the territories in which they wield power to be worth supporting? To what degree do they have a right to demand protection, governance, and inclusion? A government that neglects or abuses an entire class of people or an entire sector of a city (such as a shantytown) is a government that does not consider those people to be legitimate members of the political or social community: "Those people don't have rights, and as a government official I therefore have no duties to them."

To what degree, then, do those in power protect the rights of those not in power? To what degree do the agents of the state or the statelet do things for common people that they do not personally want to do but believe they have a duty to do? To the degree those agents so protect and respect community actors, provide them with a predictable environment to carry out daily activities and long-term projects, and treat them as they treat members of their own in-group — to the degree they do these things, they are thereby increasing the overall legitimacy of their society.

A visitor went to Medellín during the Miracle period (see § 6.1) and observed the impressive changes that had been taking place in the city's peripheral barrios. He had lived in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, another city with a marginalized and violent periphery (the slums are called *favelas* there), and he had thought a lot about what could possibly be done to deal with such a complex problem in such a complex environment. "I don't have

any original, clever answer to the problem of Rio's favelas," he wrote. "Frankly, I just don't know enough about the complex sociological and economic issues involved." But after visiting Medellín and seeing the beginnings of a transformation in the periphery's relationship with the rest of the city, he came to understand one important point: "no amount of economic development or job training or infrastructure building or education is going to have any effect until the residents of Rio's favelas are seen as legitimate citizens of society, as the valuable contributors they actually are."

> The Brazilian government and all the NGOs in the world can pour as many resources into these communities as they want, but they need to learn one important lesson from Medellín: it is only when you promote a genuine message of inclusion both in public and behind closed doors, a message backed up by concrete action, that you are able to inspire the energy and will from all sectors of society that you need to conquer such an intractable problem.[18]

Medellín's "intractable" problems had not yet been conquered by the end of this study, and in fact much of its progress was being eroded as the most recent wave of armed actors reinitiated conflicts over access to local illicit markets and over local access to global illicit markets, a variation on a familiar theme. But the dynamics of legitimacy between the nonstate armed actors who had controlled territory in the past and the community actors who faced the choice of cooperating with, supporting, being neutral toward, or opposing them — those dynamics offer a lesson to the state actors who today are trying to establish their own control and legitimacy in the periphery.

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[18] "Medellín, Colombia vs. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Lessons to be Learned," Tiago in Colombia, http://www.tiagoforte.com/2009/07/medellin-colombia-vs-rio-de-janeiro.html (accessed 29 July 2009).

9.3.3. Legitimacy of State Actors

There is, of course, such a thing as the legitimacy of the state, as the friend-of-a-friend political scientist had pointed out to me in the introduction to this section (§ 9.3). But I hope that by this point I have demonstrated some of the more interesting non-traditional dynamics of legitimacy as well. The reader who has suffered through the extended discussions of those dynamics in the previous two subsections probably has by now a clear sense of what my analysis of the legitimacy of state actors might entail: a step-by-step review of the proxy and causal variables at three levels of analysis, with pairwise, bidirectional comparisons of the dynamics between different sets of state actors and different sets of referees, and so forth. For the interested reader, I leave that analysis as an exercise. Here, rather than applying the full framework to the legitimacy of Medellín's multifarious state actors, I make some general observations that by now are probably fairly obvious but worth emphasizing nonetheless.

In my interviews with experts who have studied Medellín's violence, the question of legitimacy appeared frequently, but the term itself seemed often to be used ironically, whether intentionally so or not. Diego Ríos told me that most people in Medellín, wanting to avoid problems, have simply stayed neutral with respect to whatever political movement or armed conflict happened to be present in their barrio that year; they didn't explore too deeply what those movements and conflicts were about, and they tried not to get involved if they could avoid it.[19] Sometimes those residents have found it necessary to engage with the armed actors who controlled their barrios, and César Mendoza González used the phrase "legitimacy of convenience" to describe the relationship

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[19] Diego Ríos, Interview No. 4.

between the communities and those armed actors; the state was not present, he said, so residents would approach the gangsters or militants to solve their problems — and their problems would get solved, but in exchange they had to subject themselves to extortion and control.[20]

Juan Carlos Palou described the dynamics of legitimacy in Medellín as Hobbesian: the main source of legitimacy for different armed actors has been the protection they offered for life and property. When protection is the only public good provided by those in power, he said, life is impoverished, both materially and morally. In Medellín, even that impoverished form of protection has been taken away when it has ceased to be convenient. As a result, communities' loyalties in Medellín have tended to be very weak, shifting from guerrillas, to militias, to paramilitaries, and now, perhaps, to the state, as each group has come into control. "But what other option do people have?" Palou asked: people can subject themselves to the new power, they can collaborate with it, or they can resist it, and in Medellín people have done all three, depending on the circumstances. He observed that people have learned that they have to play between the legal and the illegal: they might use the state for its public services (infrastructure, social work, etc.) but they will turn to whatever group controls their barrio to resolve their personal and community problems.[21]

Many others, experts and common people alike, expressed a similar skepticism about legitimacy in Medellín. In a place where social relations are so relentlessly instrumental, they implicitly argued, legitimacy cannot reliably explain much: All

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[20] César Mendoza González, Interview No. 6.

[21] Juan Carlos Palou, Interview No. 3.

relations between common people and nonstate armed actors have been relations of expediency; all support of armed groups has come from a desire for protection or a fear of reprisal; all opposition to those groups has come from self-defense, greed, or opportunism; and all support that those groups have offered to residents has come from deception, since pretending to care about the community simply made it easier for them to control territory and thereby access and exploit that territory's resources (drug markets, smuggling routes, brothels, rackets, etc.). The state — not just Medellín, but the Colombian state as a whole — is likewise widely believed to be irrelevant at best and illegitimate at worst. A deep cynicism about social and political relations pervades Medellín's society.

But I don't think that cynicism is entirely justified. To be fair to the cynics, Colombia in general and Medellín in particular can be a demoralizing place for someone who recognizes that social capital and legitimacy in the exercise of power tend to have salutary effects on the quality of life, stability, and long-term development. But legitimacy and illegitimacy have, despite widespread claims to the contrary, played an important role in regulating relations between community actors and the nonstate or state actors who have tried to control or govern them.

With respect to the nonstate armed actors, as the last two subsections and many sections in Part I should have demonstrated, there have been many different kinds of armed actor who have sought and won territorial control in Medellín's periphery over the past 25 years, and in their relationships with the people who lived there, the levels of legitimacy and illegitimacy varied widely. Most such relationships were probably characterized by neutrality, but many were characterized by illegitimacy, some by weak

legitimacy, and even a few by moderately strong legitimacy. Moreover, if one is concerned about explaining the violence there, illegitimacy played a non-trivial role. It wasn't all just fear, greed, and opportunism that led to violence, although those things certainly were involved in most instances of violent opposition to armed rule. Much of that opposition was strongly tinged with moral and social disapproval as well, especially against those gangs involved in the drug trade and against those who had once been defenders of the community's moral and social order but later lost their way. Wherever there was active support or violent opposition, there were always mixed motives, but that does not necessarily imply that the subset of motives that derived from what people thought was right or wrong played no role: the presence of illegitimacy — moral judgments about worthiness of opposition — certainly seemed to activate latent opposition.

With respect to the state, the cynicism about legitimacy in Colombia is not entirely justified either. There is a strong tendency in Colombia — not just in Medellín — to insist that the Colombian state is illegitimate, an attitude that was systematically rejected by Eduardo Posada Carbó in 2003, when the period of relative stability had barely even begun. Posada Carbó offered evidence that, while many in Colombia have complained bitterly about the state's illegitimacy, citizens' group behaviors, the state's public attributes, and even some opinion polls have often pointed in the opposite direction, toward legitimacy. For example, he countered criticisms about the quality of the country's democracy (or in my terms, complaints that the political system was not accessible to common people) by citing the fact that not only have elections taken place regularly in Colombia for more than a century, but reforms to the system have steadily

extended the franchise to more and more people — and despite citizens' claims that there is no democracy in Colombia, a lot of those people continue to vote election after election, and the losers of those elections have stepped down peacefully. He countered criticisms about the state's credibility — in particular its ability to deliver political goods to citizens — by pointing out that a lot of state institutions actually operate very well and have often received positive evaluations in public opinion surveys; he cited the country's world-class public-transportation networks, the high quality (if not always the equity) of public education and health services, a strong tradition of policy planning, and steady improvements in the professionalism of military and police forces, among others.[22]

Certainly it has long been the case that the state has had little if any presence in many of Medellín's peripheral barrios. Despite that absence, many communities have longed for a constructive state presence, and there is a long history of informal community leaders approaching the state with requests, for example, for a stronger police presence, or for a JAC and a budget line. (See Chapter 7, especially § 7.2.3, for a discussion of what community actors want from the state.) That in itself could be considered a proxy for legitimacy: were the state to show up and do the things that the militias, for example, were doing, it was clear that it would be welcomed and supported. Few people wanted a nonstate actor to govern them, but in the absence of the state, they took what they could get, and if what they could get was pretty good at governing, they were willing to lend a degree of legitimacy to that effort. Were the state to put down roots in their communities instead, it would find fertile ground.

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[22] Eduardo Posada Carbó, *'Ilegitimidad' del Estado en Colombia*.

Chapter 10. Implications

10.1. Summary of Findings

The preceding chapters have demonstrated that the relationship between legitimacy and violence in Medellín has been shaped by issues such as the manner of governance (whether or how the rule of law was maintained or the social order promoted), access to resources (relative to rivals' access), and the relative costs of territorial control. The findings described at length in Chapters 8 and 9 may be summarized as follows:

- Violence fell once someone capable of keeping order was in charge. That is, most decreases in collective and interpersonal-communal violence, in both micro-territories and the city as a whole, were explained by increases in territorial control.

- Violence rose when ineffective, unpredictable governors attracted violent opposition. More precisely, most increases in collective violence were explained by a process of "illegitimation," in which an unpredictable living environment sparked internal opposition to local rulers and raised the costs of territorial control, which increased rulers' vulnerability to rivals.

- Most of the city's violence was due to common crime rather than organized crime (i.e. more interpersonal-communal violence than collective violence).

- But the violence due to common crime was enabled by the violence due to organized crime: most increases in interpersonal-communal violence were explained by the breakdowns in social order and the rule of law brought about by collective violence associated with territorial control (e.g. gang wars and mafia wars).

- Most of those engaged in organized violence today are in it for the money: the true believers of the armed political and social movements of the past have been marginalized or corrupted over time. As a consequence of this gradual shift in motives from a bias for the political and social toward a bias for the economic, the complexity of the city's violence has diminished over time.

- Legitimacy has lowered the costs of territorial control: relatively resource-poor nonstate armed actors have won and held territory against rivals mainly by strategies of legitimation (winning the support of residents).

- Illegitimacy has raised the costs of territorial control: relatively resource-rich nonstate armed actors have been able to win and hold territory against rivals using force, coercion, and barter but otherwise engaging in strategies of illegitimacy-avoidance (maintaining a tolerable and predictable daily living environment).

- The most important factors driving illegitimacy have involved an intolerable unpredictability in the daily living environment; the main features of unpredictability have been a deficit of transparency (accurate, correct, and comprehensive publicity of the rules, rights, duties, and identities of those

who are in control) and a deficit of credibility (capable and non-arbitrary enforcement or fulfillment of rules, rights, and duties).

These findings, more than any others, account for most of the dynamics observed in dozens of micro-territories and statelets within Medellín (including in Caicedo La Sierra) across all of the time periods studied and (during the 2003-2007 "Miracle" period) in the city as a whole.

10.2. Implications for Policy

These findings provide a glimpse of what it might take for policy makers to succeed in sustainably reducing violence in places such as Medellín, and here I interpret these findings as policy recommendations. The temptation is always to allow the scope of one's recommendations to exceed the scope of one's findings; I have endeavored to resist that temptation and so offer only a limited set of recommendations that can be derived directly from the main observations presented above.

10.2.1. Protect and Respect Residents of Peripheral Barrios

Violence in the city's peripheral barrios increased dramatically during the first half of 2009. The murders seemed mainly to be instances of collective-economic violence (mainly drug traffickers against drug traffickers, plus innocent bystanders), which is consistent with the findings that collective violence has become increasingly motivated by economic rather than political or social concerns. But the murders seem also to be related to disputes over control of resources rather than direct control of territory: that is, they seem to be fighting to control local drugs and rackets markets or local access to

global illicit markets — wholesale drug markets, smuggling routes, etc. — but not to control and govern entire neighborhoods where those resources are present. If true, and several sources have suggested it is (see Chapter 7), then this is somewhat different from what has been found in the past, when territorial control was often considered necessary to control the economic resources it contained.

This observation, however, does not directly challenge the main findings of this study. If we assume (as I think we rightly can) that state actors are the ones who currently (albeit tenuously) control the territories where most of the violence is taking place, but that their control is beginning to break down, then we can see, based on the city's history, what will probably happen if that breakdown gets to a point where residents start feeling that life has become intolerably unpredictable: the more the current wave of violence affects their daily routines, those residents will illegitimize and begin to oppose the state actors who claim to be in control, and that opposition will dramatically and quickly increase the costs of controlling those barrios, making the state actors vulnerable to attacks by nonstate armed actors who do not want to control the territory but who do not want the state to control it either. In other words, if the state illegitimizes itself to its citizens in those barrios, it will end up facing opposition from both its own citizens and those nonstate armed actors (thereby increasing collective violence), which will make it harder to maintain order (thereby increasing interpersonal-communal violence). If that happens, Medellín will be back to where it was before 2002. This outcome is not inevitable, because I don't think the city has gotten to the point of illegitimation, even if it is getting very close to unpredictability.

To prevent this outcome, the state should consider itself resource-poor relative to the potential resources available to potential rivals (drug traffickers): given the magnitude of the problem of violence historically, the state today really does not have the resources it needs to fully control the peripheral barrios and protect them against armed traffickers. According to the findings of this study, resource-poor actors have only ever succeeded in Medellín when they have engaged in strategies of legitimation: winning the voluntary support of the communities. That would be the ideal strategy for city and state actors. (See §§ 9.2, 10.3, and C.6 for observations about what legitimacy-building strategies might entail, including criteria for measuring progress.)

Given the city's history, however, it is very unlikely that enough state actors — in city hall, the mayor's office, the barracks, or the front lines — would work in solidarity toward a goal of legitimation long enough to make any such strategy work. Therefore, I focus here on a somewhat higher-risk recommendation that assumes the illicit actors who are the main perpetrators of today's collective-economic violence will continue to be engaged in a contest for control over markets rather than over territory (at least in the short term) and will continue to target the state's control over territory only to the degree the state's weakness gives them free access to those illicit resources. If they do not contest the state's control of territory directly, then the state should be able to hold territory *in the short term* with a strategy of illegitimacy-avoidance.

As the violence in the city has begun to return to its formerly high levels, city and national security forces have been sent in to the peripheral barrios to keep order. To follow an illegitimacy-avoidance strategy, the immediate priorities of the officials who manage or have oversight of those security forces should be:

1. to ensure that residents of those barrios know all relevant laws, their rights and

   obligations under the law, and the rights and obligations (e.g. the rules of

   engagement) of the security forces patrolling or raiding their neighborhoods;

2. to strictly enforce rules against corruption within the security forces, and to

   prosecute to the fullest extent of the law any violations of those rules; these

   first two recommendations are intended to promote transparency, which is one

   of the two components of predictability;

3. to give the security forces the personnel, resources, and training they need to

   protect residents' rights and enforce the law while engaging in operations

   against nonstate armed actors; this recommendation is intended to promote

   credibility, the other component of predictability; and

4. fully empower, support, and expand the local Immediate Attention Command

   units (CAI: Comandos de Atención Inmediata) to act as intermediaries

   between residents and security forces to ensure that residents do not turn to

   nonstate armed actors to resolve their grievances as they have in the past; this

   recommendation is intended to improve the state's credibility relative to that

   of the nonstate armed actors.

These recommendations, if implemented, should help to maintain a predictable

and tolerable quality of life and avoid any illegitimizing actions that would raise the costs

of control, make the state more vulnerable to rivals, and begin a new cycle of violence. It

should be noted, however, that, if the nonstate armed actors who are the target of security

forces' operations decide to directly contest control of the peripheral barrios' territories

and not just their resources, then the state should recognize that its own resources will be

inadequate for the task and that it will need to enlist the active and voluntary support of the community.

10.2.2. Protect Businesses from Protection Rackets ('Vacunas')

Along with drug sales and assassination contracts, protection rackets have historically been among the most important sources of income for nonstate armed actors who have controlled micro-territories and statelets within Medellín. Not only has it funded their control, and thereby facilitated their other illicit activities, it also has created a hostile and unpredictable environment for local businesses and has restrained the city's potential for much-needed economic development. Making it a priority to protect local businesses from extortion not only would contribute to the creation of a predictable operating environment and thereby contribute to an illegitimacy-avoidance strategy but would also send a signal to business and residents alike that the state is the armed actor most worthy of their support and thereby contribute to any strategy of legitimation that would be needed if (or when) any nonstate actors decide to contest control of the periphery again.

10.2.3. Prepare for 'Invasions' by Internally Displaced Persons

The history of Medellín — as in many Latin American, African, and Asian cities — shows that violent conflict and economic depression in the countryside leads inevitably to illegal urbanization, as the rural poor arrive in cities they cannot afford to live in and therefore engage in squatting, "barrio piracy," and "invasions." The pattern is: they arrive, they squat, they lack resources and so they pirate them (electricity, water,

etc.), they lack security and so they provide it themselves (via gangs or self-defense groups), they are unrecognized by the city and so they are left to fend for themselves economically, and finally when their number is too high to ignore or the violence in their settlements begins to leak out into "legal society," the city finally recognizes them, gives them title to their lands, provides some services — but still largely leaves them to fend for themselves, until, again, the negative externalities become too severe to ignore.

This has happened repeatedly in Medellín and has long been among the main drivers of social instability in the city's periphery (see Chapters 2-3). It continues to happen today (for example, in settlements just outside the legal boundary of the city's northeastern zone), and it will happen again in the future. So instead of doing *ad hoc* and *post hoc* planning, the city's planners should preemptively "legalize" settlements before they are settled, by finding the areas of the city most likely to be settled by internally displaced persons in the future and planning for their rapid development when the time comes. This policy would be a buffer against future disruptions of social order and would preempt any nonstate efforts to control territory that the city has not already claimed for itself.

10.2.4. Keep Data-Collection Programs Funded and Transparent

As Chapter 8 demonstrated, basic data are not available for many variables that might be important to understanding the problem of violence in Medellín. This gap in data has been addressed recently in city policy: Medellín Cómo Vamos and other data-collection efforts begun under the administration of Sergio Fajardo have been enormously helpful for city officials doing long-term planning for development, anti-

violence, and other efforts. These projects should be given a reliable funding source so that they may continue indefinitely. Further, regulations requiring transparency of data-collection methods should be strengthened, and all collected data should be made freely available online, disaggregated at the lowest level consistent with appropriate privacy protections. These steps will enable outside researchers to act as "force multipliers" in the analysis of the city's most pressing problems, including violence.

10.3. Implications for Strategy

This study's findings are suggestive not only of the policy recommendations above but also of several general propositions that merit further study in terms of their implications for strategies to implement anti-violence policies. These general propositions are as follows:

- Any strategy of violence reduction should begin with a capability to prevent rival actors from governing; that is, it should begin with control, especially territorial or social control.

- In any effort to attain or sustain territorial control, resource-poor actors should engage in a strategy of legitimation while resource-rich actors should engage in, at minimum, a strategy of illegitimacy-avoidance.

- The essential element of an illegitimacy-avoidance strategy is predictability (in both action and outcome), and two of the main contributors to predictability are transparency and credibility. As noted, transparency involves accurate, correct, and comprehensive publicity of the rules, rights, duties, and identities of those who are in control, and credibility involves

capable and non-arbitrary enforcement or fulfillment of rules, rights, and
duties.

- Tenuous territorial control, if it is not contested, can be strengthened by
  greater resources or greater legitimacy.

More broadly, this study suggests some considerations that should be accounted
for when dealing with issues related to what is variously called state failure, state
weakness, or state fragility. Colombia has long been considered a fragile state, with weak
governance and weak legitimacy, and the dynamics in Medellín's periphery have long
been considered a symptom of that fragility. In such areas, when some nonstate armed
actor has "taxed" local businesses, patrolled their neighborhoods, resolved disputes, lent
money, fed poor families, helped their neighbors pirate electrical service from the public
grid, let people in the neighborhood know what the rules are, and punished those who
broke them, what those armed actors were doing in those areas was *governing*. They
might not have been doing it well or fairly, but they were governing. Were they the
"legitimate" government of the areas they controlled? It depends: Did the people who
lived there believe the militia or the gang was worthy of their support? Some did, and
some did not. But what was certain to most of them most of the time was that the state
was not the legitimate government, because it did none of the things the militia or the
gang did: the state did not govern them, and so it had no legitimate claim to their loyalty.

This suggest a general observation. Fragile states are fragile for a reason;
"ungoverned" areas are not under control of the state for a reason. That reason usually
has to do with political relationships between the social elites who happen to control the
state institutions, and the other populations who happen to live in the state's nominal

territory, such as the residents of Medellín's peripheral barrios. If certain populations do not identify with the state or its system of governance, it often is because the state — whether from lack of capacity, ethnic enmity, or historical mistakes of cartography — has never governed them, has failed to protect them, has not advanced their interests, has exploited their resources, or has outright harmed them. Consequently, local power structures — family, community, tribe, clan, gang — often end up with stronger claims to the locals' loyalty and support than does the state: from their perspective, the legitimate governing structure is whatever entity governs them in a way that they consider right or worthy. In fact, a social, political, or jurisdictional dispute between the nominal government of a state and some local, provincial, tribal, or autonomous government is often precisely the factor that enables certain illicit actors to operate with impunity in such places, hiding between gaps in governance and legitimacy.

In many places, of course, people who do not have any real relationship with the state want nothing more than for the state to protect them, to educate them, to pave their roads, to provide electric and water services, to help them start businesses. To say that the authority of the state has been eroded by globalization (see Appendix A) is not to say that states no longer represent the last, best hope of many people. Many indigenous people in southern Colombia have wanted to be left alone by the state to maintain their native way of life; when that way of life has been threatened by the encroachment of insurgents and narcotraffickers, they often have wanted the state to help protect them — but to do so in a way that would enable them to maintain their autonomy, not in a way that would be exploitive. Likewise, many residents of the peripheral barrios of Medellín in the 1980s and 1990s protected themselves by joining gangs or forming self-defense groups: they

had been neglected by the state, and their only interaction with the state was during police raids, many of which turned into massacres. But many residents nevertheless held out hope that the police would build a station in their neighborhood and go on patrol to protect them, or that the city would help resolve conflicts between gangs. Sometimes their pleas worked; sometimes they had to depend on NGOs or the church to play that role. But they would have preferred a "normal" life, recognized and protected as full members of the Colombian citizenry.

In strategies aiming toward long-term territorial control and stability, many policy makers increasingly recognize the centrality of legitimacy-building. What this study suggests — and this is a proposition that merits further study — is that legitimacy-building entails governing: sometimes the prize goes to whomever shows up. If state actors want to control territory, if resources are scarce, and if mere illegitimacy-avoidance is not likely to succeed, then legitimacy-building will most likely become the key strategy. This study suggests that legitimacy-building likely involves state actors' recognizing the legitimacy of the populations living in the territory in question (see § 9.3.2) and, above all, actually governing them.

10.4. Implications for Theory

Likewise, this study's findings suggest several propositions that merit further study with respect to their relevance to theory:

- The distinctions this study made among legitimacy, illegitimacy, and neutrality, and among delegitimation, illegitimation, and neutralization, merit theoretical elaboration.

- The negative correlation (within certain bounds) that this study found between complex urban violence and territorial control partly supports existing conflict theory but needs further testing of assumptions. It tends to confirm the work of Kalyvas, but Kalyvas's work addresses traditional civil wars, not complex urban violence. Therefore, further study is merited to determine the full sets of circumstances under which the relationship in question is operative.

- The negative correlation found between territorial control and illegitimacy supports existing legitimacy theory (see Appendix C) but needs further testing in cases outside of Medellín.

- The positive correlation found between illegitimacy and unpredictability represents a new proposition that merits further study.

- The process aspect of legitimacy merits further study (see § C.5).

- The distinction between long-term territorial control and short-term territorial control should be further specified. A preliminary specification could be as follows: for terms of territorial control, the *short-term* may be defined as the period during which either legitimacy or resources are fixed, and *long-term* may be defined as the period after which either could be adjusted. In the short-term, territory can be held either: (1) by an actor with the ability to raise resources but with low support (fixed legitimacy) or high opposition (fixed illegitimacy); or (2) by an actor with fixed resources but the ability to raise legitimacy; but not (3) by an actor with fixed resources and fixed legitimacy or fixed illegitimacy. To reach the long-term, the actor would have to make

some structural adjustment such that new resources become accessible or legitimacy becomes feasible. This proposition, however, merits further study.

- Hybrid categories of violence should be considered for inclusion in frameworks for future work on complex violence. The violence framework used in Chapter 8 and discussed in Appendix B provides a finer-grained look at violence than is usually provided in studies of violence. Yet there are important cases it does not capture well because they fall between categories, for example between communal and collective. The most important of these is violence that is perpetrated by an individual who does not have a direct or two-way relationship with a larger group or movement but is nevertheless inspired by that movement to act violently: such violence is not collective (since the individual is not acting on behalf of a group), but it is not merely interpersonal either (since is inspired by collective and not merely individual motives). It might therefore be worth considering adding a hybrid category of "communal-collective" violence, or perhaps "networked" violence, to account for those organizations that operate on an "open-source" model — perhaps a violent version of Anonymous, the anti-Scientology movement started by a small group of people who posted a video on YouTube encouraging certain kinds of actions (and discouraging violent actions) to disrupt that organization, with the ultimate aim of dismantling it[1] — or to account for those individuals who take inspiration from some larger movement and

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[1] See, for example, Marcus Baram, "Scientology's Anonymous Critics: Who Are They?" published electronically by ABCNews.com, http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=4513883 (accessed 3 September 2009).

become "copy cats" of others in the movement without ever actually communicating with them or taking orders from them.

- A final proposition that merits further study is the likelihood that legitimacy is a path-dependent phenomenon; if it is, then its path-dependence should be accounted for in models that incorporate some measure of legitimacy. For example, in the adaptive-agent model of civil violence produced by Joshua Epstein, John D. Steinbruner, and Miles T. Parker, grievance, G, is a function of both hardship, H, and perceptions of legitimacy, L; and legitimacy is considered a constant (it doesn't need to be, but the authors do so for the sake of simplicity).[2] If $G=H(1-L)$, as that model proposes, then $L=1-G/H$. In that case, one can predict that someone with few grievances and a lot of hardship must think the authorities have a lot of legitimacy, otherwise they would rebel. That makes sense. But with this equation, you can't predict what they think about legitimacy if they have few grievances and little hardship: this equation would suggest that they think the authorities have a lot of legitimacy, but unless you know what their grievances and hardship levels were before, you wouldn't necessarily come to this conclusion: If, for example, they once had few grievances and a lot of hardship, but now they have the same grievances but little hardship, why would we now think that they believe the authorities have *less* legitimacy, as this equation would suggest: shouldn't they have more? Maybe so and maybe not; either way, it should be demonstrated rather

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[2] Joshua Epstein, John D. Steinbruner, and Miles T. Parker, "Modeling Civil Violence: An Agent-Based Computational Approach," working paper, *Center on Social and Economic Dynamics Working Papers* 20 (Washington: The Brookings Institution, January 2001).

than assumed. By looking at legitimacy over time, the phenomenon might be

better understood.

Part III. Appendices

Appendix A. Policy, Globalization, and Governance

This study was undertaken, ultimately, to help policy makers and implementers better understand what can and cannot be done to control complex urban violence. To that end, it is necessary not merely to understand certain complex phenomena, urban dynamics, and patterns of violence; it is equally important to understand the context, challenges, and limitations of policy making itself as an instrument of change. For that, certain questions have to be answered: What is policy? Who makes policy? Through what governance structures is policy made? How are those structures changing, and what are the causes and consequences of those changes? How does globalization affect policy making and policy makers? To what ends can states no longer effectively or legitimately address their policies? Finally, for a study of policy as an instrument for controlling violence, what kinds of policies should be studied, and how should they be measured? These questions are addressed in this chapter. The concepts defined and discussed here, and the analysis presented in the preceding chapters, are mutually reinforcing: the Medellín case provides a local context for how these phenomena operate in the real world, while the discussion of the phenomena provides a global context for how the events in Medellín unfolded.

As globalization erodes the monopoly that states were once expected to have on force, loyalty, and the provision of political goods and the regulation of social relations, policy makers on the payroll of a state (and the people who have to implement their policies) are finding their work to be a growing challenge. Questions of governance and

legitimacy, once comparatively straightforward, are blurring the boundaries among important policy issues, creating uncertainties regarding which institutions have the appropriate authorities and capabilities to address those issues, and complicating the ability of those institutions even to formulate the questions their policies are meant to address — much less to formulate effective policies that have a chance of succeeding in the real world. Some issues that once were in the purview of states (or their provincial or local governments) are today more effectively addressed bilaterally, or by international institutions, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work at the community or national levels. Some issues simply are more effectively addressed by public-private partnerships, or through "open-source" networks, by local communities, or even by private foundations and influential individuals than they are by states.

The sovereignty of states has always been what is commonly termed a "convenient fiction": states have always intervened in the affairs of other states, while proclaiming their respect for the norm of external sovereignty (non-interference); and many states have long been unable to attain or to maintain internal sovereignty (effective control) over their territory or the people under their nominal jurisdiction. Yet over the past several decades, and accelerating during the 1990s, globalization has exacerbated the pressures that have always challenged the state system, making the fiction of sovereignty less and less convenient with each passing year.

Not only are a growing number of nonstate, substate, transstate, and stateless actors taking responsibility for governance functions once reserved exclusively for states, but a growing number of individuals and groups are shifting their primary identities and

loyalties away from territorially defined states and toward local communities or tribes on the one hand and territorially dispersed social networks and social movements on the other — thereby adding their number to those many communities around the world that have never identified with any state in the first place. The growing accessibility and affordability of global communication, transportation, and financial networks, which facilitate global commerce and make it easy for people to stay in touch with distant loved ones, also make it possible for illicit actors to smuggle and traffic in human slaves and dangerous products, plan and implement terrorist attacks, launder ill-gotten finances, and co-opt or destabilize whatever formal governance structures threaten their activities. Most policy makers, meanwhile, are constrained to act within the territorial boundaries of states, the functional boundaries of international organizations, and the moral boundaries of the constituents they purportedly represent. With few exceptions, illicit actors are not so constrained.

There is a sense among many policy makers and implementers that, within this difficult governance environment, legitimacy and "good" governance — perhaps in the context of human development, economic development, or irregular war, depending on the policy maker you're talking to — must somehow play a role in any sustainable solution to these problems. But legitimacy is a difficult concept: difficult to define, difficult to measure, and, in the real world, difficult to influence. And the combination of globalization and illicit activity has shown "bad" governance to be a sticky phenomenon in the environments where reform is said to be needed most.

One of the purposes of this study was to clarify the relationships among legitimacy, governance, violence, and social or territorial control in the context of a

globalizing world, to help policy makers formulate relevant questions and effective

answers. This appendix steps back from the analysis of the preceding chapters to discuss

several concepts related to policy, governance, and control. Below, after defining key

terms used throughout this work (§ A.1), I discuss globalization and the challenges it has

created for policy making (§ A.2), then define governance and discuss its growing variety

and complexity amid the declining of the authority of the state (§ A.3).

A.1. Definitions

A *policy* is a plan of action, or a statement about what one will do under what

conditions, how one will do it, and, often, to what ends it will be done. Policies can be

formal (written, legal, explicit, or created by institutions formed specifically for policy

making), or informal (verbal, customary, *de facto,* implicit). Rules, regulations, laws,

strategies, statements of obligations and penalties, and the dictates of tribal or customary

law are all examples of policies. So are declaratory policies, which are either declarations

about what one will do under what circumstances (i.e. the promulgation of policies) or

policies about what one will say under what circumstances (i.e. public affairs or public

diplomacy). Rules and processes for developing policies are themselves policies: policies

about policy-making. Individuals, groups, organizations, governments, and other entities,

whether they be state or nonstate actors, all are capable of developing, promulgating,

implementing, and (it should be noted) mismanaging policies. A *public policy* is any

policy that is developed and enforced collectively (as by a government), or that purports

to confer a benefit or a right, or to impose a cost or an obligation, upon all members of a

given group of people whether they were directly involved in its development or not.

The development, promulgation, implementation, and revision of policies all take place in specific social contexts; affect and are affected by those contexts; and often are the subject of intense conflict if not outright antagonism. Conflict is a natural feature of all human societies: different people and different groups have different abilities, needs, opinions, worldviews, values, interests, and priorities, and where these are not in accordance across different individuals and different groups, the result is conflict. The conflict may be over the distribution of wealth, power, or prestige; it may be over the content of policy, of memory and history, or of what counts as truth; it may be over goods that are divisible (an art collection, money) or goods that are indivisible (the economic system, the external security of the community); and it may be resolved violently or nonviolently.

Conflict creates tension with human beings' innate desire for some degree of social order — most of us want to be safe, most of us want to be more or less "normal" according to the standards of our reference groups, and most of us want life to be more or less predictable so that we can go about our day's activities and carry out our life's plans and projects without too many unpleasant or harmful surprises. (Pleasant surprises, of course, we generally welcome, yet some people are unsettled even by pleasant surprises.) Social order emerges from interactions among individuals motivated to make life safe, predictable, and "normal," a process through which "conduct is defined as desirable or undesirable, approved or deviant, permitted or prohibited."[1] Through the emergence of social order, some conflicts are preempted by defining the behavior that would give rise

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[1] "Mediante el control social se definen las conductas deseables e indeseables, conformes o desviadas, lícitas o prohibidas …" Hernando León Londoño Berrío, Ricardo León Molina López, and Juan David Posada, "Política Criminal y Violencia Juvenil," 31.

to them as socially unacceptable, and some conflicts are resolved by punishing behavior

that violates those norms. Systems of social control evolve to shape and maintain this

social order. Some social scientists distinguish *active social control,* through which

norms are constructed and socialized by the institutions of society (family, school,

church, media, recreation, etc.), from *reactive social control,* through which violations of

those norms are defined "as pathological, disapproved of, deviant, or criminal" and so are

punished, either formally by criminal justice institutions or informally by social

institutions and social pressures (shaming, mocking, etc.).[2]

Formal and informal systems of social control have evolved or been established in

all societies, and while a great variety of social structures therefore exists, some general

observations can be made about all of them:

> Social life is structured along the dimensions of time and space. Specific
> social activities take place at specific times, and time is divided into
> periods that are connected with the rhythms of social life — the routines
> of the day, the month, and the year. Specific social activities are also
> organized at specific places; particular places, for instance, are designated
> for such activities as working, worshiping, eating, and sleeping. Territorial
> boundaries delineate these places and are defined by rules of property that
> determine the use and possession of scarce goods. Additionally, in any
> society there is a more or less regular division of labour. Yet another
> universal structural characteristic of human societies is the regulation of
> violence. All violence is a potentially disruptive force; at the same time, it
> is a means of coercion and coordination of activities. Human beings have
> formed political units … within which the use of violence is strictly
> regulated and which, at the same time, are organized for the use of
> violence against outside groups.[3]

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s.v. "social structure," http://www.britannica.com (accessed 2 February 2009).

Different societies and different social groups may resolve their conflicts differently, may legitimize and use violence differently, and may develop different systems of social control, but conflict, violence, and social control are universal features of humanity.

Conflicts over two fundamental issues can arise in any group: *who has control?* and *how do they exercise that control?* In a sense these are meta-conflicts, conflicts over (among other issues) who gets to define how conflicts get resolved. The way these meta-conflicts are resolved by any given human group fundamentally defines the nature of that group's social structure or political regime: how do they resolve conflicts over questions of control and governance? These questions are fundamental to the functioning of any human grouping, and they involve concepts that were central to this study: governance and control, states and statelets, and the relationships between and among state and nonstate actors at different levels of aggregation.

Governance is the particular manifestation of collective behavior that involves policy-making, public-goods delivery, institution-building, and network management. *Policy-making* is geared toward regulating social, political, and economic relations. *Institution-building* and *network management* are geared toward the same goal — to influence policy outcomes — but operate under different assumptions: institution-builders assume policy outcomes can be achieved through linear processes managed by hierarchical organizations, while network managers assume policy outcomes are the result of often-complex interactions among heterogeneous actors, with diverse incentives and motivations, in the public, private, and voluntary sectors. Either can be the case, depending on the issue and the actors involved; in the real world, governance often involves both networks and hierarchies. A *public good* is technically anything whose

production or delivery necessarily benefits everyone within a particular population because, once produced or delivered, it cannot be selectively withheld from any subpopulation unless it is withheld from the entire population (e.g. the only way to prevent one person on a street from enjoying the benefits of a street light at night would be to turn off the street light entirely); a public good is sometimes said as well to be something whose use or enjoyment by one person does not diminish its ability to be used or enjoyed by anyone else (e.g. if one person "uses" a traffic signal, by looking at it to determine how safe it would be to proceed through the intersection, that act does not prevent anyone else from similarly using it).

Many things that are claimed to be public goods only approximate the various technical definitions that academics use, and so "the delivery of public goods" often ends up, in practice, to mean "the delivery of political goods" or, equivalently, "the work done by governance institutions," a standard list of which might include "security, judicial, legal, regulatory, intelligence, economic, administrative, social, and political goods and public services."[4] It would be circular, of course, to define *governance* as "the delivery of political goods" and define *political goods* in terms of those things that are delivered by governance institutions. But many academic concepts get translated by the public (and by policy makers) that way, and in any event the popular misinterpretation does not affect the definition used here, which focuses on the broader concept of public goods: Governance involves policy-making, public-goods delivery, institution-building, and network management. Governance institutions (security, judicial, legal, etc.) make rules, deliver public goods, and manage networks of influence. To say that some governance

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[4] Robert D. Lamb, *Ungoverned Areas and Threats From Safe Havens*, 17.

institutions also do other things under the guise of public-goods delivery is only to say

that some governance institutions overreach; it does not mean that they are not

governance institutions.

Governance can be undertaken by state, nonstate, substate, and transstate actors

alike, and it can be done well or poorly; fairly or unjustly; democratically or dictatorially;

through linear or nonlinear processes; through hierarchical organizations, markets, or

networks; or through any combination of the above. In other words, governance should

not be confused, as it too often is, with govern*ment*, nor with "good" or "authoritative"

governance, nor with any particular system of governance, such as state governance or

democratic governance, nor with the more limited concept and practice of public

administration.

Given this definition, one can now say that to *govern* is to deliver public goods; to

make, implement, and enforce policies; and to build and maintain the institutions through

which, and to try to steer the networks through which, these activities take place. A

government is any entity formally (i.e. specifically) constituted for the purpose of

governing (e.g. local governments carry out certain governance functions in a given

territory; student governments govern students; etc.). A *governor* is any individual or

group that actually governs an area or a population; it need not be a government but can

be an organization formed for some other purpose (such as a business enterprise, as in old

factory towns) that controls an area or a population and also carries out some governance

functions.

Control is the capability to prevent governance, as measured by "the probability

that a certain event or class of events will not occur within a defined area within a defined

period of time."[5] It "can be defined and measured empirically, using various indicators

such as the level of, presence of, and access enjoyed by political actors in a given place

and time."[6] A gang controls a neighborhood if it can prevent the city (and other gangs)

from entering and governing there (e.g. to provide police protection or social services);

insurgents control a village if they can keep the state's military forces out. Having the

capability (or "capacity") to govern or to prevent governance does not necessarily imply

that one actually governs or prevents governance: control can be used to selectively allow

governance as well as to forbid it (e.g. the guerrilla militias of Medellín's peripheral

barrios invited state social workers and development professionals into the barrios they

controlled, but challenged the presence of state police forces). *Territorial control* is the

ability to prevent others from governing in a specific place (e.g. a gang can prevent the

police from entering a barrio). *Functional control* is the ability to prevent others from

delivering some public goods and essential services but not others (e.g. a gang can

prevent the police from entering a barrio, but cannot prevent the people who live there

from receiving public assistance deposited electronically into an account accessible by

debit card: the gang has control over security functions but not social-services functions).

Institutional control is the ability to prevent others from using the controlled institution to

govern (e.g. the state intelligence service has been "captured" by individuals not

necessarily loyal to the constitution, and the president and prime minister are unable to

reliably make and implement intelligence policy as a result of their not having control

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[5] Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); quoted in Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 210.

[6] Ibid.

over that institution). *Temporal control* is the ability to prevent others from governing a specific place, population, function, or institution during certain periods of time (e.g. the police control a neighborhood during the day, but a gang controls it at night). Finally, an important aspect of *social control,* discussed earlier, is the ability to prevent others from governing a specific population or subpopulation (e.g. a religious leader claims the loyalty of a religious minority who obey his dictate not to comply with the state's demands; or a union leader selectively delivers or withholds the votes of its members). One form of social control is the ability to prevent a population from governing itself (e.g., the governor imprisons, executes, or "disappears" certain political activists; or criminal and gang activity in a neighborhood undermines the authority and capabilities of social institutions to control vice and deviant behavior).

A *policy event* is a significant occurrence that takes place as a result of a policy, whether the event or its outcome had been intended or not, and regardless of the identity of the policy maker (the city, a militia, the chamber of commerce, etc.). Examples of policy events include military operations, development projects, hostage releases, legislation, gang wars, elections, the publication of an article or opinion poll, a tipping point or critical mass in an emergent phenomenon, or the development and promulgation of a policy.

A *control* policy event is one in which an actor gains, attempts to gain, or announces the intent to gain power at the expense of some other actor; examples might include a military operation to eject a militia (even if it does not succeed), or an assassination of a rival gang leader. The discussion above listed five kinds of control: territorial, functional, institutional, temporal, and social. All territorial disputes are

control events. Corruption scandals or the infiltration of illicit actors into positions of power are policy events related to institutional control. Threats to community or church leaders are matters of social control; the forced displacement of a family affects both social and territorial control. Personnel changes — hiring more police or public school teachers, stepping up recruitment or conscription — can change the balance of functional or temporal control. The circulation of a pamphlet setting a 10 p.m. curfew — a common occurrence in Medellín — is an example of temporal control. Control is a prerequisite for governance (by definition: control is ability to prevent governance): if you do not control a place (or an institution, or a function, etc.), you cannot govern it.

A *governance* policy event is one in which an actor uses, tries to use, or announces the intent to use power to deliver public goods or essential services to residents; to make and enforce rules in the community; to build institutions; or to influence the networks that influence policy outcomes. Examples might include the announcement of a development project, the establishment of an emergency response system, or an election. As the discussion above noted, governance has a number of facets (policy-making, institution-building, network management, and public goods delivery) and some definitions have also spelled out lists of functions (security, law-enforcement, justice, economic regulation, essential services, disaster response, etc.).

Control implies a concentration of power. *Governance* implies a dispersion of the benefits of power. (See the discussion of "controllers" versus "governors" in § 9.3.2.) *Social control* is a special case: when it is maintained by social institutions within the community it more closely resembles self-governance, but when it is maintained by an identifiable subgroup, especially one that operates by preventing self-governance, it more

closely resembles control. Many events, in fact, are likely to have the character of both.

For example, installing a police station in a particular barrio is a clear signal of an intent

to control it, but it also is there to facilitate the protection of residents, a governance

function; on the other hand, if the police posted there operate in such a way that the safety

of residents is routinely sacrificed or disregarded during searches for insurgents or gang

leaders, then its presence would tend to be an indicator of control rather than governance.

Protecting privileges is control; protecting residents is governance.

A *state,* pragmatically speaking, is the government, bureaucracies, offices,

institutions, and so on that, collectively, are internationally recognized as the *de jure*

sovereign ruler of a particular territory (e.g. as a member of the United Nations).

According to customary international law, a state is an entity that possesses "(a) a

permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter

into relations with the other states."[7] In Colombia, for example, the state includes all

documented citizens; the physical territory in the northern Andean region of South

America; and the national, departmental, and local governments, as well as the courts, the

military, the police, government social service agencies, public transportation agencies,

and other government offices. Charles Tilly provides a useful characterization of a state

as being an entity whose agents

> characteristically carry on four different activities: (1) War making:
> Eliminating or neutralizing their own rivals outside the territories in which
> they have clear and continuous priority as wielders of force. (2) State
> making: Eliminating or neutralizing their rivals inside those territories.
> (3) Protection: Eliminating or neutralizing the enemies of their clients.

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[7] "Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States."

(4) Extraction: Acquiring the means of carrying out the first three activities — war making, state making, and protection.[8]

Agents or *actors* (here I use the terms interchangeably) are people (whether working alone, in informal groups, or in formal groups such as agencies or organizations) who work for, represent, govern, or control some *entity* (group, organization, institution, corporation, etc.) within a social structure or a network. Examples of agents include gang leaders, governors, treasurers, detectives, arms traders, social workers, teachers, soldiers, bureaucrats, financers, etc. *State actors,* or *state agents,* are the agents of a state. *Nonstate actors,* or *nonstate agents,* are agents of nonstate entities such as NGOs, militias, companies, mafias, insurgent groups, etc. *Substate actors,* or *substate agents,* are the agents of local, provincial, tribal, autonomous, or other governments or governors at a scale below that of the state (e.g. they control or govern either a territory that is smaller than, and fully within, a state's territory, such as a province or a statelet, or some sub-population within the state); substate actors may be subsidiary to (and therefore part of) the state, or they may be nonstate actors separate from or competing with the state (e.g. the governors or agents of a statelet). *Transstate actors* operate in, exist in, or move among the territories of multiple states; more commonly called *transnational actors* and sometimes called *stateless actors,* they may be individuals, groups, governments, governors, or any other kind of entity; they may operate on a contiguous territory that spans the borders of two or more states (as the FARC have at Colombia's border with Venezuela), or they may operate as geographically dispersed networks, cells, or movements (as the Cacique Nutibara Bloc operated in Medellín). *Illicit actors* are groups or individuals who "use[] or incite[] armed violence (or who assist[] those who use or

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[8] Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," 181.

incite armed violence) for political or private gain in ways that threaten"[9] other people; they can be nonstate, substate, transstate, or even state actors (such as "rogue elements of the state, for example, a police force that has been 'captured' by organized crime"[10]). Examples of illicit actors include actors commonly labeled as terrorists, insurgents, traffickers, smugglers, pirates, money launderers, extortionists, kidnappers, and so on.

A *statelet* is an entity that does not enjoy any recognition as a state but whose agents nonetheless carry out some form of war making (keeping the state out), state making (keeping rivals out), protection (of local allies and constituents), and extraction (taxes, smuggling, extortion, etc.) in a particular territory with a particular population. A statelet is the *de facto* governor of a territory that is under the nominal jurisdiction of one or more recognized states that, in fact, lack the capacity to actually govern or control it. Examples include Somaliland, Transdneister, Gaza, and the tribal lands of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region. Neighborhoods or housing developments in the inner cities of some otherwise strong states, places well known as "no-go" zones for police, have operated essentially as statelets. In Colombia, there have been many statelets, both in rural and urban areas, where the state has ceded control, either by design or by default, to a militia, paramilitary, or guerrilla organization, some of which have actually governed as well as controlled the area in question. The territories in Caicedo La Sierra controlled by M-6&7/Metro Bloc and La Cañada/Cacique Nutibara Bloc were statelets. Statelets can be governed strongly or weakly, well or poorly, and legitimately or illegitimately, just like states.

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[9] Robert D. Lamb, *Ungoverned Areas and Threats From Safe Havens*, 15.

[10] Ibid. at note 7.

Some authors and policy makers refer to statelets as *ungoverned areas,* but this is often inaccurate. Any area that looks ungoverned from the outside is more commonly characterized in reality by one of three situations: either the "ungoverned" area is in fact a collection of very small statelets whose agents have settled into stable arrangements with their neighbors regarding who will control what areas; or the "ungoverned" area is in fact a *contested area,* a zone of conflict where two or more actors are actively vying for control, usually violently; or the "ungoverned" area is in fact governed by a state, but it is governed weakly, poorly, irresponsibly, or in a way outsiders simply do not like.

Finally, *subsidiarity* has to do with the relationship between higher and lower levels of governance, such as that between state and substate governments or between state and substate actors (as such, the term is closely related to federalism and decentralization). As a normative principle, subsidiarity prescribes a rebuttable presumption that any policy decision should be made at the lowest governance level that is competent to make and implement it (i.e. higher levels are subsidiary to lower levels). As a practical matter, it refers to the principles (whether explicitly negotiated or implicitly accepted) that guide agreements over which levels or actors of government will have jurisdiction over which functions of government. The term originated in the Catholic church but is most commonly used today in the context of European Union (EU) treaties that limit the jurisdiction of EU rulemaking and recognize the jurisdictional rights of EU member states. Despite its restricted use today, the underlying concept can usefully be generalized and applied to the analysis of the dynamics of governance in any number of situations. Many fragile states, for example, are fragile precisely because the society in

question has not established a commonly accepted set of subsidiarity principles to regulate relations between center and periphery.

A.2. Policy and Globalization

State-based policy-making today faces two basic challenges: First, the problems that many state-generated policies are meant to address — such as the international narcotics trade that has been a driver of much of Colombia's violence — have sources and consequences that no longer (if they ever did) respect administrative boundaries between and within states. As a consequence, state policy makers are forced either to cooperate with policy makers from other jurisdictions and from nonstate organizations, or to concede their incompetence to make efficient or effective policy on some issues. Second, the people over whom state policy makers believe they have authority — such as the residents of Medellín's peripheral barrios — do not necessarily share that belief to the degree they once did; many consider themselves instead to be subject to the rights and responsibilities defined by their religious communities, their tribal leaders, or international law, to take just three examples, and not by the state, or not primarily by the state. Both challenges arise as a consequence of globalization, and it has only been in the past few years that these challenges have even been recognized as such. In this section I briefly criticize those who have ignored globalization and the nonstate actors it has empowered, then discuss the challenges that globalization increasingly poses for policy makers.

In 2001, a few months before the United States suffered 3,000 casualties in a coordinated attack by four separate teams of terrorists, John Mearsheimer's *The Tragedy*

of Great Power Politics was published. In his discussion of the causes of war, Mearsheimer explained that states, or at least great powers, strive toward regional hegemony "because hegemony is the ultimate form of security," then followed that statement with the astonishing claim that "there are no meaningful security threats to the dominant power in a unipolar system."[11] The term *terrorism* did not appear in the book's index. His neglect of nonstate threats followed from the three "core" realist assumptions he cited:

1. states are the principle actors in world politics, but realists "focus mainly on great powers … because these states dominate and shape international politics and they also cause the deadliest wars";

2. the structure of the international system is the main influence on the behavior of great powers, not the "internal characteristics" of the states; and

3. power calculations "dominate states' thinking" as they "compete for power among themselves."[12]

Mearsheimer was correct that history's great power wars have been enormously destructive. But to argue that great powers have nothing to fear from any source other than *other* great powers was to walk with blinders through recent history. It is true that states are the primary actors on the world stage and great powers are the stars of the show. However, a theatrical production can be ruined not only by the mistakes of lead actors, but also by minor actors turning in a particularly bad performance, and even by disruptive audience members. Great powers often do have other great powers to fear, but

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[11] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 345.

[12] Ibid., 17.

not always, and not exclusively. Sometimes lesser powers act with immunity in opposition to the national interests of great powers — how were the OPEC states made to suffer during the oil crises of the 1970s, when high energy prices harmed great-power economies? — and sometimes nonstate actors do the same. The point is taken that the 9/11 attacks, while tragic and disturbing, killed far fewer Americans than died in the Vietnam War, the Korean War, either of the World Wars, or certainly the American Civil War; historically, wars have indeed been more destructive than terrorist attacks. And, yes, realism is a theory of state actions, not of the behavior of nonstate actors. But so much the worse for the theory if it fails to look at states not only as actors in international affairs but also as the *acted-upon*. And so much the worse for a theorist who lacks the imagination to anticipate the mass of casualties that could result from terrorists' acquisition of weapons of mass destruction — or from the target society's overreaction to a smaller-scale terrorist attack — or from the small arms that transnational criminals deliver to conflict zones worldwide.

Hans Joachim Morgenthau proves a partial corrective to Mearsheimer's parochial outlook. While acknowledging "interest defined as power" as the "perennial standard by which political action must be judged and directed," and the nation-state as the "ultimate point of reference of contemporary foreign policy," Morgenthau insisted that "the contemporary connection between interest and the nation state is a product of history, and is therefore bound to disappear in the course of history."[13] He assumed larger units would one day supplant the nation-state as the interest-bearing unit of analysis and insisted that nothing in realist theory precluded that outcome. But that just suggests that other units —

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[13] Hans Joachim Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace,* Brief ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 12.

larger, smaller, or different in form — could easily do the same. In other words, in realism there is nothing sacrosanct about the nation-state, or more generally the state.

Mearsheimer, in stating that realism "merely requires anarchy," does briefly acknowledge that "it does not matter what kind of political units make up the system. They could be states, city-states, cults, empires, tribes, gangs, feudal principalities, or whatever."[14] Fair enough, but then why ignore the cults, tribes, gangs, mafias, organized criminals, and other nonstate actors who today actually are challenging the authority of nation-states, and who have at various times in recent history managed quite successfully to disrupt their functioning? Even Morgenthau, being a realist, was still mostly concerned with interstate war — his masterpiece, after all, was an analysis of politics *among nations* — so he, too, leaves out nonstate actors as significant, meaningful factors in world affairs. But as Robert Gilpin notes, "Realism is a philosophical position and an analytic perspective; it is not necessarily a moral commitment to the nation-state."[15] The state, he says, continues to be the primary actor in international affairs, but "realism should acknowledge the importance of such nonstate actors as multinational firms, international institutions, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the determination of international affairs."[16] Since Gilpin's primary focus is economic globalization pre-9/11, he could perhaps be forgiven for failing to mention terrorists, traffickers, and warlords. Today, with U.S. and other troops fighting insurgencies and terrorists in Afghanistan and Iraq, with terrorist attacks against civilians on the rise worldwide, and with "criminal

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[14] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 365.

[15] Robert Gilpin, *Global Political Economy: Understanding the International Economic Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 15.

[16] Ibid., 17.

insurgencies" tearing apart some areas in places such as Colombia and Mexico, such a failure could no longer be forgivable.

Bruce W. Jentleson, in a self-reflective look at the policy relevance of his own scholarly discipline in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, found that political scientists in the previous three to five years had failed to adequately address important "questions that address terrorism as a particular sociopolitical phenomenon and security threat — Who are the terrorists? How are they organized? What are their strategies? Their operational relationships to states? Their immediate political and regional contexts?"

> Major scholarly journals such as *World Politics, International Organization, Security Studies,* the *American Political Science Review,* and the *American Journal of Political Science* did not publish a single article in at least the past three years that had questions such as those posed above as the primary focus. *International Studies Quarterly* had one article, although it concluded that transnational terrorism was declining. *International Security* had only one article, on domestic preparedness for a terrorist attack. … For the 2001 annual conference of the American Political Science Association, examining five sections deemed most potentially relevant, and their 101 panels averaging about 3 papers each, only 2 papers had terrorism as their primary focus. For the 2001 conference of the International Studies Association, with many more potentially relevant sections and panels, 20 papers were identified from the pool of about 2,000 papers.[17]

His point in criticizing the discipline was not to advocate that it become the academic equivalent of a think tank or, indeed, the discipline of policy studies, but simply to criticize "the broader disciplinary privileging of general theory with its many '–isms' (e.g., realism, liberalism, and constructivism) over middle-range theory with its more limited claims and greater self-consciousness of conditionalities yet greater utility for

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[17] Bruce W. Jentleson, "The Need for Praxis: Bringing Policy Relevance Back in," *International Security* 26, no. 4 (2002): 169.

being applied to the 'how' questions of strategy" and to advocate merely for a shift in the discipline's emphasis toward policy-relevant middle-range theory.[18]

Moisés Naím, editor of *Foreign Policy,* has twice asked prominent international relations scholars to review the state of their discipline for his journal: Stephen M. Walt in 1998 and Jack Snyder in 2004.[19] In both cases, one before 9/11 and one after, the assumption that states are the central actor in international relations remained unquestioned. "Just as his colleague Walt had done six years earlier, Snyder too concluded that the realist model still offered the most reliable lenses to assess the direction of global politics," Naím wrote in an extended criticism of the field; even the alternatives to realism — constructivism and liberalism — continue to view the world through the "lens" of the state.[20]

If an academic discipline's focus is on international security and if international security has traditionally been merely a polite antonym for the risk of war between states, then one should not be surprised that such scholars failed to produce research suggestive of the modifications to security arrangements that would be needed to prevent medium-scale terrorist attacks such as 9/11. The Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) that followed those attacks was, according to those undertaking it, a war between a great power and nonstate actors (and, where applicable, their state sponsors): at least among policy makers and implementers, the consensus was shifting to an acknowledgement that international

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* (1998): 29; Jack Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," *Foreign Policy* (2004): 52.

[20] Moisés Naím, *Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers, and Copycats Are Hijacking the Global Economy,* 1st Anchor Books ed. (New York: Anchor Books, 2006), 269.

security was increasingly about more than merely interstate wars. Transnational crime and terrorism were at least as relevant.

That has been clear to some scholars for years. In the summer of 1968, a Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) cell hijacked a commercial airline flight on its way to Israel and threatened to kill everyone on board if Israel refused to release Palestinian terrorists from prison. With that act, wrote Bruce Hoffman, who was studying terrorism long before 9/11, "the nature and character of terrorism demonstrably changed … facilitated by the technological advances of the time that had transformed the speed and ease of international commercial air travel and vastly improved both the quality of television news footage and the promptness with which that footage could be broadcast around the globe."[21] Were those hijackers threats to Israeli territory, or to the integrity of Israeli state institutions, or to Israel's very survival? No, they were not. But does that mean they were not threats to Israel's national security, despite the traditional definitions? Surely, they were threats to the *individual* security of the hostages over whose lives the terrorists had undeniable power. Militarily they certainly were no match against Israeli security forces. But that is exactly why they used the tactics they did: the Palestinians had no military or even economic power to speak of, so they resorted to the only power available to them: force on a small scale as an instrument of extortion and public opinion on a large scale. At any rate, Israel certainly treats such tactics as national security threats.

What makes such asymmetric tactics increasingly effective — whether used by terrorists or traffickers, for political objectives or for personal profit — is globalization.

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[21] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 68.

The term *globalization* has come to refer to nearly everything and so in many contexts it has come to mean almost nothing. Those who do define it usually do so in limited ways, most frequently to refer to the interdependence of national economies or to the effects of instantaneous telecommunication on cultures and values. But globalization is not limited to these spheres; political, military, economic, social, cultural, migratory, technological, ecological, and other socially relevant processes all take place on a global scale, assisted by developments in communication and transportation technologies. These processes may be considered different dimensions of globalization. It is vital to keep in mind this multidimensional character, "because changes in the various dimensions of globalization do not co-vary": the period 1914-1945, for example, was characterized by military globalization but economic *de*-globalization.[22]

David Held and colleagues identified six dimensions, or "domains," of globalization — political, military, economic, cultural, migratory, and ecological — and defined the term as

> a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions … generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power. In this context, flows refer to the movements of physical artefacts, people, symbols, tokens and information across space and time, while networks refer to regularized or patterned interactions between *[sic]* independent agents, nodes of activity, or sites of power.[23]

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[22] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "Introduction," in *Governance in a Globalizing World*, ed. Joseph S. Nye and John D. Donahue (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 6.

[23] David Held, et al., *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 16.

Less formally, *globalization* they defined as the "widening, deepening, and speeding up of global interconnectedness," which they argued tends to magnify the effects of distant events such that even local developments can have global consequences.[24]

Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye usefully distinguished globalization from *globalism* and *interdependence.* "Globalism is a state of the world involving networks of interdependence at multicontinental distances. … Globalization and deglobalization refer to the increase or decline of globalism." Interdependence is a characteristic of a reciprocal relationship between or among entities; it is "part of contemporary globalism but by itself is not globalism." They identify four dimensions: economic ("the long-distance flow of goods, services, and capital, and the information and perceptions that accompany market exchange"), military ("long-distance networks of interdependence in which force, and the threat or promise of force, are employed"), environmental ("the long-distance transport of materials in the atmosphere or oceans or of biological substances such as pathogens or genetic materials that affect human health and well-being"), and social and cultural ("movements of ideas, information, and images, and of people — who of course carry ideas and information with them").[25]

Graham Allison similarly used a network metaphor, defining globalization as "the creation or expansion of an identifiable network … [that] connects points and people around the globe on some specified dimension." Where specific connections between specific points cannot be identified, he noted, there is no globalization. Where reciprocal relationships can be identified, he added, they may be unequal: a rural farmer, for

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[24] Ibid., 14.

[25] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "Introduction," 2.

example, may benefit from the extension of the electricity grid to his farm, but "no one imagines that the farmer's influence upon the power generator is equivalent to the generator's influence on him."[26] Inequalities of this sort are among the main features, for example, of the international security environment, particularly with respect to the distribution of power among states and nonstate actors and to different forms and qualities of governance at different levels of governance (local, regional, etc.).

Orlando Acosta and Jorge Iván González went a step further and defined globalization in terms not just of interdependent networks but of interacting subsystems. In their perspective, globalization is a hierarchical, self-organizing, open, complex system brought about by "multidimensional interactions among individual, communal, national, and regional agents through institutional codes that articulate international, transnational, and global dynamics."[27] As a complex adaptive system it is constantly changing, with no predetermined endpoint, no predictable outcomes, systemic features that cannot be extrapolated from the features of subsystems, and, occasionally, some very nasty surprises.

In sum, *interdependence* is a characteristic of a relationship involving reciprocal effects, *globalism* is a state of the world involving interdependent networks and interconnected subsystems at transregional distances, and *globalization* is a process involving the creation or expansion of globalism — that is, of an identifiable global

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[26] Graham Allison, "The Impact of Globalization on National and International Security," in *Governance in a Globalizing World*, ed. Joseph S. Nye and John D. Donahue (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 72.

[27] "… originado en las interacciones multidimensionales entre agentes individuales, comunidades, naciones y regiones a través de códigos institucionales que articulan las dinámicas internacionales, transnacionales y globales." Orlando Acosta and Jorge Iván González, "Globalización: Una Aproximación desde la Evolución Biológica y los Sistemas Complejos Auto-Organizativos," ["Globalization: A Perspective from Evolutionary Biology and Self-Organizing Complex Systems,"] *Análisis Político* No. 61 (2007): 101.

network connecting specific people, states, or nonstate actors in reciprocal relationships — in ways that cannot always be predicted.

The transportation and communication technologies that have been the driving force of globalization are indifferent to the desirability of the exchanges they enable: terrorists can travel as readily as scientists; arms can be traded as readily as tulips; and extremism can be communicated as readily as pluralism. One might usefully (if simplistically) speak, therefore, of a continuum between beneficial forms of globalism ("good" globalism) and dangerous forms ("bad" globalism). Moreover, exchanges of ideas, people, and economic goods between and among states take place at a rate that enables actions in one place to have substantial effects abroad. Unsustainable debt accumulation in Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand led to a collapse of their currencies in 1997 and significant damage to the Asian regional economy, which triggered riots in Indonesia the following year and played a role in the civil violence in East Timor in 1999. It remains to be seen what the security implications of the global financial crisis that began in 2008 will have, but that crisis demonstrated just how tightly woven the international financial system had become, as some extremely large gambles (such as "credit-default swaps") by a small number of people interacted with some relatively small gambles (such as high-risk mortgages) by a very large number of people to create waves of financial instability throughout the world, affecting even those who placed no such bets.

Globalism and interdependence complicate policy making not only for economic policy but for security policy as well. Terrorism is a good example. For centuries terrorism was a localized phenomenon — the earliest known terrorists used daggers

against their victims — but developments in technology that enabled legitimate businesses to travel and communicate more quickly and securely across long distances enabled terrorists to do the same, and in the second half of the twentieth century terrorist groups increasingly crossed national borders to attack their targets, trade weapons, recruit, train, and plan.[28] The Soviet military's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 left a power vacuum that eventually was filled by the Taliban, which attracted Al Qaeda and others from throughout the region seeking a haven in which to plan attacks against distant targets; this globalization of terrorism reached into U.S. territory in 2001.

The international trade in narcotics is another example, one that was key to the current study (see Part I). Latin American drug traffickers have been innovators in underground globalization for at least three decades. The cocaine trade between the United States and the Andean region has existed for more than a hundred years and has been illegal for almost that long. Until the late 1970s, however, cocaine was usually smuggled into the United States by "mules," travelers who hid small quantities of cocaine in their luggage and then sold the drugs to U.S. distributors. When American demand for cocaine rose in the late 1970s, the need to transport ever-larger quantities triggered the development of more complex networks of growers, producers, smugglers, and money launderers throughout the Western Hemisphere. As policy makers and counternarcotics officials in the United States responded with stepped-up law enforcement, demand-reduction efforts, and counternarcotics aid beginning in the mid-1980s, these international networks became even thicker and more sophisticated. They were early adopters of cell phones and computer technology and set up innovative and complex

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[28] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 67.

business arrangements and transportation networks worldwide. By the early 1990s, South American traffickers were transporting tons of cocaine at a time by land, sea, and air and coordinating their activities with dozens, sometimes hundreds, of other groups: growers and insurers throughout the Andes; producers operating massive drug laboratories (protected by guerrillas or paramilitaries) in the jungles of Colombia; transporters in Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean; international arms dealers; and investors and organized crime syndicates in the United States, Europe, and Asia. The wealth and power of these international trafficking groups corrupted the already weak institutions of governance in the Andean states. The drug lord Pablo Escobar was so wealthy at the height of his power that he offered to immediately pay off Colombia's entire foreign debt in exchange for amnesty, an offer the state rejected.

During the late 1990s and early 2000s much of the debate over U.S. aid to Colombia centered on the degree to which U.S. assistance should (or could) strengthen those institutions, and on whether the military components of the aid package might weaken them further. U.S. policy makers faced pressure on these questions from a number of domestic interest groups, but just as the problems the aid sought to address were now globalized, the pressure on policy makers came from global sources as well. For example, international networks of human rights, environmental, and (perhaps ironically) anti-globalization activists worked with their counterparts within the United States to either oppose or restrict U.S. military aid to Colombia. Pressure came also from foreigners who supported an expanded mission for U.S. aid, including the government of Colombia and multinational corporations whose operations there were frequently under attack by guerrillas. The Colombian government had the ear of American policy makers

during the Clinton and second Bush administrations both because it was a willing partner in the war on drugs and, later, the war on terrorism, and because the country was an important trading partner and a growing source for oil imports. This advance of bilateral trade reflected a broader trend in which countries throughout Latin America were increasingly, if at times reluctantly, opening their markets to trade more freely with the United States. As globalization tied the U.S. economy more strongly to those other economies, stability and security within those countries became a growing concern to U.S. policy makers. But while Colombia opposed international trafficking and terrorism and was willing to cooperate in multilateral efforts to oppose them, it also was unable to exercise effective control over much of its territory and suffered from pervasive corruption at all levels of government; as a consequence, the effectiveness of its cooperation was deeply compromised, and the costs ended up being far higher than they might otherwise have been.

Latin American drug traffickers are not the only globalized illicit actors. There are also arms traffickers in Africa, human traffickers in Asia, money launderers in the Caribbean, poppy and heroin smugglers in Afghanistan, intellectual-property pirates in China, actual pirates off the coast of Somalia, nuclear expertise traffickers, organ smugglers, art thieves, even international garbage brokers. While many transstate criminals still specialize in particular "products" (organs, art, girls, poppies), while other illicit actors use weapons and tactics typical of their field (insurgents have military doctrine, while many crime rings use nothing more powerful than a shotgun, etc.), and while some organized crime is still "organized" in the sense of having hierarchical organizations with reasonably effective command and control systems, some evidence

suggests that in general illicit actors are increasingly indifferent to the products they

traffic in and the tactics they employ, and they increasingly form themselves into non-

hierarchical organizations and networks. In other words, global illicit activity is

increasingly characterized by product indifference, diffusion of tactics, and diffusion of

structures:

- *Product indifference.* More and more, illicit actors specialize in processes

  rather than products; for example, they develop a smuggling route and open it

  up to shipments of any number of products or people. Human "mules" have

  been found smuggling, in their stomachs, not only condoms filled with

  cocaine but also condoms filled with hundred-dollar bills. Any human

  trafficking network that can smuggle sex slaves across borders can smuggle

  wanted criminals or known terrorists across borders. A system used to

  smuggle a ton of cocaine can as easily smuggle a crate of automatic rifles.

- *Diffusion of tactics.* Street gangs are no longer the switchblade and length-of-

  chain street fighters imagined in old films; now they have access to military-

  grade weapons and, most recently, formal military training in urban warfare.

  The Zetas, one of the most dangerous gangs of Mexico's "criminal

  insurgency,"[29] are made up of former Mexican special-forces troops who

  realized they could make a lot more money working for drug traffickers than

  for the government. Reports have surfaced of American gangsters joining the

  U.S. armed forces, receiving basic training in firearms and urban warfare

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[29] John P. Sullivan and Adam Elkus, "Plazas for Profit: Mexico's Criminal Insurgency," Small Wars Journal, published electronically by Small Wars Foundation, http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog /2009/04/plazas-for-profit-mexicos-crim/ (accessed 10 May 2009).

tactics, serving out their tour of duty in Iraq or Afghanistan, and returning home to their gangs at the expiration of their contracts. "Such military training could ultimately result in more organized, sophisticated, and deadly gangs, as well as an increase in deadly assaults on law enforcement officers."[30] Likewise, insurgents and paramilitary organizations increasingly raise money by trafficking in narcotics; after a while, many become little more than drug trafficking organizations themselves, even while continuing to proclaim a broader political program. This was seen with both the FARC and the AUC in Colombia (see Chapter 6).

- *Diffusion of structure.* The hierarchical organized crime structures of the past — kinship and cartel arrangements, for example — have increasingly given way to network structures and social movements, facilitated by cell phones, airplanes, cable news, and the Internet. The evolution of the drug trade in Colombia is a perfect example of this trend: Pablo Escobar persuaded the sons of Fabio Ochoa Restrepo to use their father's smuggling routes (which had been developed to get domestic appliances stolen from the United States into Colombia) to smuggle cocaine from Colombia into the United States (an early example of product indifference). Their organizations formed a cartel arrangement with other trafficking organizations, with Escobar's group playing the role of coordinator. After Escobar's Medellín Cartel was dismantled, his successors organized the drug trade as more of a hub-and-spokes network, with Diego Murillo's "office" at the center (see Chapters 5

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[30] National Gang Intelligence Center, *Gang-Related Activity in the U.S. Armed Forces Increasing,* Intelligence Assessment (12 January 2007), http://www.stripes.com/07/feb07/gangs/ncis_gangs.pdf, 3.

and 6). As Murillo's network was targeted, and he himself was eventually extradited to the United States, new network structures emerged with far more nodes, many of them now in Mexico. Al Qaeda has similarly evolved from an organization, to a network with sleeper cells, to a globalized social movement.

This is only a very small sampling of the innovations in organization and in the global trade in illicit goods and services made possible by the same technologies and social phenomena that have empowered and motivated multinational corporations, international activists, and humanitarian-aid workers.[31] Some of the most important and difficult policy problems the world faces today have become globalized.

This state of affairs is unlikely to change any time soon. Airplanes, telecom systems, and satellites cannot be uninvented, and people who want or need to communicate with distant friends and colleagues, send them things, visit them, or help them out, have no incentive to stop doing so and have every incentive to find cheaper ways to do so. Even with the financial crisis in 2009 there is little evidence of deglobalization, with the exception of some calls for economic protectionism. In the absence of major catastrophes (e.g. unless the financial crisis were to turn the current global recession into a global depression), this growing interdependence is not likely to be reversed in the short run. Furthermore, demographic, economic, technological, and environmental trends are such that the difficulties involved in addressing the effects of globalization will become increasingly complicated in the long run:

> An unprecedented 90 million people are added to the planet each year, most of them in the poorest countries, which are least able to accommodate them. Poverty, disease, and hunger continue to blight the lives of hundreds of millions of people. Valid concerns persist about the

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[31] Moisés Naím, *Illicit*.

sweeping global economic changes that could eliminate jobs and livelihoods, undermining whole communities; about rising economic disparities; about failing governments and worsening social conditions. It's certainly possible that this generation's legacy to the next will be an Earth poisoned by industrial toxins, shorn of virgin forests, and committed to an altered climate. … Over the next half century, human society will undergo a profound demographic transformation, experience fundamental shifts in the global balance of economic and political power, and cope with nearly continuous technological change. These transformations are inevitable — the forces that compel them are already in place ….[32]

Just as ballistic missiles made it possible for one state to kill millions on the other side of the planet within hours, and satellites made it possible to locate targets, guide missiles, and photograph the results anywhere in the world, new developments in technology are likely to complicate matters even further. Examples include advanced research on biological pathogens that makes it increasingly possible to manipulate basic life processes, and that risks accidental or intentional escape of new, virulent strains of those pathogens; and work on miniaturization of computer systems, the development of nano-technology, and other technological innovations that may make it possible, for example, to target individuals for assassination at great distances while offering to the assailant a high degree of plausible deniability.[33]

In short, policy makers facing diplomatic, economic, security, and other challenges are increasingly finding their hands tied with respect to what they can accomplish within the confines of "foreign" or "domestic" policy, a distinction that scarcely makes sense in a world in which local events can have global consequences and

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[32] Allen L. Hammond, *Which World? Scenarios for the 21st Century* (Washington: Island Press, 1998), 3.

[33] John Steinbruner and Nancy Gallagher, "Constructive Transformation: An Alternative Vision of Global Security," *Daedalus* 133, no. 3 (2004): 83; John D. Steinbruner, *Principles of Global Security* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).

global phenomena affect even the most remote locations. Globalization, in other words, has greatly complicated governance in both concept and practice.

A.3. Policy, Governance, and 'Ungoverned' Areas

The ancient Greek words *kybernan* ("to steer a ship") and *kybernetes* ("the steersman") entered the English language by way of the French. *Kybernetes* evolved via Latin into *cybernétique,* which in the 1830s meant the "art of governing," and from there entered English in 1948 as *cybernetics* (the study of automatic control and communication systems). *Kybernan* similarly evolved (Latin: *gubernare,* "to steer, direct, or guide") into *gouverner* ("to govern"); both noun variants *gouvernement* and *gouvernance* were used synonymously in the 13th century to mean "the art or manner of governing" but later they diverged, with *gouvernance* coming to refer to the "burden of governing" and *gouvernement* to the institution. In 1297, the verb *gouverner* was translated to Middle English as the verb *govern,* and in the 14th century, *gouvernance* passed into Middle English as *governance,* retaining the sense of its Old French predecessor, "the art or manner of governing." *The Governance of England,* the first constitutional treatise in English, was written around 1470,[34] when *governance* and *government* were still used more or less synonymously; like their French counterparts,

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[34] Sir John Fortescue, *The Governance of England, otherwise called The Difference between an Absolute and a Limited Monarchy*, ed. Charles Plummer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885, orig. ca. 1470); cited in E. Maunde Thompson, "Review," *The English Historical Review* 1(3), no. 3 (1886): 568.

however, the two terms later diverged, sometime during the 16th century, to distinguish the art from the organization.[35]

Current usage of *governance* derives indirectly from disparate ideas introduced in the field of economics during the 1930s but left unconnected and undeveloped for nearly four decades. The most important of these was Ronald Coase's 1937 article, "The Nature of the Firm," in which he argued that organizational behavior — for example, managers' decisions about whether to acquire another company and thereby grow larger, or simply to enter into a contract with it and thereby stay the same size — could not be explained simply in terms of market prices, but rather had to be explained as well in terms of marketing costs, contracting costs, and other transaction costs.[36] Coase did not actually use the word *governance* in print in 1937. But the idea that the structure and behavior of organizations and the nature of organizational decision-making needed to be derived rather than assumed resonated with the institutional economists of the 1970s, who cited Coase as the intellectual forefather of their work on *corporate governance.* Corporate governance came to be seen as a broader concept than corporate management, since

> the governance role is not concerned with running the business of the company *per se,* but with giving overall direction to the enterprise, with overseeing and controlling the executive actions of management and with satisfying legitimate expectations for accountability and regulation by the interests beyond the corporate boundaries.[37]

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[35] Corinne Huynh-Quan-Suu and Service de Traduction de l'Union Européenne, "Étymologie du Terme 'Gouvernance'," Gouvernance dans l'EU, published electronically by Commission européene, http://ec.europa.eu/governance/docs/doc5_fr.pdf (accessed 20 April 2009); Online Etymology Dictionary, s.v. "govern" and "cybernetics," http://www.etymonline.com (accessed 19 April 2009).

[36] R.H. Coase, "The Nature of the Firm," *Economica* 4, no. 16 (1937): 386.

[37] R. Ian Tricker, *International Corporate Governance* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1984), 6; quoted in R.A.W. Rhodes, "The New Governance: Governing Without Government," *Political Studies* XLIV (1996): 652.

In their use of this term one can hear the echo of its ancient origins: governance as steering. This was followed in the 1980s, during the mass migration of private-sector ideas and practices into the field of public management, when the idea took hold that what the public sector needed was "'less government' (or less rowing) but 'more governance' (or more steering)."[38] Proponents of this school of thought argued that the offices of government should set the rules and the tone, but that the work of government would be more efficient and more just if it operated less like a hierarchy and more like a market; privatization, outsourcing, structural adjustment, private-sector management practices, and a loosening of regulations thus became the order of the day for many governments.[39]

From the "new institutional economics" that introduced corporate governance to the discipline that studies market mechanisms, and the "new public management" that introduced market mechanisms to the discipline that manages governments, emerged a broader understanding of the concept that introduced "good governance" to the disciplines of international development and conflict management. Whereas contracts and transaction costs were central to much of the corporate governance literature of the 1970s, and the efficiencies of markets over hierarchies were central to much of the new public management literature during the 1980s, the good governance literature of the 1990s focused on public goods and the institutions that deliver them.

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[38] Ibid; citing David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit Is Transforming the Public Sector* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1992), 34.

[39] Oliver Williamson, "Corporate Governance," *The Yale Law Journal* 93, no. 7 (1984): 1197; R.A.W. Rhodes, "The New Governance: Governing Without Government"; Claire Launay, "La Gobernanza: Estado, Cuidadanía y Renovación de Lo Político: Origen, Definición e Implicaciones del Concepto en Colombia," ["Governance: State, Citizenship and Political Renewal: Origin, Definition, and Implications of the Concept in Colombia,"] *Controversia* no. 185 (2005): 91.

The World Bank Group was the bridge between the economic-liberalization conceptualization of the new public management school and the later, broader conceptualizations that followed. In a 1989 report on Africa, the Bank argued that the underlying cause of underdevelopment on that continent was a "crisis of governance."[40] Three years later, defining governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development," it elaborated a vision of development that equated "good" development with good governance. Although it could not say so explicitly, being limited by charter to addressing a country's development and not its politics, the Bank nevertheless defined good governance in terms scarcely distinguishable from the standards of the economic and political institutions of Western liberal democracies.[41]

Other authors, unrestrained by a development charter, quickly recognized the breadth of the concept inherent in the Bank's work and set about elaborating it accordingly. "Governance is the word that describes the tension-filled interaction between citizens and their rulers, and the various manners in which diverse kinds of governments enable their constituents to achieve satisfaction and material prosperity, or to thwart those and related aspirations," wrote Robert I. Rotberg and Deborah L. West in a study based on Rotberg's definition of governance as "the delivery of political goods to citizens: the better the quality of that delivery and the greater the quantity of the political

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[40] World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* (Washington: The World Bank, 1989).

[41] World Bank, *Governance and Development* (Washington: The World Bank, 1992); Adrian Leftwich, "Governance, Democracy and Development in the Third World," *Third World Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (1993): 605; Claire Launay, "La Gobernanza: Estado, Cuidadanía Yrenovación de Lo Político: Origen, Definición e Implicaciones del Concepto en Colombia."

goods being delivered, the higher the level of governance."[42] Following Rotberg, Marie

Besançon defined *governance* as "the management, supply and delivery of some or most

of these [political] goods," which in her conceptualization included, among other things,

security, the rule of law, political and civil freedoms, health care, education,

infrastructure, and a functioning money and banking system, with security being the most

important: "Good governance results when nation-states provide a high order of certain

political goods — when the nation-states perform effectively and well on behalf of their

inhabitants."[43] For B. Guy Peters, governance involved building "institutions designed to

exercise collective control and influence over the societies and economies for which

[governments] have been given responsibility."[44] Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, and

Pablo Zoido-Lobatón defined the term even more broadly, as

> the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised.
> This includes (1) the process by which governments are selected,
> monitored and replaced, (2) the capacity of the government to effectively
> formulate and implement sound policies, and (3) the respect of citizens
> and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social
> interactions among them.[45]

A few years into the new millennium, so much work was being done on "good

governance" as the solution to development that the World Bank was able to identify

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[42] Robert I. Rotberg and Deborah L. West, *The Good Governance Problem: Doing Something About it,* WPF Reports, 39 (Cambridge, Mass.: World Peace Foundation, 2004), http://www.worldpeacefoundation.org/WPF39.GovernanceRanking.pdf, 1.

[43] Marie Besançon, *Good Governance Rankings: The Art of Measurement,* WPF Reports, 36 (Cambridge, Mass.: World Peace Foundation, 2003), 1; Robert I. Rotberg, "The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States: Breakdown, Prevention, and Repair," in *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 2.

[44] B. Guy Peters, *The Future of Governing,* 2nd ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 1.

[45] Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, and Pablo Zoido-Lobatón, "Governance Matters," working paper, *World Bank Policy Research Working Papers* 2196 (Washington: World Bank, October 1999), http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/pubs/govmatters.html, 1.

more than a hundred relevant datasets, assessments, and ongoing studies sponsored by the

Bank and other researchers, and Besançon was able to review 47 projects measuring

governance and related issues in democracy, corruption, and risk.[46]

The growth of the good governance literature paralleled that of the "state failure"

literature — many of the same thinkers worked on both topics — and this led inexorably

to policy makers' concern over "ungoverned" territories in the wake of the terrorist

attacks of 11 September 2001 (9/11). In Rotberg's introductory chapter to his second

edited volume on state failure, he described a "strong state" (in contrast to "weak,"

"failed," and "collapsed" states) in the same terms as his work on good governance, even

explicitly linking the concept of state strength to empirical studies of governance

quality[47]:

> Strong states unquestionably control their territories and deliver a full range and a high quality of political goods to their citizens. They perform well according to indicators like GDP [gross domestic product] per capita, the UNDP [United Nations Development Programme] Human Development Index, Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, and Freedom House's *Freedom of the World Report*. Strong states offer high levels of security from political and criminal violence, ensure political freedom and civil liberties, and create environments conducive to the growth of economic opportunity. The rule of law prevails. Judges are independent. Road networks are well maintained. Telephones work. Snail mail and e-mail both arrive quickly. Schools, universities, and students flourish. Hospitals and clinics serve patients effectively. And so on. Overall, strong states are places of enviable peace and order.[48]

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[46] World Bank, "Consolidated Matrix of Both Internal and External Governance Data Sets and Instruments," Excel spreadsheet, published electronically by The World Bank Group, www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance (accessed 20 April 2009); Marie Besançon, *Good Governance Rankings*.

[47] Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004); Robert I. Rotberg and Deborah L. West, *The Good Governance Problem: Doing Something About it*.

[48] Robert I. Rotberg, "The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States: Breakdown, Prevention, and Repair," 4.

The obvious assumption of the state failure literature that the nation-state was the appropriate unit of analysis pervaded the literature on governance as well. Besançon, citing Rotberg's work on failed states, explains why: "In this era, nation-states are responsible for the task of governing and providing goods to those who reside within their borders. Many of these nation-states have corrupt leaders who drain the country's treasures and provide little or no security, education, infrastructure, or any other public good to their constituents."[49]

Yet states are not the only coordinators of collective action and are not the only actors corrupted by power. Keohane and Nye argued that governance is a broader concept than is suggested by the literature; to them, governance encompasses

> the processes and institutions, both formal and informal, that guide and restrain the collective activities of a group. Government is the subset that acts with authority and creates formal obligations. Governance need not necessarily be conducted exclusively by governments and the international organizations to which they delegate authority. Private firms, associations of firms, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and associations of NGOs all engage in it, often in association with governmental bodies … sometimes without governmental authority.[50]

Governance takes place at multiple levels (subnational, national, and supranational), and sometimes between levels, and it is exercised through multiple instruments (laws, norms, markets, and architecture): "one can slow traffic through a neighborhood by enforcing speed limits [(laws)], posting 'children at play' signs [(norms)], charging for access [(markets)], or building speed bumps in the road [(architecture)]."[51] States can operate at any of these levels or use any of these instruments, but they need not: nonstate actors are

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[49] Marie Besançon, *Good Governance Rankings*, 2.

[50] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "Introduction," 12.

[51] Ibid; citing Lawrence Lessig, *Code and Other Laws of Cyberspace* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 88, 207.

increasingly capable and active. The central governments of many states do not exercise

de facto control over the entire territories under their *de jure* jurisdictions. Yet while

Keohane and Nye correctly observed that governance takes place within and among

private, governmental, and third-sector actors, even they failed to acknowledge that

governance is at times undertaken by, for example, guerrillas who have wrested control

of an area from the central government (or are attempting to).[52] Colombia, for example,

did not exercise control over some regions of its territory for decades, occasionally even

relinquishing its own sovereignty over certain territories during peace negotiations; in

some towns they controlled, guerrillas maintained local order and provided social

services, until ejected by paramilitary forces, some of whom then played that same role

(see Chapter 6).

It was concern over precisely such territories — especially in the wake of the 9/11

terrorist attacks, which had been planned from a "lawless" and "ungoverned"

Afghanistan — that led the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to launch a three-year

study of "ungoverned" areas that transnational terrorist, insurgent, or criminal networks

could use as safe havens. Its initial conceptualization of the issue was almost entirely in

terms of state failure and state sponsorship of terrorism. As defined during the 2006

Quadrennial Defense Review, the mission of what came to be known as the Ungoverned

Areas Project was to figure out how to contribute to "building partnership capacity" by

enabling "strategic partnerships to extend governance to under- and ungoverned areas";

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[52] Nelson Kasfir, "Dilemmas of Popular Support in Guerrilla War: The National Resistance Army in Uganda, 1981-86" (paper presented at the Laboratory in Comparative Ethnic Processes (LiCEP) 6, Dartmouth College, University of California-Los Angeles, November 2002).

the "partners" in question were assumed to be state actors, especially those receiving U.S. foreign assistance.[53]

The terminology raised some eyebrows outside of the department, because the term *ungoverned* historically has been used by the powerful as a prelude and justification for attempts to repress "ungoverned passion" (the "undisciplined" or "unbridled" sexuality of women); to "civilize" (or, more recently, "democratize") an "ungoverned" ("uncivilized") people; or to take over some "ungoverned" ("uncolonized" or "unclaimed") territory to extract its resources — in short, as a prelude to oppression, imposition, or exploitation.[54]

Administration officials did not ease such concerns by the way they used "lawless" and "ungoverned" (or, worse, "ungovernable") in public in the early days of the Global War on Terrorism, as at times they seemed to suggest they were considering some kind of military approach to the problem, even if it was just by increasing military assistance to states with such areas. In an interview with *The New York Times* less than four months after 9/11, then-Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz was asked to clarify comments he had made "about regions that you consider ungovernable or ungoverned … sort of lawless regions where it's easy for terrorist cells and terrorist group to breed." While stipulating "very clearly, we're not talking about future

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[53] United States Department of Defense, *Building Partnership Capacity: QDR Execution Roadmap* (Washington: 2006), Tasks 3.3.4 and 3.3.5; United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*.

[54] Early instances of the use of "ungoverned" in this manner include: The New York Times, "Sentimental Philanthropy," 29 January 1852, 2; The New York Times, "Washington — the Approaching Meeting of the Virginia Legislature — the Charges of Corruption Against Kansas Members of Congress — an Unorganized Territory — the Georgia Case in Washington — Mr. Hear and Mr. Sawyer of South Carolina," 7 February 1870, 1; Herbert Spencer, "Behavior and Ceremony," *The New York Times*, 27 January 1878.

operations," his response did suggest he believed that non-state forms of governance *as such* were the problem:

> At the same time that one has to worry about governments that actively support terrorism, what this whole crisis has revealed to us is that places with no government at all become very dangerous as havens for terrorists as well. … I haven't thought enough about what I want to mean by that term [ungoverned] … I think what it really means is at some level it's governed by not what we can naturally think of as governments … it might be more benign if they were truly ungoverned, but they are in fact governed by tribal groups or anarchic groups or ethnic militias. … [There] are probably going to be many cases where the best thing we can do is to provide the training and equipment and possibly some of the backup support from us to permit countries that really want to deal with terrorists, [that] have the will but lack the means, lack the ability, to take on the problem.[55]

The conventional wisdom, which these comments reflected at the time, assumed that the problem of "under- or ungoverned areas" was a problem of state weakness or state fragility, an unwillingness or inability on the part of some states to govern all their territory, and that therefore the appropriate policy response was to encourage and enable those states to fill those "gaps" in governance.[56] A simplistic take on this conventional view held that this could be accomplished primarily by increasing military, intelligence, justice, and law-enforcement capacity, but that take scarcely withstood scrutiny: the first managers of the Ungoverned Areas Project immediately recognized that states with "ungoverned" areas would need assistance with "governance capacity" defined more broadly: not just to improve counterterrorism capacity but to strengthen administrative

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[55] Paul Wolfowitz, interview of 7 January 2002 with James Dao and Eric Schmitt of The New York Times, M2 PressWIRE, 14 January 2002, published electronically by M2 Communications Ltd., http://www.m2.com (accessed 15 April 2008); James Dao and Eric Schmitt, "A Nation Challenged: Strategy: U.S. Sees Battles in Lawless Areas After Afghan War," *The New York Times,* 8 January 2002.

[56] United States Department of Defense, *Building Partnership Capacity: QDR Execution Roadmap*, 12.

capacity, economic management, political institutions, and civil society as well.[57] Likewise, the most systematic study of the problem at the time recognized the relevance of nonsecurity institutions, demographics, and other "soft" factors, in addition to military and security factors, in such "ungoverned territories."[58]

The assumptions underlying the conventional wisdom at the beginning of the project — that inadequate "state penetration" was the problem, and that building state capacity was the solution — were challenged during the course of the project itself. As staff studied the problem and solicited input from experts and experienced military personnel (I was the project's co-manager during this stage), it quickly became clear that what actually makes some places suitable as sanctuaries for illicit transnational activity is not their lack of governance but their manner of governance: many states govern in ways that are dangerous to both insiders and outsiders, and many places not controlled by a state are not dangerous to either.

The first of the project's three main findings was simply this: "Few places in the world are literally 'ungoverned': where the central government is weak or missing, another governing body — usually a provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous government, but sometimes an informal or nongovernmental organization — tends to emerge (or already exists) to maintain order and deliver needed services." It went on:

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[57] The first action officers to manage the Ungoverned Areas Project were Leslie Hunter, a civil servant, and Colin Kahl, a consultant; I joined the project in 2006 and co-managed it with Major Sandra Reyna of the U.S. Army. The project was directed at different times by Barry Pavel, Thomas Mahnken, Amanda Dory, Kathleen Hicks, Alisa Stack O'Connor, Eric Herr, Katherine Johnson, and Laura Cooper. Contributions to the project came as well from staff in more than forty offices throughout the U.S. government, including the Defense Department, the State Department, USAID, the Intelligence Community, and the National Security Council; from participants in a series of workshops hosted by The RAND Corp; and from consultations with private-sector experts.

[58] Angel Rabasa, et al., *Ungoverned Territories*.

> The pertinent question with respect to ungoverned areas is not about the *degree* of governance but about the *manner* of governance: *Who is, and who is not, governing an area, and what are the consequences of the particular way they govern?* If a semi-autonomous tribal government is willing and able to govern its territory in a way that is inhospitable to transnational illicit activity, then that is likely to be satisfactory ….[59]

The project got a strong push toward this conclusion at an August 2007 conference at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, where contributors to a forthcoming edited volume on the issue implicitly criticized the assumptions underlying most of the literature on governance, all of the literature on state failure, and the conventional wisdom on "ungoverned" areas that had reified state capacity-building during an era when the authority of the state had been diluted, in the organizers' analysis, by: the authority of the market (as a result of the spread of neoliberal ideology), the authority of international organizations (as a result of the spread of human rights ideology), the authority of civil society (as a result of the spread of democratic ideology), and the ability of common people to communicate and travel globally and cheaply (as a result of the spread of technology).[60]

The second finding of the Ungoverned Areas Project followed from the first. If the problem was not who governs but how they govern, then the solution should aim not to improve specific types of government (i.e. states) but to achieve specific results with respect to the quality of governance, whether the "partner" is a state or not:

> In many cases, provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous governments — and in some cases, other countries, corporations, or organizations — are simply better positioned than the central government to address the local conditions that enable illicit actors to operate there. It often will be more efficient and effective to influence and enable those entities rather than —

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[59] Robert D. Lamb, *Ungoverned Areas and Threats From Safe Havens*, 18. (emphasis in original).

[60] Anne L. Clunan and Harold Trinkunas, *Ungoverned Spaces?*

> or, preferably, in addition to and with the assistance of — the host state in the short term. For diplomatic, legal, and practical reasons, the host state cannot be ignored or bypassed, but nor should it be permitted to impede progress against safe havens when other entities are positioned to help. An appropriate balance is needed.[61]

In other words, policy on "ungoverned" areas should be based, not on the narrower conceptualizations of governance reflected in the state failure literature, but on the broader conceptualizations found in the best of the "good governance" literatures — at least as broad as that of Keohane and Nye (if not of the "cybernetic" approaches, to be discussed shortly). By focusing on state failure and conventional notions of governance, those involved in developing policies and strategies to confront nontraditional security threats involving nonstate actors had been blinding themselves to the fact such threats can emerge in strong and otherwise well governed states as well as in weak, failing, or failed states. The Ungoverned Areas Project had little to say regarding "ungoverned" areas in strong states, beyond recommending further study on the dynamics of governance that make urban, maritime, and "virtual" safe havens possible in weak and strong states alike.[62] (The current study follows directly on the recommendation to study urban dynamics.)

The third and final finding was based on an observation, expressed by many consulted during the course of the project, that today's nonstate actors seemed to understand the new dynamics of governance better than state actors, and that nonstate illicit actors had been quicker to adapt to globalization and to states' efforts to counter them than states had been to adapt to the changing nature of transnational crime, irregular

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[61] Robert D. Lamb, *Ungoverned Areas and Threats From Safe Havens*, 5.

[62] Ibid., 24 and 49.

war, and "ungoverned" areas. "Our ability to develop coherent policy for safe havens is constrained by policy processes that depend on separate institutions to address issues that, by their nature, cannot effectively be dealt with separately." The challenge was summarized as follows: "criminals, insurgents, terrorists, and warlords increasingly borrow each other's tactics, buy each other's services, and exploit each other's missions. The [United States Government], by contrast, has mostly separate doctrines for each type of adversary or type of conflict, with limited overlap."[63] The problem with having different agencies, different units, and different personnel developing and implementing policy for different types of security problem or illicit activity is that the nature of these issues have changed, becoming increasingly fluid across different disciplinary boundaries as new innovations allow (see the introduction to Appendix B). While it is clear that the United States and other states have recognized this problem and have taken some steps to overcome it through various interagency coordination processes, those steps have been tentative and contested.

The findings of the Ungoverned Areas Project represented a strong critique of the way governance had been conceptualized and the way its misconceptions had misinformed policy, strategy, and doctrine for a particular set of security problems (and, indeed, continue to do so). Yet in some ways it did not go far enough in its critique of the way governance had been conceptualized: in the spectrum of conventionality in the "ungoverned" literature, the Ungoverned Areas Project lay somewhere between the best of the conventional wisdom as articulated by Angel Rabasa and his colleagues at RAND, which it had build upon, and the more daring alternatives to state authority considered in

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[63] Ibid., 47.

the Monterey conference and edited volume by Anne L. Clunan and Harold Trinkunas, which it anticipated.[64]

For a wide range of problems, beyond security and crime, alternative forms of governance have arisen in recent decades precisely in response to the pressures of globalization and the waves of ideologies (free markets, human rights, democracy) and technologies (global communications, global finance, global transportation) that have eaten away at the authority and capacity of the state. Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks convincingly argue that governance, if it is to have any hope of succeeding in today's world, must operate at multiple levels. "Large (i.e., territorially extensive) jurisdictions have the virtue of exploiting economies of scale in the provision of public goods, internalizing policy externalities, allowing for more efficient taxation, facilitating more efficient redistribution, and enlarging the territorial scope of security and market exchange. Large jurisdictions are bad when they impose a single policy on diverse ecological systems or territorially heterogeneous populations":

> Centralized government is not well suited to accommodate diversity. Ecological conditions may vary from area to area. Controlling smog in a low-lying flat area surrounded by hills (such as Los Angeles) poses a very different policy problem than smog control in a high plateau such as Denver. Preferences of citizens may also vary sharply across regions within a state, and if one takes such heterogeneity into account, the optimal level of authority may be lower than economies of scale dictate. In short, multi-level governance allows decision makers to adjust the scale of governance to reflect heterogeneity.[65]

Through their analysis of five more or less separate literatures on the diffusion of state authority, they distinguish between two general types of multi-level governance: general-

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[64] Angel Rabasa, et al., *Ungoverned Territories;* Anne L. Clunan and Harold Trinkunas, *Ungoverned Spaces?*

[65] Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, "Unraveling the Central State, But How? Types of Multi-Level Governance," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 2 (2003): 233.

purpose jurisdictions (Type I) and task-specific jurisdictions (Type II). Type I multi-level governance, in their conception, is the familiar federal structure in which "every citizen is located in a Russian Doll set of nested jurisdictions, where there is one and only one relevant jurisdiction at any particular territorial scale." Such structures govern communities rather than specific policies and tend to be highly hierarchical by design. Type II multi-level governance is a set of more fluid structures "fragmented into functionally specific pieces — say, providing a particular local service, solving a particular common resource problem, selecting a particular software standard, monitoring the water quality of a particular river, and adjudicating international trade disputes." The variety of arrangements is vast, including everything from local school districts (to govern just the school system), to multi-province districts such as the Delaware River and Bay Authority (to operate bridges and ferries), to international environmental treaty bodies (to monitor and enforce, or "name and shame"), to the World Trade Organization, to any number and variety of partnerships between and among the public, private, and voluntary sectors.[66]

Largely overlooked in policy circles until only very recently has been the "other" branch in the linguistic family tree of governance: *kybernetes* (the steersman), *cybernétique* (the art of governing), and *cybernetics* (the study of automatic control and communication systems). Conspiracy theorists — of which there seemed to be no shortage in Medellín — tend to attribute undesirable outcomes to the intentional behaviors of powerful, if secret, government or corporate agents: by asking, "Who benefits?" they believe they can identify the perpetrator, to whom they apparently

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[66] Ibid.

attribute vast, and almost always fully unwarranted, amounts of competence (see § 6.1.3).

Against the logic of conspiracy — an extreme version of what John Steinbruner called

the analytic paradigm[67] — one may pose the logics of adaptation, of cybernetics, or of

complex systems, in which outcomes are path-dependent, difficult to predict, constantly

changing, and "emergent" from interactions among networks of non-centralized agents.

Governance, in these approaches, is "directed at the creation of patterns of interaction in

which political and traditional hierarchical governing and social self-organization are

complementary, in which responsibility and accountability for interventions is spread

over public and private actors."[68] Or in the words of R.A.W. Rhodes, "Governance is

about managing networks":

> Interorganizational linkages are a defining characteristic of service delivery and I use the term *network* to describe the several interdependent actors involved in delivering services. These networks are made up of organizations which need to exchange resources (for example, money, information, expertise) to achieve their objectives, to maximize their influence over outcomes, and to avoid becoming dependent on other players in the game.[69]

As globalization makes the world more complex, governance structures have

evolved to meet the challenges it has generated. Innovations in governance have come

about among organizations of all kinds: illicit actors, multinational corporations,

international organizations, public-private partnerships, social movements, volunteer

networks, and even states have all experimented with new structures and processes of

governance — to varying degrees of success. It can be easy to fall into the simplistic

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[67] John D. Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision: New Dimensions of Political Analysis* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 25.

[68] Jan Kooiman, *Modern Governance: New Government-Society Interactions* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1993), 252; quoted in R.A.W. Rhodes, "The New Governance: Governing Without Government," 657.

[69] R.A.W. Rhodes, "The New Governance: Governing Without Government," 658.

conclusion that illicit actors have adapted well while states have not, but clearly there have been many illicit actors whose internal governance has been disastrous for their organization or movement, while many states have shown creativity and flexibility by, for example, adopting private-sector management practices for some tasks, creating formal mechanisms for interagency coordination within existing hierarchical structures, and encouraging (or sometimes merely not discouraging) the formation of informal networks such as "communities of interest" on particular issues. Governance, then, as James N. Rosenau has written, is a broader phenomenon than government, encompassing formal political institutions as well as social institutions, social networks, and organizations in the private and voluntary sectors as well as the public sector:

> … government suggests activities that are backed by formal authority, by police powers to insure the implementation of duly constituted policies, whereas governance refers to activities backed by shared goals that may or may not derive from legal and formally prescribed responsibilities and that do not necessarily rely on police powers to overcome defiance and attain compliance. … Put more emphatically, governance is a system of rule that works only if it is accepted by the majority (or, at least, by the most powerful of those it affects), whereas governments can function even in the face of widespread opposition to their policies.[70]

For policy makers hoping to influence the complex dynamics of territorial and social control, governance, violence, and legitimacy that take place in cities such as Medellín, it is important to be able to recognize the distinction between governance and control, and especially the difference between mere control (the ability to prevent governance) and "bad" governance (ineffective policies, poor management, doing just enough to be accepted only "by the most powerful of those it affects," etc.).

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[70] James N. Rosenau and Ernst Otto Czempiel, eds., *Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 4.

Appendix B. Complex Violence

Many of the world's most difficult security problems can be made to seem more intractable simply by listing the categories of problems or armed actors involved. In Afghanistan, for example, there is a terrorism problem (al Qaeda), an insurgency problem (the Taliban), an unconventional warfare problem (parastatal militias), a transnational crime problem (arms and opium poppies), an "ungoverned" areas problem (the "Pashtunistan" safe haven), a human rights problem (the violent oppression of women and religious minorities), a humanitarian problem (internally displaced persons), and most generally a "post-conflict" reconstruction problem. Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have a similarly large number of problem categories, as do any number of cities or villages throughout the world in places such as Nigeria, Indonesia, and, perhaps to a lesser extent, now Mexico. Each of these problem categories has traditionally been addressed by its own *policy discipline* (by analogy to academic disciplines), and the complexity of such places can be roughly measured by how many policy disciplines can reasonably claim jurisdiction over a significant subset of its problems.

Those problems can be made to seem even more intractable still by recognizing that certain individuals and groups who operate there do not fit neatly or stably within any one of these problem categories. An arms dealer, for example, might take opium poppies as payment, sell them to insurgents, then launder the money through a charity that is a subcontractor for a development project. Or a guerrilla unit made up of fighters

recruited from a refugee camp might avoid defeat by defecting to the competing

paramilitary group, and then to fund future operations they might sell security services to

poppy farmers and opium producers in the war zone, then eventually take over the

production process directly. Or a farmer might accept some money from an insurgent

group to shell a neighboring village one night, and only that night. Are these people

insurgents, narcotraffickers, transnational criminals, unconventional forces, or just

common people? They can be any or all of the above at any given time.

Complex situations such as these, involving multiple problem categories and

multiform actors operating from ambiguous motives, present a real puzzle to policy

makers who must decide which of their existing capabilities, agencies, and authorities are

best suited to addressing them: Is it mainly a defense problem or mainly a development

problem, and if it's both which should take priority? Is it mainly a military problem or

mainly a law-enforcement problem? Which doctrines, planning frameworks,

"paradigms," "best practices," or, most generally, policy disciplines should be brought to

bear upon the problem: reconstruction and stabilization, democracy and governance,

conflict mitigation and management, counterterrorism, counternarcotics and transnational

crime, counterinsurgency, unconventional warfare, urban warfare, humanitarian relief —

which one, or which combination, and with what priority?

As was discussed in Appendix A, trends in globalization, urbanization, irregular

warfare, and other phenomena have created a world in which these problem categories

and policy disciplines cannot hope to adequately capture or address the complexities

present in certain areas of the real world today. These problems require interdisciplinary

solutions, and both in the field and back at headquarters, policy makers and those

involved in implementation have been improvising such solutions, often with useful and innovative results.

But social scientists and policy analysts can contribute to the search for sensible, efficient, and lasting solutions to today's complex problems by studying phenomena that cut across or take place in the spaces between our existing categories of knowledge and practice.

Complex violence is one such phenomenon, cutting across and sometimes hiding between the gaps of our existing policy disciplines. *Complex violence* involves multiform armed actors, in networked relationships, with shifting loyalties, and with diverse or ambiguous motives; *complex urban violence* is, to keep the definition simple, complex violence that takes place in densely populated areas.

The central problem of each of the security-policy disciplines — stability operations, transnational crime, counterterrorism, etc. — is the use of violence by different actors; the central problem of complex environments involving multiple security-policy disciplines is complex violence. By focusing on the common problem within these complex environments — complex violence — the analysis of the problem and the search for a solution becomes more tractable than would trying to understand all the different motivations and methods and loyalties of all the different violent actors. (By reference to the complex-systems literature, I am tempted to say that certain forms of violence might be analogous to an *attractor,* the study of which makes it possible to understand important dynamics within a complex system without having to know much about all of the system's components. Given the data requirements for studying complex systems, however, I am not willing to claim anything beyond the analogy.)

As a thought experiment, consider the difference between narcotrafficking today and narcotrafficking in some hypothetical world in which no violence were associated with narcotrafficking: if the proceeds of the poppy trade in Afghanistan went to building mansions and buying expensive cars instead of also funding insurgency operations and terrorist attacks; or if, upon the arrest of a drug kingpin in Colombia, questions about succession were resolved by nonviolent procedures within the trafficking organization instead of by mafia wars; or if, in Los Angeles, gangs who distribute drugs were to divide turf through negotiation and ongoing consultation. Narcotrafficking in the real world is a danger; narcotrafficking in this hypothetical world is a nuisance, not entirely unharmful and not exactly legal, but at least no more violent than, say, pineapple-juice trafficking: The cultivation, processing, transport, and distribution of cocaine differs from the cultivation, processing, transport, and distribution of pineapple juice only in that the cocaine cycle is illegal and involves violence, whereas the pineapple-juice cycle is legal and does not, generally, involve violence (at least not as much as it once did in Latin America).

As another thought experiment, consider the difference between a group of people using indiscriminate violence against innocents as a way to coerce an occupying power to leave the area, versus a group of people publicizing the occupiers' abuses as a way to win domestic and international support for efforts to get them to leave. The first is a terrorist group; the second is a political movement. As a final thought experiment, consider a place where social order has broken down and people resolve their conflicts by threatening or killing their adversaries, versus a place where communal, tribal, or legal

processes exist to resolve conflicts and people actually use those processes when problems arise.

The point of these thought experiments is not that finding a way to get narcotraffickers to use less violence would be a worthy intermediate policy goal since it would mitigate the harms of the illegal activity (even if stopping short of ending it). Nor is it that finding a way to get terrorists to participate nonviolently in political processes, or finding a way to establish conflict resolution procedures where none currently exist, would be worthy goals as well. These certainly would be worthy goals, and in fact achieving them in the real world would be impressive accomplishments. But there is a larger point.

The larger point of these thought experiments is that the central problem, in all of our preexisting categories of security problems, is *the use of violence by some actor* to express some emotion or to achieve some end; isolate violence from any one of these problems and the problem reduces to an injustice or a nuisance. This is not meant to trivialize injustices or social nuisances. But the introduction of violence complicates any situation and exacerbates any conflict, whereas its elimination simplifies both.

These observations seem so obvious that they would not be worth making — if not for the fact that making them explicit can help reduce what seems to be an intractable set of problems to what seems to be a potentially tractable problem: We can view certain policy environments as having a such complex mix of (our own preexisting) problem categories that we can never hope to adequately map them out for the purposes of designing comprehensive and rational strategies to deal with them, or we can view such policy environments as problems of complex violence, still difficult to understand and

address, but analytically more tractable. It is the latter approach that has been taken for this study.

The story of violence in Medellín cuts across and hides between so many different categories and levels of analysis that studying it requires either an intradisciplinary analysis of some subset of the problem or an interdisciplinary synthesis by a team of experts.[1] For this study, I tried to take a somewhat different approach. In Part I, a rather complicated story was told of armed actors, innocent bystanders, shifting loyalties, surprise betrayals, evolving policies, and policy failures. But the main character throughout the story was violence itself, or rather *complex urban violence,* from its conception and birth, its juvenile outbursts, its gradual evolutions and multiple dimensions, its sudden transformations and crises of identity, to where it is today, still carrying its distinctive character, but now (to extract diminishing returns from the metaphor) in mature form, without the baggage and idealism of its youth, and perhaps showing some early signs of aging. By making violence the main character, I hoped to demote the very complicated set of problem categories and armed actors in the city, from a cast of divas fighting for the spotlight, to a chorus of supporting actors, there mainly to help with the exposition and development of the main story line.

In Chapter 8, I hoped to demonstrate that the multifarious security problems of Medellín during the past 25 years could be analytically reduced to a problem of complex violence, and that the patterns of that violence could be described in a way that hints at

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[1] A good example of an interdisciplinary synthesis is Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas, Héctor Gallo, and Blanca Inés Jiménez Zuluaga, *Dinámicas de Guerra y Construcción de Paz: Estudio Interdisciplinario del Conflicto Armado en la Comuna 13 de Medellín*.

potential paths for intervention. In this appendix, I discuss the conceptualization and framework that informed Chapter 8's description of the city's patterns of violence.

Three pathologies taint the literature on violence in Medellín, not only the academic literature but the popular press and policy analyses as well. First, too many studies and policy makers look simply at homicide rates and assume (without demonstrating) that they stand as an adequate proxy for "violence" when even a casual review of the data on violence suggests it is a much more involved phenomenon than can be captured by only one indicator. In other words, in trying to explain violence, their dependent variable is homicides. Second, many recognize that Medellín suffers not from violence but from "violences" and their work describes the many types of violence in detail; but in trying to explain these violences (plural), their dependent variable ends up simply being violence (singular), lumping together all the different types and explaining them in aggregate as being "the" result of culture, narcotrafficking, greed, etc. A third pathology in the study of and reporting on violence in Medellín is a tendency to ignore or, worse, explain away trends and patterns over time. This particular pathology affects mostly those organizations, social workers, and researchers who work with victims of violence. Typical is the claim by some people who work with trade unionists, for example, that violence, human rights violations, and violations of international humanitarian law against trade unionists has only one trend: worse. That claim is made even in years when homicides, disappearances, attacks, instances of torture, and so on have all declined in the previous several years; in the face of such declines, some people will point to the one type of violence that has increased (threats) and to the fact that even if things were better this year than last, they are worse here than elsewhere.

Here, I studied violence across two dimensions over time. The first dimension is the relationship between perpetrator and victim, which I call the *context* of violence, and the second is the *manifestation* of the act of violence itself. The framework developed for the World Health Organization's (WHO) study of health and violence takes a similar approach, and, with some significant modifications informed partly by the work of Caroline O.N. Moser and Cathy McIlwaine and party by a desire to focus on violence resulting from action rather than neglect, it was largely the WHO framework that was used as a model for this study.[2] The next section discusses the manifestations of violence (§ B.1) and the one after discusses context (§ B.2). The data that were collected about violence in Medellín were presented in Chapter 8, which described the overall patterns of violence in Medellín and, where available, Caicedo La Sierra.

Some definitions are in order. *Violence,* for the purposes of this study, is any behavior that causes one or more human beings death, bodily injury, physical pain, psychological trauma, suffering, or fear. Violence can manifest itself physically or psychologically, intentionally or unintentionally, and, when intentional, for instrumental or expressive purposes. It can be self-inflicted, perpetrated by one or two individuals either within the home or out in the community, or perpetrated by members of groups for social, economic, or political reasons. *Death* is the loss of human life. Bodily *injury* is nontrivial damage to a limb, organ, sense, or system resulting in a temporary disability (i.e. the injury can heal) or a permanent disability (it cannot heal). Physical *pain* is a

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[2] The definitions and categories used in this Chapter were partly informed by: Etienne G. Krug, et al., *World Report on Violence and Health*; Caroline O.N. Moser and Cathy McIlwaine, "Latin American Urban Violence as a Development Concern: Towards a Framework for Violence Reduction"; Caroline O.N. Moser, "Urban Violence and Insecurity: An Introductory Roadmap"; Cathy McIlwaine and Caroline O.N. Moser, "Violence and Social Capital in Urban Poor Communities: Perspectives From Colombia and Guatemala"; Panos D. Bardis, "Violence: Theory and Quantification."

nontrivial, unpleasant, and distressing sensation in any part of the body. Psychological *trauma* is a nontrivial, unpleasant, and distressing emotion that results in a temporary or permanent behavioral or personality disorder. *Suffering* is an unpleasant and distressing emotion arising in response to nontrivial pain, a nontrivial loss, or the anticipation of either. *Fear* is an unpleasant and distressing emotion arising in response to nontrivial danger, such as the anticipation of death, injury, or pain.

Under these definitions, violence can be committed against nonhuman animals. Similarly, some might consider vandalism — defacing, damaging, or destroying inanimate objects — to be a form of violence against property. For the purposes of this study, however, both vandalism and violence against nonhuman animals will be ignored, unless that behavior is intended as a threat, in which case it will be considered an instance of psychological violence. Unintended violence will likewise be ignored, as the purpose of this study is to understand how policy might be used not to prevent accidents but to change violent behavior. Finally, the definition of violence proposed here stands a middle ground between those who would define violence in strictly physical terms (by excluding psychological violence) and those who would define it in broadly diffuse terms (by including nonhuman "systemic" perpetrators, as discussed in the next paragraph).

To the three categories of perpetrator proposed in this definition (self, individual, group), some writers would add *system,* using the term *structural violence, incidental violence,* or variants to describe the way social, political, and economic relations in society can result in fear, suffering, trauma, pain, injury, or death for disadvantaged members of society, usually over a long period and out of the sight of the privileged. Similarly, some writers would expand the definition of violence beyond discreet acts or

behaviors to include ongoing relationships, for example, the ongoing exploitation of the weak or the marginalized by powerful individuals and groups. While structural violence and exploitive relationships certainly result in the same sorts of harms caused by acts of violence, they are far more diffuse forms of violence, in which specific, individual, human perpetrators cannot easily be identified.[3] They are different enough from the discrete behaviors perpetrated by self, individual, and group that they would more usefully be analyzed and addressed under other frameworks, such as human development or human security, designed to address precisely those broader concerns.[4]

B.1. Manifestations of Violence

Violence is manifested in two main ways: physical and psychological. *Physical violence* is any behavior that involves physically touching the victim — whether directly (beating, striking, shoving, etc.) or indirectly (throwing, launching, initiating, etc., as with a weapon, fire, energy, sound waves, etc.) — in a way that causes the victim pain, injury, death, trauma, suffering, or fear. *Psychological violence* is any behavior that does not involve physically touching the victim but that nevertheless causes the victim to experience trauma, suffering, or fear. In other words, both manifestations of violence can result in psychological reactions — trauma, suffering, and fear — but only physical violence can result in pain, injury, or death as well: behavior that does not result in pain,

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[3] See, for example, Mary R. Jackman, "License to Kill: Violence and Legitimacy in Expropriative Social Relations," in *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations*, ed. John T. Jost and Brenda Major (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 437.

[4] See, for example: United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2000: Human Rights and Human Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now* (New York: Commission on Human Security, 1 May 2003), http://www.humansecurity-chs.org.

injury, or death but that does result in trauma, suffering, or fear counts as psychological

violence if it does *not* involve physical contact between the victim and the perpetrator (or

an object used by the perpetrator); it counts as physical violence if it *does* involve such

physical contact. Obviously, then, suicides, homicides, massacres, and beatings will

always be considered examples of physical violence; rape is physical violence as well,

even in those cases when it does not result in physical pain or injury, since it involves

direct and very intimate physical contact. By contrast, any *threat* of physical violence

will always be considered a form of psychological violence (unless and until the threat is

carried out, at which point it becomes physical). Likewise, some forms of extortion, such

as protection rackets, that threaten nontrivial losses are forms of psychological violence

as well (but most forms of blackmail, for example, would not be considered a form of

violence at all, because what is threatened would cause only a trivial form of suffering:

embarrassment). A single act, such as torturing a man in front of his wife, can count as

both physical violence (against the man) and psychological violence (against the woman).

Some writers exclude psychological forms of violence from their work, arguing

that it is less direct, less measurable, or less damaging to the victim than physical

violence. This, however, is shortsighted for two reasons. First, the two manifestations of

violence are closely linked: psychological violence often results from the threat of

physical violence. An armed robbery (psychological violence) might not technically

count as a "violent crime" in legal circles, but the chances are very high that it could, if

just one thing "goes wrong"; the fear of its going wrong is very real, and often very

traumatic, to the victim. Forced prostitution (psychological violence) might be very

different from forced rape — the client does not need to use overwhelming force to get

her to do what she wants, since she is pretending to want it or enjoy it — but it does carry an implicit or explicit threat of physical violence (from her pimp) for noncompliance, and as such forced prostitution is no different from (and in fact, may be defined as) *coerced* rape: *have sex with him, and pretend to like it, or face the devastating consequences.* (Coercion is discussed below.) Likewise, merely witnessing an act of physical violence — a gang forces a man to watch them rape his wife, a mother receives a finger in the mail from her son's kidnappers, a soldier is the sole survivor of a battle his platoon lost — can create lasting harm to the witness, in the form, for example, of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or chronic major depression: the loss of one's personality is not trivial.

Second, psychological trauma is no less destructive to an individual than physical harm, and in many cases it can be even more devastating. One may physically recover from a shooting and go on to live a happy life; or the shooting might have been done under circumstances that were so traumatic that the victim's family and friends say that "he was never quite himself again": he recovered from the injury but lost a part of his identity or his humanity in the process. Someone may be kidnapped without ever having been physically touched; but they suffer the very nontrivial loss of their freedom. A farming family might receive a series of written death threats, followed by the nighttime killing of their cows: they flee and suffer the nontrivial losses of their land, their home, their livelihood, and perhaps, depending on where they end up, their culture or their identity. The fact that kidnapping and forced displacement (more accurately called coerced displacement) are forms of psychological violence does not make them any less devastating than if the victims had been beaten until their ribs were broken.

Both physical and psychological forms of violence may be used for either instrumental or expressive purposes. *Expressive violence* is violence (physical or psychological) that is carried out for the psychological fulfillment of the perpetrator: for "fun," for "sport," for revenge, or out of hatred, frustration, or boredom. Many cases of spousal abuse result from a (usually) man's inability to deal with life's frustrations in a constructive manner, and he takes those frustrations out on his wife (usually coming up with some elaborate *post hoc* rationalization having to do with her behavior). Some serial killers were known earlier in their lives to have tortured animals for fun before moving on to human beings. Sadists are people who get enjoyment or sexual pleasure out of causing pain in others. Some gangs get started by teenagers with a lot of time on their hands and no social responsibilities; imagining a conflict with the kids a block over makes life a lot less boring, and fights break out as a result. Revenge killings are the driving force behind some of the world's most intractable conflicts, many of which are started over some relatively trivial event:

> The war between the Handa clan and the Ombal clan began many years ago; how many, Daniel didn't say, and perhaps didn't know. … Among Highland clans, each killing demands a revenge killing, so that a war goes on and on, unless political considerations cause it to be settled, or unless one clan is wiped out or flees. When I asked Daniel how the war that claimed his uncle's life began, he answered, "The original cause of the wars between the Handa and Ombal clans was a pig that ruined a garden."[5]

Chapter 5 discusses the gang wars of Caicedo La Sierra; despite the ostensibly political nature of the conflict some years after, the gang wars actually originated in an argument between children, which generated cycles of resentments and revenge. In short,

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[5] Jared Diamond, "Vengeance Is Ours: What Can Tribal Societies Tell Us About Our Need to Get Even?" *The New Yorker* (2008).

expressive violence (whether physical or psychological) is done to no particular ends:
nothing is asked of the victim, and nothing is given to the perpetrator but the satisfaction
of having committed the violent act.

Instrumental violence, by contrast, is violence done to achieve an end: to defend
against or deter an attack, to take someone else's property, to compel compliance with a
demand, etc. Instrumental violence may take a physical or a psychological form, and the
difference between instrumental-physical violence and instrumental-psychological
violence is the difference between *force* and *coercion,* as Schelling eloquently described
in *Arms and Influence:* it is the "difference between taking what you want and making
someone give it to you, between fending off assault and making someone afraid to assault
you, between holding what people are trying to take and making them afraid to take it,
between losing what someone can forcibly take and giving it up to avoid risk or
damage."[6] In Schelling's view, suffering, the psychological response to pain or to the
threat of pain, is the bridge between force and coercion:

> To inflict suffering gains nothing and saves nothing directly; it can only
> make people behave to avoid it. The only purpose, unless sport or revenge,
> must be to influence somebody's behavior, to coerce his decision or
> choice. To be coercive, violence has to be anticipated. And it has to be
> avoidable by accommodation. … Coercion requires finding a bargain,
> arranging for him to be better off doing what we want — worse off not
> doing what we want — when he takes the threatened penalty into
> account.[7]

Force (instrumental-physical violence) uses power or pain to induce behavior, while
coercion (instrumental-psychological violence) uses fear or suffering to induce *voluntary*
behavior. Coercion achieves compliance by credibly expressing an intent to use physical

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[6] Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 2.

[7] Ibid.

violence (or further violence) or the loss of something of value as punishment for noncompliance, while also credibly assuring the victim that that outcome will be avoided by complying. A single event can count as force against one victim and coercion against another. If a militia enters a village, kills the men, rapes the women, castrates the boys, sells the girls into slavery, then burns the village to the ground, but spares all of the neighboring villages to give them the opportunity to surrender or suffer the same fate, then the militia is using force (physical violence) against one set of victims as a means of coercion (psychological violence) against another set of victims. If a drug dealer is killed by a vigilante group, whose members then mutilate his corpse and display it in public with a sign around his neck telling other drug dealers to leave the neighborhood (a not-uncommon occurrence in Medellín's history), then the specific way the physical violence was carried out against the victim amounted to an intentional act of psychological violence against other neighborhood drug dealers. Likewise, physical violence can be used as a strategy of psychological violence against one and the same victim. In a strong-arm robbery, the perpetrator punches or knocks the victim to the ground, then stops and demands money: the victim's compliance derives from the (psychological) fear of *further* (physical) violence.

B.2. Context of Violence

All violence takes place in a particular *context* that can affect both the severity of the victim's psychological response and, often, the brutality of the violent act itself. That context has to do with the relationship between victim and perpetrator, the motivations

underlying the act of violence, or both. This implies three levels of analysis: the individual level, the interpersonal level, and the collective level.

Taking place at the *individual* level is *self-inflicted violence,* which involves only one person who is both perpetrator and victim. Its most common physical manifestations are self-mutilation, suicide, and suicide attempts. Self-inflicted psychological violence often derives from mental illness and can include drug abuse and addiction, participation in extremely risky behaviors such as erotic asphyxiation and anonymous promiscuity, eating disorders such as anorexia, or self-neglect that leads to infectious disease or unsustainable weight loss or weight gain.

Violence at the *interpersonal* level involves one or two perpetrators acting against one or more victims with whom they either are intimately related (as family members, life partners, close friends, etc.) or are passing acquaintances or strangers. *Intrafamilial violence* is interpersonal violence that takes place inside the home or among close relatives or acquaintances (including spousal abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, pedophilia, date rape, etc.), while *communal violence* involves one or two perpetrators acting against one or more victims whom they may or may not know, and it may take place in someone's home, on the street, at a commercial property, or in some other public area (this includes most categories of common, rather than organized, crime: robbery, assault, rape, etc.). Note that this usage of the term *communal* differs from that used by some conflict researchers who use *communal conflict* or *intercommunal conflict* in a way that is similar to how I use *collective violence.* To avoid confusion, I will usually use the terms *interpersonal-communal* or *intrafamilial-communal* violence, but even without the modifiers the reader should keep the intended meaning in mind throughout this work.

Table B-1. Contexts and Manifestations of Violence, with Examples

Context		Manifestation	
Level	Type	Physical Violence	Psychological Violence
Individual	Self-inflicted	·suicide ·self-mutilation	·substance abuse ·self-destructive behavior
Interpersonal	Intrafamilial	·spouse, child, or elder abuse ·pedophilia, date rape	·child or elder neglect ·street children (proxy)
	Communal	·assault and battery ·rape	·robbery/armed robbery ·fear of crime (proxy)
Collective	Social	·turf wars ·hate crimes ·social cleansing	·mutilation of corpses as public intimidation ·street gangs, vigilantes
	Economic	·kidnapping ·mafia wars ·anti-union violence	·organized crime ·extortion ·coerced prostitution
	Political	·war/combat ·massacres ·displacement ·disappearance ·terrorism ·imprisonment	·state security forces, guerrillas, paramilitaries ·deterrence and compellence policies ·terrorism as public intimidation

The examples in this table are illustrative only. Some (identified as "proxy") are not acts of violence *per se,* but consequences of violence, included here as potential indicators for the category. Others (such as "street gangs") are meant simply to identify the type of perpetrator with which that category of violence is most strongly identified and whose presence alone is intimidating (and so a potential indicator).

Source: World Health Organization, with author's modifications and examples

Violence at the *collective* level involves one or more perpetrators, who are members of an identifiable group, acting against one or more victims for social, economic, or political reasons. For the purposes of this definition, a group is considered to include three or more people who interact on a more or less regular basis for social, economic, or political reasons; the choice of three people rather than two people is essentially arbitrary, but it does fit with common usage (two people make a "couple" or a "pair," not a "group") and does have some precedents (for example, Medellín's morgue defines a massacre as the killing of three or more people during a single event).

Collective violence is *social violence* if the group is a social group, formed for reasons of affection, common interest, or identity (such as youth gangs, street gangs, civic associations, etc.) and if the act of violence is committed to enforce respect, express pride in the in-group, express disdain for an out-group (such as a competing gang or a different racial or ethnic group), to defend or acquire territory for the purpose of social control, or to punish members for violating in-group rules, among other reasons.

Collective *economic violence* involves any group formed for the primary purpose of making money, whether from the sale of goods or services (legal or illegal) or by theft or fraud, which includes most organized crime groups and other criminal conspiracies: mafias, drug traffickers, money launderers, assassins for hire, crime rings, racketeers, and otherwise legitimate business managers using violence to coerce or enforce a cartel arrangement or to take or protect assets (as in the forced disappearance of union organizers).

Finally, collective *political violence* involves acts committed by one or more members of a group that makes or purports to be making decisions about political goods (e.g. they are doing the job they think a government should be doing), which may include agents of states and governments (police, military, and other security forces) whether acting in their official capacity or not, or may include nonstate or illegal organizations such as paramilitaries, vigilante groups, self-defense groups, militias, or guerrillas. Acts of political violence can include war, assassination, forced displacement, imprisonment, and the forced disappearance of political opponents and human-rights defenders, among other acts.

This framework is summarized in Table B-1, which describes the context of violence in terms of both the level at which the perpetrator operates (individual, interpersonal, or collective) and the specific type of relationship the perpetrator has with the victim; and describes the manifestation of violence in both its physical and its psychological forms, with examples, proxies, and indicators that might be useful as measures.

How is it useful to categorize violence in the way described in this framework? Two ways: First, it provides the vocabulary to describe any given act of violence: A guy stops a bus at the end of its route and tells the driver to pay his boys a large amount of money to wash and guard his bus overnight. The driver refuses, saying the amount of money is too high for a cleaning, and he's never had problems with vandalism before so he doesn't need a guard. He goes home for the day. He returns the next morning to find his bus a charred wreck, completely burned inside and out. The bus driver is not a victim of physical violence, because he himself was never touched: it was an inanimate object that was damaged. It was, however, psychological violence, because the driver suffered a nontrivial loss (of his only source of family income). Second, analyzing violence through these categories helps to generate a reasonable initial assessment both of the general structure of the problem — for example, if most violence is collective (that is, organized) rather than communal (a more diffuse problem), that suggests the underlying problem is not primarily a breakdown in social order but a reflected of some larger conflict — and of the general motivations driving the violence (e.g. some forms of political violence could represent real grievances against the government, whereas purely economic violence is little more than an expression of greed). Robin M. Williams gives an example as well of

the differences in psychological motivations behind interpersonal versus collective violence:

> those persons who commit violent crimes differ greatly in personality characteristics from persons who serve in wartime military forces. [Interpersonal] violence tends to issue from persons who have difficulty establishing satisfactory group ties and enduring interpersonal relationships, who frequently clash with established authority and group norms, and whose violence is often self-defeating and self-punishing. In contrast, "good soldiers" are highly responsive to demands for social conformity, readily adjust to giving and receiving orders, have strong affiliative capacities, and function reliably as loyal members of groups. … Of course, there will be intermediate cases — for example, assassinations or acts of sabotage carried out by isolated individuals who nevertheless see themselves as participants in mass movements.[8]

The utility of the conceptualization and framework presented here are perhaps easiest to see in a real-world context, and the reader is referred to Chapter 8, which applied this framework to a review of the quantitative and qualitative data that were available about violence in Medellín.

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[8] Robin M. Williams, Jr., "Legitimate and Illegitimate Uses of Violence: A Review of Ideas and Evidence," 27 and n. 5 (his citation omitted).

Appendix C. Legitimacy and Illegitimacy

The question may be discussed thus: a prince who fears his own people more than foreigners ought to build fortresses, but he who has greater fear of foreigners than of his own people ought to do without them. ... Therefore, the best fortress is to be found in the love of the people, for although you may have fortresses they will not save you if you are hated by the people. When once the people have taken arms against you, there will never be lacking foreigners to assist them.

Niccolò Machiavelli (1513)[1]

Legitimacy is a fundamental concept in several fields of human knowledge; it plays an important role in the political, sociological, anthropological, psychological, philosophical, business management, and organizational studies literatures and, increasingly, in policy and doctrine for diplomacy, development, warfare, and other endeavors. Because people are motivated to voluntarily support that which they consider to be "legitimate," legitimacy is said to explain the stability of social, economic, political, and other collective systems. If legitimacy is correlated with stability, then those who are interested in building and sustaining a set of relationships, a set of rules, or a distribution of power, wealth, prestige, or status are, by that fact, interested in understanding, achieving, and maintaining its legitimacy; likewise, those who are interested in changing those relationships, rules, and distributions are thereby interested in understanding and challenging their legitimacy.

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[1] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 108.

Theories of rational choice have dominated the fields of political science, economics, and to some degree policy studies for several decades, so it is worth briefly considering what distinguishes the work that that set of theories does from what theories of legitimacy do. Karol Soltan has said that the entire literature on rational-choice theory can be summarized in four words: "People respond to incentives."[2] I would argue, albeit less succinctly, that the entire literature on legitimacy is a series of variations and elaborations on an equally simple observation: People are motivated by what is right. Incentives certainly matter, especially in the short term, but what people think is right matters as well.

People can be induced to behave in certain ways through the application or manipulation of external incentives, but external incentives are costly in both effort and resources. Because people are self-motivated to behave in ways that are consistent with their own views of what is right and wrong, what is good and bad, and what is virtuous and vicious, systems of rules and relationships based on some blend of those views (or on habits and norms of behavior that seem not inconsistent with those views) tend to be less costly and more stable in the long run. Thus, for example, the problem of collective action — which posits that certain activities, namely those that would benefit some group of people but that are costly to initiate, would not take place in the absence of selective incentives to initiators — presents a real puzzle only if one assumes that people merely respond to incentives: When a few individuals actually initiate activities that benefit a larger group of people without also selectively benefiting themselves, their behavior

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[2] Karol Soltan, personal communication, 8 April 2008.

presents no puzzle to those of us who assume that people are motivated by and are willing to sacrifice for what they think is right.

Moreover, when policy makers — not only for states, but for nonstate actors, non-profit organizations, businesses, and any other type of institution — assume only that people respond to incentives, they might find themselves facing perverse results: The day care center that wants parents to pick up their children on time and implements as an incentive a policy to fine those who are late might find that the parents no longer consider showing up on time to be a moral imperative, since the fine is now equivalent to a fee for service (the service being extended-hours daycare), and that lateness actually increases as a result.[3] Likewise, in a violent conflict over something the contenders consider to be sacred rather than material, offering material incentives in exchange for compromise is often taken as a deep insult and can trigger an increase, rather than a decrease, in violence.[4] People might be less willing to help a friend load furniture into a moving van if they are offered money than if they are offered nothing more than gratitude: in one scenario it is labor and the pay is perhaps not worth the effort; in the other it is a favor to a friend, something offered gladly and without ulterior motive.[5] "Teachers incentivized to produce higher test scores get higher test scores but not better-educated students. CEOs incentivized to improve the performance of the company's shares improve the

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[3] Uri Gneezy and Aldo Rustichini, "A Fine Is a Price," *Journal of Legal Studies* 29, no. 1 (2000).

[4] Jeremy Ginges, et al., "Sacred Bounds on Rational Resolution of Violent Political Conflict," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 104, no. 18 (2007): 7357.

[5] James Heyman and Dan Ariely, "Effort for Payment: A Tale of Two Markets," *Psychological Science* 15, no. 11 (2004): 787.

performance of the company's shares but not the performance of the company."[6] As the

psychologists who developed self-motivation theory put it (with respect to work

environments, but equally applicable in other contexts):

> Humans are inherently motivated to grow and achieve and will fully commit to and engage in even uninteresting tasks when their meaning and value is understood. … Carrot and stick approaches to motivation … lead to a heightened focus on the tangible rewards of work rather than on the nature and importance of the work itself. Such approaches can create short-term productivity increases by controlling people's behavior, but the resulting motivation is of poor quality — it is unsustainable and … tends to undermine intrinsic interest in work. [Focusing on] and [nurturing an interest in] the intrinsic importance of work … has been shown to link to better performance, especially in the complex, creative, and heuristic tasks that increasingly characterize modern work.[7]

Or as Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer once learned: "Work consists of whatever a body is

obliged to do, and … Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do."[8]

In short, people do respond to incentives, but they also are motivated by what is

right or what they believe is right. This dissertation studied the latter motivation in the

context of complex urban violence, a context that has nothing if not complex sets of

incentives.

The study of extreme cases — cases with extremely high or extremely low values

on the study variables — can help to illuminate more general relationships between and

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[6] Barry Schwartz and Kenneth Sharpe, "The Wrong Cure: Better Incentives, for Doctors or Insurers, Won't Lead to Better Health Care," Slate, http://www.slate.com/id/2224193/ (accessed 4 August 2009).

[7] Dan N. Stone, Edward L. Deci, and Richard M. Ryan, "Beyond Talk: Creating Autonomous Motivation Through Self-Determination Theory," *Journal of General Management* 34 (2009): 75. (authors' citations omitted).

[8] Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1920 [1875]), 19. (emphasis in original); see same quote in James Heyman and Dan Ariely, "Effort for Payment: A Tale of Two Markets."

among the phenomena under study.[9] Medellín is an extreme case of high violence, high

both in its level of violence (it had the highest murder rate in the Western Hemisphere in

1991 and again in 2002) and in its level of complexity (in terms of the variety of actors,

their shifting motivations, and the instability of their alliances). But Medellín is also an

extreme case of instrumental social relations: social capital and trust among strangers are

extremely low, and the tendency for expediency or exploitation to be used to achieve

short-term results at the expense of long-term relationships is extremely high; it's the

kind of place for which Immanuel Kant must have imagined his hypothetical Kingdom of

Ends as a corrective.[10] As such, it can be argued that, if a role for legitimacy can be found

in an explanation for violence and stability in a place such as Medellín, then legitimacy

can be said to at least partly explain something about violence and stability more

generally. Does legitimacy — or its opposite, illegitimacy — add anything to our

understanding of violence in Medellín that cannot be adequately explained by incentives?

If so, what does that imply for theorists of legitimacy or, more importantly, for policy

makers charged with reducing violence in complex environments?

This appendix analyzes the concepts of legitimacy and illegitimacy, discusses

some issues involved in measuring them in the real world, and introduces the multi-

dimensional, multi-level framework that was used in this study to evaluate the dynamics

of legitimacy and illegitimacy in Medellín (see Chapter 9). It begins with a discussion

and definitions of legitimacy, illegitimacy, and related terms and briefly considers their

relationships to the concepts of loyalty, support, right, duty, imitation, expertise, and

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[9] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 47; Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 24.

[10] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*.

leadership. This discussion exposes not just what legitimacy and illegitimacy are, but what they are said to *do:* legitimacy motivates compliance, illegitimacy motivates opposition; legitimacy sustains, illegitimacy impedes (§ C.1). Other phenomena or behaviors — agreement, habit, seduction, persuasion, compromise, force, coercion, barter, and deception — can achieve similar outcomes to what legitimacy does; they therefore can be mistaken for legitimacy or can be used as alternatives to legitimation (§ C.2). These "alternatives" to legitimacy complicate efforts to measure it: since legitimacy is a latent (unobservable) phenomenon, one can rarely be fully confident that what one is measuring is legitimacy and not something else. To help overcome this problem, I have developed a conceptual framework through which key questions about the phenomenon being measured might be answered (§§ C.3-C.6): *Legitimacy of what? Legitimacy according to whom? Legitimacy by what processes?* And, *Legitimacy by what criteria?* From these questions comes a discussion of the measurement framework itself (§ C.7), which lays out the different legitimizing characteristics that a role, policy, distribution, or structure might have (transparent, credible, justifiable, equitable, accessible, and respectful) and the different levels at which they might be measured (individual beliefs, group behaviors, and system features), and identifies a provisional set of indicators that may be evaluated to determine the degree to which nonstate, state, and community actors might be considered legitimate. Chapter 9 reported the results of the analysis, guided by this framework, of the dynamics of legitimacy and illegitimacy of those actors.

C.1. What Is Legitimacy, and What Does It Do?

It was Thucydides whose writings on an ancient war were the first to have survived history with an extended discussion of legitimacy — the concept if not the term — intact. In his *History of the Peloponnesian War,* the Greek historian imagines the dialog between representatives of the island of Melos, who had wished to stay neutral in the war between Athens and Sparta, and representatives of Athens, who wanted to take over the strategically located island and who offered the Melians a chance to surrender or die. The Athenians pointed out that their force was so far superior that resistance would be futile and deadly; the Melians offered a series of pragmatic and increasingly preposterous (in Thucydides' telling) arguments as to why the Athenians should let them remain neutral and not take over their island. Implicit to some of their initial arguments was the credible moral claim that attacking or enslaving the Melians would violate principles of honor and right action, principles held by Athenians and Melians alike: just because the Athenians would easily win the battle did not mean it was right that they should wage it. The Athenian retort that "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must" — a death sentence to the Melians — was essentially the same argument that Thrasymachus made to Socrates, in Plato's account, regarding what justice entails and implies.[11] But the Melians' pragmatic response to the Athenians is in some ways more satisfying than Socrates's airy response to Thrasymachus (and, later, Glaucon). They said that if Athens attacked Melos, the other neutral islands would learn about it and, fearing the same fate, would band together in self-defense. In short, they argued,

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[11] Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War,* trans. Richard Crawley, vol. 6, Great Books of the Western World (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1952 [431 BCE]), book V; Plato, *The Republic of Plato,* trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945 [370 BCE]), book I.

power unchecked and illegitimate is unsustainable, as it tends to trigger opposition. The

Athenians responded that they would take their chances. And indeed even after they

besieged the island, annihilated the men, and enslaved the women and children, the other

neutral islands did not band together as the Melians had hopefully predicted. (It is

doubtful that any surviving Melians would have taken any comfort in learning that

Athens did end up losing the war and its empire anyway.)

The Melians were implicitly, if ineloquently, trying to tell the Athenian invaders

something about legitimacy and illegitimacy that history has long demonstrated, namely

that legitimacy contributes to long-term stability while illegitimacy contributes to short-

term instability. They were hoping that, if the Athenians did not buy a moral argument

about the legitimacy of their proposed actions, they would buy a military argument about

the consequences of illegitimate action. Since then, writers interested in the moral

question, some of whom have cited the Melian dialogs as the first published account of

arguments for legitimate action, have focused on legitimacy and its role in maintaining

stability or, less commonly, on illegitimacy and its role in undermining stability, while

writers interested in the military question have focused both on legitimacy as something

to be earned and illegitimacy as something to be avoided: In 4th Century BCE Greece,

Aristotle, concerned with how to live a good life and create a just political system, was

interested in the legitimacy of constitutions and of the distributions of the rewards of

social life. In 3rd Century BCE India, Ashoka, concerned with right conduct and the

stability of his empire, acted on his belief in the legitimizing influence of transparent

rules, public deliberation, and respect for differences. In 16th Century Italy, Niccolò

Machiavelli, concerned with how politicians remain in power, was interested both in how

illegitimacy is avoided and how legitimacy is earned, paying attention, for example, to the public behavior of leaders and their effectiveness as leaders within the limits of what is acceptably cruel. In 17th Century England, John Locke, concerned with how governments should operate, was interested in the sources of legitimacy, concluding that the consent of the governed is the most important. In 18th Century France, Jean-Jacques Rousseau combined Machiavelli's concern for the sources of stability with Locke's concern for the sources of legitimacy and concluded that consent of the governed is the main source of both. In 19th Century Germany, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, concerned about the well-being of the working classes, were interested in the legitimizing myths that the ruling classes imposed upon society as a way to maintain disparities in wealth and power. And in early 20th Century Germany, Max Weber described the processes through which social order is maintained, linking individual belief to group behavior in the first multilevel theory of the legitimation of social orders, and thereby bringing the study of legitimacy out of the realm of political philosophy and into the realm of social science.[12]

Most of these and other authors never used the term *legitimacy* in their writings (Weber was the most important exception), but the underlying dynamics they were

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[12] Aristotle, *Politics,* trans. Ernest Barker and R. F. Stalley, The World's Classics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995 [330 BCE]); Ven. S. Dhammika, *The Edicts of King Asoka: An English Rendering* (Barre, Mass.: The Buddhist Publication Society and DharmaNet, 1993 [ca. 257 BCE]), http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/ashoka.html (accessed 21 July 2009); Amartya Sen, "Why Democratization Is Not the Same as Westernization: Democracy and Its Global Roots," *The New Republic* 229, no. 14 (2003): 28; Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*; John Locke, "An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent, and End of Civil Government," in *Social Contract: Essays By Locke, Hume, and Rousseau,* ed. Ernest Barker, The World's Classics, No. 511 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960 [1690]); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Social Contract," in *Social Contract: Essays By Locke, Hume, and Rousseau,* ed. Ernest Barker, The World's Classics, No. 511 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960 [1762]); Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology,* trans. W. Lough and C.P. Magill (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1938 [1845]); Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968 [1914]).

referring to was the same. In fact, the term *legitimacy* was not commonly used in English to describe the set of phenomena with which it is currently associated until the 20th Century. It derives from the Latin *lex* (law) and *legitimus* (lawful), and from Medieval Latin's *legitimare* (to make or declare to be lawful) and its past participle *legitimatus,* which entered Middle English around 1494 as *legitimat.* But the context in which this form was used in Middle English was initially restricted to questions regarding rights to inheritance (of goods or titles) by children born outside of legally, religiously, or socially sanctioned marriages; such a child in a royal family, for example, could not become king or queen, or one from a common family could not presume to have the same right as his or her half-siblings to inherit their parents' property. The term *illegitimate* entered English around 1536 to refer to those children born out of wedlock. In the 17th Century, *legitimate* was becoming used more in line with the Latin original, to refer to something in accordance with laws or norms (and not just those regulating the rights of children born out of wedlock), and by the early 19th Century this usage broadened further to refer to accordance with fact ("genuine, real").[13] As the laws regulating the rights of illegitimate children were liberalized over time, the emphasis in the term's usage shifted increasingly toward the more general sense (of accordance with laws, facts, rules, norms, expectations, and so on) such that by the 20th Century this broader sense came to dominate usage.

When something is or someone acts in accordance with these standards, what is the result? In other words, what does legitimacy *do?* Morris Zeldtich Jr. reviewed

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[13] Online Etymology Dictionary, s.v. "legitimate" and "illegitimate," http://www.etymonline.com (accessed 22 July 2009); The Concise Oxford English Dictionary of Etymology, s.v. "legitimate," http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O27-legitimate.html (accessed 22 July 2009).

24 centuries' worth of literature on legitimacy and, observing in those literatures a broad range of circumstances in which it has been found to play a role, summarized what legitimacy entails and what it produces: "legitimacy is always a matter of voluntarily accepting that something is 'right,' and its consequence is always the stability of whatever structure emerges from the process."[14] To this formulation, most theories of legitimacy offer only useful complications. Many of those complications have to do with the mechanisms through which legitimacy is said to bring about stability: Some have said legitimacy induces voluntary compliance, a mechanism for stabilizing relationships (or systems) of authority or dominance. Others have said legitimacy validates certain patterns of behavior and thereby provides a predictable regularity, and therefore stability, to social structures, political systems, and social orders in general. Others have said it encourages political participation or social actions that demonstrate or reinforce support. Still others have said it lowers the barrier to entry into markets or the cost of controlling territory or other resources. Some of these mechanisms are discussed presently.

Weber defined the term *domination* as "the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons"[15] and said that "the legitimacy of a system of domination may be treated sociologically only as the probability that to a relevant degree the appropriate attitudes will exist, and the corresponding practical conduct ensue."[16] The "appropriate attitudes," he argued, have to do with people's beliefs about what makes the system legitimate: the grounds for those

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[14] Morris Zelditch, Jr., "Theories of Legitimacy."

[15] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 53.

[16] Ibid., 214.

beliefs may be *rational* ("resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands"), *traditional* ("resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them"), or *charismatic* ("resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him").[17] In other words, the presence of belief in legitimacy is an indicator of legitimacy.

The "corresponding practical conduct" that ensues from these beliefs is not merely compliance with a command, according to Weber, but just about any action that is oriented to what he called a "valid" social order. The presence of such behaviors is also an indicator of legitimacy. Weber argued that many individuals behave in ways that seem to derive from a personal belief in certain "maxims" (norms, values, principles, symbols, etc.) about what counts as a duty or as proper behavior; the fact that many such individuals behave that way creates a general expectation that behaving in contrary ways will result in social disapproval or legal sanction; "proper" conduct therefore becomes routinized, defined as normal, and, in Weber's term, *validated;* and so even if some individuals do not themselves believe in the maxims that they believe others believe in, those nonbelievers nevertheless orient their own actions toward an understanding that a social order based on belief in those maxims does nevertheless exist. In other words, what makes a social order valid is the fact that people usually act as if they believe that *others*

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[17] Ibid., 215.

act as if *they* believe in the existence of a set of legitimate maxims for duty and proper

conduct, and this validation of proper conduct is what makes the social order stable.[18]

Following Weber, Sanford M. Dornbusch and W. Richard Scott used the term

propriety to refer to personal (individual-level) judgments about the legitimacy of the

values, norms, symbols, practices, etc. of organizations, and *validity* to refer to

organizational (group-level) judgments about what is legitimate; action undertaken to

support those values, norms, practices, etc. they called *endorsement* when undertaken by

individuals and *authorization* when undertaken by the group.[19] Zeldtich and Henry A.

Walker drew on this terminology to argue that validity is the main process that maintains

stability, as Zeldtich explained:

> Validity has a straightforward social influence effect on propriety, and
> therefore has a canceling effect on impropriety. But in addition, it embeds
> the norms, values, beliefs, practices, and procedures of a group in a system
> of social controls, creating expectations of both authorization and
> endorsement if they are violated, which also counteract pressures to
> change.[20]

In short, what Weber and his followers have said legitimacy does — and most

subsequent writing on legitimacy has elaborated, complicated, or contested his findings

— is two things: at the (micro) level of individual interaction, legitimacy generates

voluntary compliance with commands, and at the (macro) level of the system or social

order as a whole, it generates and validates a more complex and diffuse set of behaviors

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[18] Ibid., 31.

[19] Sanford M. Dornbusch and W. Richard Scott, *Evaluation and the Exercise of Authority,* 1st ed ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1975).

[20] Morris Zelditch, Jr., "Theories of Legitimacy," citing Morris Zelditch, Jr. and Henry A. Walker, "Legitimacy and the Stability of Authority," in *Advances in Group Processes*, ed. Edward J. Lawler (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1984), 1.

that tend to sustain a social order. Legitimacy, in other words, induces voluntary compliance and generates social stability.

In the middle of the 20th Century, the political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset shifted the conversation from the legitimation of social orders to the legitimation of political systems. "Legitimacy involves the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate or proper ones for the society." Lipset focused specifically on the legitimacy of states and in particular on the legitimacy of democratic states and the complex ways in which stability, economic development, effectiveness, and legitimacy affect each other. Like Weber, he argued that legitimacy derives in part from beliefs about what counts as valuable, but he made an important extension by arguing that the legitimacy of a system derives at least in part from the effectiveness of the system: "The extent to which contemporary democratic systems are legitimate depends in large measure upon the ways in which the key issues which have historically divided the society have been resolved."[21] And so Lipset was less concerned about the compliance action of legitimacy than about its effects on the stability of the overall system.[22]

In this he was not alone. In the middle of the century, in the context of a Cold War in which it was not yet clear whether democratic or Communist systems would prevail, most English-language authors who wrote about legitimacy (mainly, political sociologists and political scientists) were concerned about questions of political stability, and

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[21] Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53, no. 1 (1959): 69.

[22] Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics,* expanded ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981 [1961]).

especially the stability of democracies. Amid that era's rapid growth in the availability of

comparative country data, the political scientist David Easton encouraged the

development of more systematic frameworks to organize the data so that the stability of

political systems might be studied more scientifically. Defining *politics* as the

"authoritative allocation" of a society's values (wealth, power, prestige, etc.), Easton

analyzed legitimacy within a framework of support for such allocations. Such political

support, he argued, can be offered either to specific political authorities within the system

or to more diffuse structures, such as the political community or the political system as a

whole.[23] In other words, like Weber, Easton found that legitimacy has both specific and

diffuse forms (and therefore should be expected to have both specific and diffuse effects).

Those who followed Easton's lead — and there were many — focused as he did

on the role of political support in sustaining political systems, but much of the empirical

evidence for their research ended up coming from data about political participation and

from survey data about trust in government. Russell J. Dalton, for example, studied how

legitimacy affects participation in advanced industrial democracies. In addition to

providing empirical support for the multidimensionality of Easton's framework (i.e. the

specific and diffuse forms of legitimacy), Dalton's work was an important contribution to

a string of studies that cumulatively suggested that legitimacy, in addition to inducing

compliance and generating stability, also increases political participation.[24] In that line of

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[23] David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: Wiley, 1965); David Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

[24] Russell J. Dalton, *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

research, participation was conceptualized as a reflection of consent or support for the system.

But this line of research became increasingly disheartening to democrats as the century progressed: the traditional measures of political participation were found to be in a long, steady decline among Western democracies, as were the scores on opinion surveys about trust in government, and these declines were interpreted as a decline in legitimacy. But these trends led others to question whether democratic legitimacy itself was in retreat or whether the long-understood link between legitimacy and stability was incorrect; whether legitimacy had been misconceptualized; or whether the long-used measures of participation and opinion had simply turned out to be poor indicators.[25]

To answer these questions, John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson reviewed the literatures on declining trust in government and declining citizen participation and identified the central challenge those literatures posed:

> These instances of declining legitimacy with no apparent impact on system stability nicely frame the central conundrum of research in this field: One might ask, "Where's the beef?" What are and where are the missing effects of legitimacy's observed decline? If institutional legitimacy has indeed declined so much in recent decades, why have we not by now observed at least a few breakdowns of established democracies, or more frequent and widespread protests directed at them? And why do even the newer democracies, with significantly worse performance than developed democracies, appear to enjoy strong popular support?[26]

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[25] John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America: Political Support and Democracy in Eight Nations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, "Legitimacy and Political Participation in Eight Latin American Countries" (paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Meeting, Chicago, 2-4 April 2009); M. Stephen Weatherford, "Mapping the Ties That Bind: Legitimacy, Representation, and Alienation," *Western Political Quarterly Western Political Quarterly* 44 (1991): 251.

[26] John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America*, 3.

Their answer to this "puzzle" was that legitimacy researchers had for too long been measuring the wrong thing (namely citizen participation, in the form of voting, writing to representatives, etc.) or at least were measuring it incorrectly. Previous researchers, they argued, had found that the relationship between citizen participation and legitimacy is linear, that is, lower legitimacy leads to lower within-system participation and higher protest behavior. But Booth and Seligson, looking at the range of participation behaviors in Latin America, took a more expansive view of what counts as involvement in politics, including such activities as volunteering in civil society organizations, getting involved in local government, and so on. What they found was that the relationship between participation and views of legitimacy is not linear but U-shaped: participation (both within the system and non-threatening alternatives outside of the system) is highest among those who consider the political system to be most legitimate and also among those who consider it to be *least* legitimate, and lowest among those in the middle. By expanding the definition of participation to involvement in politics outside of the official channels (e.g. volunteering in civil society, participating in protests, etc.), they demonstrated that, in democracies: "citizens with low support norms can and do work for change within the system through elections and campaigns. They also seek alternative arenas for participation in civil society, community, or local government. These activities do not threaten political system stability."[27]

A parallel effort to measure legitimacy started with David Beetham, a political philosopher, social scientist, and critic of Weber's conceptualization of legitimacy, particularly the way it had been used by subsequent researchers who equated legitimacy

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[27] John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, "Legitimacy and Political Participation in Eight Latin American Countries."

with belief in legitimacy (he therefore was implicitly criticizing the "trust in government"
measures). Beetham shifted the focus from trust and participation to a conceptualization
of legitimacy that he thought would make it both more realistic and more measurable. In
one aspect of that conceptualization, he defined power as being "rightful or legitimate"
when it "is acquired and exercised according to justifiable rules" — justifiable, he
clarified, in terms of the beliefs of the society in question — and when it is acquired and
exercised "with evidence of consent." The evidence of consent that he argued should be
sought was related to the idea that some forms of participation are encouraged by
legitimacy: "what is important for [measuring] legitimacy is evidence of consent
expressed through *actions* which are understood as demonstrating consent within the
conventions of the particular society."[28] Taking up that theme, Bruce Gilley — whose
own definition of legitimacy also emphasized action ("a state is more legitimate the more
that it is treated by its citizens as rightfully holding and exercising political power") —
re-specified Beetham's "acts of consent" as "positive actions that express a citizen's
recognition of the state's right to hold political authority and an acceptance, at least in
general, to be bound to obey the decisions that result."[29] Legitimacy, in other words, is
not simply a reflection of belief, but is reflected in the accord between individual beliefs
and system features and is indicated by the presence of acts of consent. The Beetham and
Gilley formulations pulled together the separate threads of what political sociologists and
political scientists had been saying about what legitimacy does in or for political systems:

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[28] David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (Houndsmill: MacMillan Education, 1991), 12 (emphasis in
original).

[29] Bruce Gilley, "The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy."

it induces voluntary compliance and encourages participation (acts of consent), and by doing so, it generates stability.

Interest in studying the legitimacy of entities other than states, political systems, and social orders grew stronger in the last quarter of the 20th Century, particularly in the fields of organizational studies and business management. Summarizing that literature, Tatiana Kostova and Srilata Zaheer wrote: "Scholars have defined organizational legitimacy as the acceptance of the organization by its environment and have proposed it to be vital for organizational survival and success."[30] Their article was not explicit but by *acceptance* they seemed to mean *lack of opposition* in the form, for example, of demonstrations, boycotts, or campaigns to have operating licenses revoked, applications rejected, or duties imposed. Survival is a species of stability (so this is consistent with previous literature), but what of success? Again, the authors were not explicit but in the case of for-profit businesses, the subject of their study, the organizational literature suggests that legitimacy keeps operating costs low and lowers the barriers to entry into markets and thereby helps increase profit; for non-profit organizations, presumably legitimacy also lowers operating costs, although in their case cost would be measured, perhaps, more by the amount of effort or the number of staff-hours or volunteer-hours than by the amount of money required to fulfill their objectives.

By the 1980s and 1990s, the work on legitimacy that had been done by organizational sociologists was encouraging social psychologists to take a look at the

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[30] Tatiana Kostova and Srilata Zaheer, "Organizational Legitimacy Under Conditions of Complexity: The Case of the Multinational Enterprise," *Academy of Management Review* 24, no. 1 (1999): 64.

concept.[31] The most important relevant work that had been done in that field before then

had been by Henri Tajfel, who in the 1970s had developed social-identity theory by

placing research subjects arbitrarily into different groups and observing that, even in the

absence of any relevant differences in characteristics between the groups, people would

develop favoritism toward members of their own group, called the *in-group,* and biases

against members of the other group, the *out-group.* A puzzle in social-identity theory

arose, however, when it became clear that some people had a tendency toward *out-group*

favoritism, the opposite of the normal pattern. It turned out that social-identity theory

could account for this by incorporating facts about social status, stability, and views of

legitimacy: members of low-status groups who considered the social system to be stable

and legitimate tended to accept their position in society even though they would be better

off under some other arrangement.[32] (In fact, Juan José Linz made the important

observation that the legitimacy of something could be measured by the degree to which

the people who do not benefit from that something nevertheless support it.[33])

Subsequent work during the 1990s in social-identity theory, social-dominance

theory, and system-justification theory suggested a variety of mechanisms for how this

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[31] John T. Jost and Brenda Major, "Emerging Perspectives on the Psychology of Legitimacy," in *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations*, ed. John T. Jost and Brenda Major (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3.

[32] See, for example, Tajfel, Henri, Colin Fraser, and Joseph Maria Franciscus Jaspars, eds. *The Social Dimension: European Developments in Social Psychology.* New York: Cambridge University Press Editions de la Maison des Sciences de L'Homme, 1984, and others cited in John T. Jost and Brenda Major, "Emerging Perspectives on the Psychology of Legitimacy."

[33] Juan J. Linz, "Crisis, Breakdown, and Re-Equilibration," in *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, ed. Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978).

and related processes operated.[34] These new developments, along with renewed interest

in the topic by organizational theorists, encouraged two psychologists, John T. Jost and

Brenda Major, to organize a conference on the psychology of legitimacy in August 1998

at Stanford University to see if they could unify some of this work. With contributions

from social and organizational psychologists, organizational and political sociologists,

political scientists, and experts in conflict studies and business management, the

conference helped pull together some loose threads in theories of legitimacy in at least a

dozen sub-disciplines.[35] Most of the chapters in the resulting edited volume, published in

2001, were collaborative efforts, some chapters were written by researchers long

influential in their fields, and the overall effect of the project was a significant advance in

the unavoidably interdisciplinary field of legitimacy studies.[36] (And yet some academics,

apparently unaware of important advances in other disciplines, were still complaining —

several years after that volume was published — that "Few books about legitimacy have

been published in the last decade" and "This whole field of study needs much firmer

links to psychology."[37]) Some of these developments are incorporated in the framework I

developed for the present study and are discussed under the appropriate headings below.

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[34] See John T. Jost, Diana Burgess, and Christina O. Mosso, "Conflicts of Legitimation Among Self, Group, and System: The Integrative Potential of System Justification Theory," in *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations*, ed. John T. Jost and Brenda Major (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[35] John T. Jost and Brenda Major, "Emerging Perspectives on the Psychology of Legitimacy."

[36] John T. Jost and Brenda Major, eds., *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[37] Lynn T. White, *Legitimacy: Ambiguities of Political Success or Failure in East and Southeast Asia,* vol. 1, Series on Contemporary China (Hackensack, N.J.: World Scientific, 2005), pp. 3 and 26.

In practical matters, the concept of legitimacy got a significant boost in Western

military doctrine during the mid 2000s, when the U.S. occupation of Iraq was challenged

by a growing insurgency, and it had become clear that the American stabilization strategy

was failing. Commanders in the field and researchers back at home started digging for a

new approach, based on history, experience, and previous studies of insurgency and

counterinsurgency. A flurry of published articles noted the key role of legitimacy in the

classics of counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine, and some argued in favor of a new U.S.

COIN strategy with legitimacy at its core (while others argued against it).[38] The U.S.

Army and Marine Corps took the raw material of the old Marine Corps field manual on

"small wars,"[39] and rewrote, greatly expanded, and jointly published it as a new field

manual that characterized COIN as a contest not over territory but over legitimacy[40]:

"Successful counterinsurgents support or develop local institutions with legitimacy and

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[38] See, for example, Colin H. Kahl, "Coin of the Realm: Is There a Future for Counterinsurgency?," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 6 (2007): 169; Edward N. Luttwak, "Dead End: Counterinsurgency Warfare as Military Malpractice," *Harper's Magazine* 314, no. 1881 (2007): 33; John A. Lynn, "Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* LXXXV, no. 04 (2005): 22; Rod Thornton, "Historical Origins of the British Army's Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorist Techniques," in *Combating Terrorism and Its Implications for the Security Sector*, ed. Amb. Dr. Theodor H. Winkler, Anja H. Ebnöther, and Mats B. Hansson (Stockholm: Swedish National Defense College, 2005), 26; John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons From Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2005); Robert R. Tomes, "Relearning Counterinsurgency Warfare," *Parameters* 34, no. 1 (2004): 16; Henry H. Perritt, Jr., "Iraq and the Future of United States Foreign Policy: Failures of Legitimacy," *Syracuse Journal of International Law and Commerce* 31, no. 2 (2004).

[39] United States Marines Corps, *Small Wars Manual,* NAVMC, 2890 (1987 reprint) (Washington: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 1940).

[40] See John A. Nagl, "The Evolution and Importance of Army/Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency," Foreword to the University of Chicago Press Edition, and Sarah Sewall, "A Radical Field Manual," Introduction to the University of Chicago Press Edition, both in U.S. Army/Marine Corps, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

the ability to provide basic services, economic opportunity, public order, and security."[41] Subsequent developments in military doctrine have kept legitimacy front and center as well, and the lesson of most of them is that legitimacy brings stability.[42]

C.1.1. Legitimacy, Loyalty, Support, Right, and Duty

If one were to distill the essence of legitimacy from this brief and perhaps simplistic review, what might emerge? *Legitimacy,* to define it succinctly, is worthiness of support, or in Karol Soltan's definition, a "right to loyalty."[43] To claim that something is legitimate is to give a moral or normative reason ("it is right") to obey, support, accept, imitate, comply with, or refrain from opposing it within some bounded range of activity or experience. To say that one should offer such support, or that something is worthy of such support, is different from saying that one merely does offer such support. Support can be externally motivated as well — it can be coerced or purchased, for example — but loyalty and self-motivated support are what make, for example, a social relationship or a governance structure legitimate, stable, and sustainable. To say that somebody or something has a *right* to one's loyalty or support implies that somebody else has a (self-recognized) *duty* or a moral, social, or legal obligation to provide that loyalty or support. *Legitimation*, sometimes called *legitimization,* is the process of granting or gaining

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[41] United States Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency,* Field Manual No. 3-24, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5 (Washington: Department of the Army and Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2006), p. 5–2.

[42] United States Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare (IW),* Department of Defense Directive, 3000.07 (Washington: 2008), http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/300007p.pdf; United States Department of the Army, *Stability Operations,* Field Manual, No. 3-07 (Washington: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2008), http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-07.pdf.

[43] Karol Soltan, "Legitimacy and Power," working paper (College Park, Md.: University of Maryland, April 2005).

legitimacy, sometimes involving a recategorization of something that was once not legitimate as something that is;[44] to *legitimize* (or to *legitimate)* is to grant or gain legitimacy.

Loyalty and *legitimacy* both ultimately derive from the Latin word *lex*, meaning *law,* and both words still retain this meaning in some senses: *legitimacy* as accordance to law or to legal principles, and *loyalty* as fidelity to one's legal obligations. Both words have evolved beyond their legal origins to include accordance with other types of rules or values and other senses of duty. Loyalty, then, is a set of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that indicate attachment, devotion, faithfulness, or fidelity and that help to sustain or deepen a relationship.

Physically speaking, to *support* something is to hold it in place, and by analogy its other meanings suggest maintenance or sustenance: to support something or someone is to help them stay where they are or get where they want to go. Financial support, for example, involves providing the resources to someone who needs them to achieve a goal; moral support entails encouragement and expressions of agreement; scientific support involves demonstrating that a claim about some phenomenon is consistent with a set of already established and accepted standards; political support can involve volunteering for a campaign, publicly announcing that one wants a certain politician or party to win or remain in power, or circulating unflattering information about opponents; and so on. Loyalty and support can be purchased or bartered; feigned loyalty or support can be coerced. But when loyalty or support derives from a norm, a value, or a belief that the

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[44] Herbert C. Kelman, "Reflections on Social and Psychological Processes of Legitimization and Delegitimization," in *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations*, ed. John T. Jost and Brenda Major (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 54.

recipient (a person, a social order, a set of rules, etc.) deserves that loyalty or support, is worthy of it, or has a right to expect it, then it may be credibly claimed that the recipient is legitimate. But when one's opposition derives from a norm, a value, or a belief that the recipient is worthy of opposition, or that one has a duty to oppose, then it may be credibly claimed that the recipient is illegitimate (see next section).

Beyond support and loyalty, which come into play in the literatures on the legitimation of power relations and social, economic, and political structures, people sometimes speak of legitimacy in terms of a worthiness of imitation or perpetuation. Consider the English language under French rule: after England was conquered in 1066 by the French Duke of Normandy William the Bastard (so named because of his illegitimate birth, and renamed William the Conqueror for perhaps obvious reasons), formerly Anglo-Saxon words became "vulgarities" (literally, words of the common people) while their French equivalents become "proper," "polite," or "educated." The only reason that mention of the word *fuck* is considered transgressive in "polite" company in English today is its Anglo origin: it was the term common people had used for the same set of acts that proper society in French-dominated England had referred to as *copulation,* which was considered a legitimate word, unlike the former. In other words, French-dominated high society was considered worthy of imitation; vulgar English farmers were not. Some people are said to be "natural" leaders, "alpha males," "queen bees," or "trend-setters" — the kind of people others want to be like, to imitate; they attract support seemingly effortlessly. Some academic papers are unreadable, filled with jargon and long, grammatically complex sentences; they are written that way not merely because the authors are bad writers (and they are indeed bad writers) but because they are

imitating the writing style of other academics whose works are considered to be part of the canon of their field, "legitimate" (genuine) classics that had set a standard for scholarship that created a halo effect upon nonessential aspects of their works, including their bad writing style: somehow, writing in plain English just doesn't seem "scholarly," whereas imitating the tortured prose of the masters lends their own work an air of credibility. What counts as a "legitimate" (not manufactured) grievance? What makes someone count as a "legitimate" scientist, a "legitimate" physician, or, more generally, a "legitimate" expert on some given topic, beyond mere credentials? Why do some people simply seem more believable than others, or more admirable, more worthy of our trust, more worthy of our imitating them? The answer is that there is something about them that we believe is admirable, good, right, rightful, proper, or virtuous, and that somehow those individuals reflect, promote, embody, or symbolize the values that we hold most dear or the standards to which we most aspire: we have judged them worthy, somehow, of imitation, of perpetuation, and more generally of our support.

C.1.2. Illegitimacy and Opposition

Illegitimacy is not merely the absence of legitimacy (i.e. an unworthiness of support) but a worthiness of opposition: to say that something is illegitimate is to give a moral or normative reason to ignore, disobey, reject, or oppose it, actively or passively. An obligation of disobedience or a duty to oppose would both be based on an assumption or an argument that that which is to be disobeyed or opposed is illegitimate.

To illustrate the difference between legitimacy and illegitimacy, consider a hypothetical legitimacy scale, from zero to 10, in which this multidimensional

phenomenon were boiled down to a single score for the purposes of comparing the legitimacy of one thing to that of another, or of tracking the legitimacy of something over time. (This is not an uncommon way to think about measuring legitimacy, and it has its merits in certain comparative pursuits.[45]) Most theorizing on legitimacy takes place in the range of one to ten on this hypothetical legitimacy scale, with the higher scores representing *more legitimacy,* lower scores representing *less legitimacy,* rising scores representing *legitimation,* falling scores representing *delegitimation*, and a score of zero representing *neutrality.* (*Delegitimation* is the process of withdrawing or losing legitimacy; to *delegitimize,* or *delegitimate,* is to withdraw or lose legitimacy.)

What the present study has discovered is that much more theorizing needs to take place, as it were, "inside the zero": that is, theories of legitimacy need to be supplemented with independent theorizing about illegitimacy. To begin with, the hypothetical scale might be extended into negative territory, with the full range being −10 to +10. In that case, it becomes immediately apparent that there is a difference between zero and the negative numbers, with zero (neutrality) representing not only an *absence of legitimacy* but also an *absence of illegitimacy,* negative numbers representing *illegitimacy,* with scores closer to −10 representing *more illegitimate* and scores closer to −1 representing *less illegitimate.* A decline in score below zero would not necessarily represent delegitimation but what might be called *illegitimation.* In delegitimation — representing a declining but still positive score, until it reaches *neutrality* at zero — people can withdraw support or withdraw *all* support from something without necessarily taking the next step of actually opposing it.

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[45] e.g. Bruce Gilley, "The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy"; John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America*.

I propose that the word *illegitimize* be used to describe the process of taking that next step, that is, going beyond merely withdrawing support and actually initiating opposition, a belief in the rightness of opposition, a duty to oppose, etc. In other words, *delegitimation,* the process in which a worthiness of support is lost, should be considered a separate process from *illegitimation* (or *illegitimization,* if a syllable must be added), the process in which a worthiness of opposition is conferred *(neutralization* could involve either process, as long as the goal or the end state is neutrality). In short, we need to take a closer look at the difference between delegitimation and illegitimation and distinguish between the dynamics "at zero" and the dynamics "below zero." It is not always clear in studies about the effects of delegitimation and what can be done to prevent it that the authors have considered whether going to zero is different from going below zero.[46]

Legitimacy is something that generates, among other things, voluntary compliance; without legitimacy (or agreement or habit), compliance has to be forced, coerced, or bartered, otherwise the result is non-compliance (see § C.2). But non-compliance is different from opposition. If you command me to bring you a cup of tea, it is one thing for me believe that you do not have the right to ask me for it and that I therefore do not have a duty to bring it to you (i.e. the request is not legitimate), and another thing for me to believe that it is wrong for you to have a cup of tea in the first place and that I therefore have a duty to oppose your getting it from anybody (i.e. the request is illegitimate). Legitimacy is a worthiness of support (or, in some contexts, of

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[46] See, for example: Suzanne E. Fry, "When States Kill Their Own: The Legitimating Rhetoric and Institutional Remedies of Authority Crises" (Doctoral Dissertation, New York University, 2005); Joanne Martin, Maureen Scully, and Barbara Levitt, "Injustice and the Legitimation of Revolution: Damning the Past, Excusing the Present, and Neglecting the Future," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59, no. 2 (1990): 281; Barrington Moore, Jr., *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (White Plains, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1978); Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970).

loyalty or imitation) and illegitimacy is a worthiness of opposition. Legitimacy sustains

and illegitimacy impedes. In the short term, legitimacy also induces compliance with

demands and requests, and encourages supportive participation and public action, while

illegitimacy induces opposition. Legitimacy lowers the costs, and illegitimacy raises the

costs, of sustaining a structure or a relationship. In short, legitimacy induces compliance,

encourages participation, and lowers costs, and so achieves stability, while illegitimacy

induces disobedience, encourages opposition, and raises costs, and so threatens stability.

Are there other phenomena that can achieve the same?

C.2. What Else Does What Legitimacy Can Do?

It is sometimes said that the prototypical legitimacy situation is one in which one

party makes a demand on another party who does not wish to comply: "Bring me a cup of

tea." "No." What tools are available to bring about compliance? Alternatively, when

someone complies with a command, a demand, an order, or a request, what explains that

compliance? Another situation said to be prototypical is when somebody who would not

otherwise benefit from a structure or relationship nevertheless supports it.[47] When one

party provides support to another party, what explains that provision? When a set of

relationships or rules remains stable over long periods, what explains that stability?

Legitimacy is only one potential explanation, or only one potential tool: people think they

have a duty to obey, to comply, or not to oppose, or that something is worthy of their

support, loyalty, participation, or imitation. One of the main findings of this study is that,

while legitimacy does lower the costs and prolong the stability of territorial and social

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[47] Juan J. Linz, "Crisis, Breakdown, and Re-Equilibration."

control, it is neither necessary nor sufficient to such control in the short term. If that is the case, then it must be the case that there are other things that also can encourage or explain the stability of territorial and social control. What might those other things be? The next few sections review several key "alternatives" to legitimacy: agreement, habit, seduction, persuasion, compromise, force, coercion, barter, and deception.

C.2.1. Agreement and Habit

Legitimacy is a phenomenon that comes into play only amid conflict: conflicts over interests, values, distributions, duties, truth claims, etc. Where there is not conflict — where there is *agreement* — legitimacy is not necessary. If it was your idea to bring me a cup of tea in the first place, it is completely unnecessary for me to request or command that you bring it to me. Likewise *habit:* if for many years you have brought me a cup of tea every day at 4:00 pm, it is, again, completely unnecessary for me to request that you bring it to me *this* afternoon. The pattern has been set, and, as humans are creatures of habit, it would take some event or change in situation to break the pattern. People develop daily, weekly, monthly, and other regular routines, or develop certain patterns in the way we think or behave, and we tend to stick with those routines and patterns as long as the conditions under which they develop stay within certain bounds. Once those bounds are crossed, it still might take some time for people to respond by breaking out of their usual patterns. Yet, powerful as the patterns set by habits are, they still are not based on anything more than precedent; behaviors reflecting deeper beliefs are more stable, as Weber observed:

> An order which is adhered to from motives of pure expediency is generally much less stable than one upheld on a purely customary basis

through the fact that the corresponding behavior has become habitual. The latter is much the most common type of objective attitude. But even this type of order is in turn much less stable than an order which enjoys the prestige of being considered binding, or, as it may be expressed, of "legitimacy."[48]

C.2.2. Seduction, Persuasion, and Compromise

"There is only one way under high heaven to get anybody to do anything," Dale Carnegie wrote in the most influential book on influence published in the 20th Century. "And that is by making the other person want to do it."

> Of course, you can make someone want to give you his watch by sticking a revolver in his ribs. You can make your employees give you cooperation — until your back is turned — by threatening to fire them. You can make a child do what you want it to do by a whip or a threat. But these crude methods have sharply undesirable repercussions.[49]

Many years ago, I read or heard — where, and from whom, I cannot now remember — that *seduction* is the art of "making other people think it was their idea"; we need not go into detail about what "it" entails, but suffice it to say that this definition is the distillation of centuries of wisdom about influencing other people: if somebody wants to do something, if somebody thinks doing it was his or her own idea, then that person is probably going to do it regardless of what you do or do not want them to do.

It would be useful if there were a word in the English language that described essentially the same phenomenon as the word *seduction* but without its sexual or immoral connotations, which makes some people uncomfortable enough that the word's mere mention can be a distraction from an otherwise serious conversation. Other words come

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[48] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 31.

[49] Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People,* revised ed. (New York: Pocket Books, 1982 [1936]), 18.

close — cooptation, persuasion, temptation, influence, attraction, etc. — but just do not seem to adequately capture the dynamic involved in "making other people think it was their idea." So I will use the term *seduction* and trust that the reader is adult enough to handle it. Often, to seduce means to tempt or to persuade someone to have sex or to do something considered immoral, sometimes using deception to achieve that end. But there is no necessary reason that the act in question must involve sex or must transgress social norms: people can be seduced into doing something morally neutral or morally good, as long as it is something that they had not initially been inclined to do but changed their mind. There are many different methods of seduction, ranging from deception and flattery, to the deployment of charisma or conformity to what the other values or admires, to a longer-term project of relationship-building. The essence of seduction, however, is finding a way to get somebody to independently change their mind or believe that it was his or her own idea to do the act in question, or that it is something that he or she had wanted to do anyway.

Once that is achieved — however it be achieved — the explanation for the act is little different from that of agreement: the other party wants to do it and indeed came up with the idea to do it, without realizing that the idea had in fact partly originated with the seductor. This is different from both *deception* and *persuasion,* however, as persuasion is more explicit, normally involving an explicit statement by one party of what action is desired, followed by argued reasons why the other party should undertake that action, often involving reference to self-interest or values or good outcomes and so on. Seduction, as noted, might involve outright deceptions — from lies to elaborate manipulations of circumstances or happenstances — but it need not do so: to the degree

deception is involved, to seduce is to deceive more by omission (the failure to state one's intentions outright) than by commission, and it might involve a great deal of truth-telling, honest flattery, grooming, or merely listening and expressing interest. (See § C.2.4 for more on deception.)

It is instructive to note the difference in methods of seduction between two of literature's greatest seductors: the fictional Don Juan, and the historical figure Giacomo Girolamo Casanova de Seingalt. In most fictional accounts, Don Juan is so driven to be with women that he usually ends up using false flatteries and deceptions that later catch up to him: he seduces, but he does not win loyalty in the process.[50] Casanova, by contrast, was known as a man who knew how to listen, to ask questions, to express interest, and to be intensely attentive: he was successful, and he won the loyalty of the women he seduced.[51] One man was focused on short-term success and quantity, the other on long-term success and quality (in addition to quantity). The difference in the approaches is the difference between appreciation and flattery, as Carnegie describes that difference: "One is sincere and the other insincere. One comes from the heart out; the other from the teeth out. One is unselfish; the other selfish. One is universally admired; the other universally condemned." Carnegie's advice for getting people to want to do what you want them to do is either to offer them sincere appreciation, under the logic that more flies are caught with honey than with vinegar,[52] or to arouse an "eager want" by suggesting, implying, or

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[50] See, for example, José Zorrilla, *Don Juan Tenorio,* Project Gutenberg (2004 [1844]), http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5201 (accessed 16 September 2009).

[51] J. Rives Childs, *Casanova: A New Perspective,* 1st U.S. ed. (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1988); William Bolitho, *Twelve Against the Gods: The Story of Adventure* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1929).

[52] In fact, whether honey or vinegar catches more flies turns out to depend on the vinegar. In a home experiment, I found that common household fruit flies were more attracted to balsamic-style vinegar than

showing them something that attracts them to the idea of doing what you want them to do.[53]

If two people agree on something, there is no need for legitimacy. Where ends or means are not in conflict, where a demand is complied with because the complier wants to do it, legitimacy is not the phenomenon that explains the compliance: agreement is. If, however, two people do not agree on something — say one person wants another person to do a favor — there are a number of other strategies, or a number of other explanations, that do not directly involve legitimacy. One is *compromise,* in which each side in the disagreement works to find some mutually acceptable solution that either leaves both parties better off or both parties worse off in ways that are mutually considered equitable or acceptable.[54] Three others are considered next.

C.2.3. Force, Coercion, and Barter

The difference between force and coercion was discussed at length in Appendix B (§ B.1). Both are forms of instrumental violence: *force* (instrumental-physical violence) uses power or pain to induce (involuntary) behavior, while *coercion* (instrumental-psychological violence) uses fear or suffering to induce (technically voluntary) behavior. Force achieves involuntary compliance simply by making it happen. Coercion achieves semi-voluntary compliance by credibly expressing an intent to use or keep using violence

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to either red-wine vinegar or clover honey (none, however, actually got caught in any of the liquids), thereby demonstrating that, in legitimacy studies, no proposition is as simple, or as settled, as it seems. See also Randall Munroe, "Flies," xkcd, http://xkcd.com/357 (accessed 15 September 2009).

[53] Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, 29.

[54] Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving in* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981).

as punishment for noncompliance, while also credibly assuring the victim that that outcome will be avoided by complying.

But while force is always a form of violence, coercion need not be. One can coerce by threatening not only violence as punishment for noncompliance but also the loss of something of value as punishment for noncompliance. Some forms of coercion, such as extortion (like the *vacuna* protection rackets of Medellín's underworld), are certainly examples of psychological violence, as they threaten nontrivial losses. However, blackmail, for example, would not be considered an example of violence at all, because what is threatened would cause only a trivial form of suffering: embarrassment. But it is a form of coercion, because it still threatens the loss of something valued, such as reputation, or peace of mind, or perhaps the continuation of some valued deception (a love affair, a guilty pleasure, etc.).

Like force and coercion, *barter* can achieve compliance as well, but it does so not by simply taking something that is valued (force), nor by threatening something that is valued (coercion), but by *giving* something that is valued: barter achieves compliance through exchange. If I want your cup of tea, I could simply take it from you using my superior strength (force); or I could threaten to break your coffee table or threaten to tell your spouse about your affair if you don't bring me a cup (coercion); or I could offer you $2.49, promise to bring you a cup tomorrow, or offer you a packet of tea cookies if you do bring me a cup (barter).

C.2.4. Deception

Deception cuts across all of these categories. Lying to people, manipulating facts and situations to make one thing seem like it is another thing, statements of intentional omission, and so on are all ways of pretending to use the strategies of compliance discussed in the previous three sections. You can lie to make somebody think there is more agreement than there really is. You can make yourself seem more attractive to somebody than you actually are (e.g. some people pretend that they want to get married just so that they can get somebody to date them for a short while). You can use lies and false facts during the course of persuasion. You can lie about your initial bargaining position as a way of getting more than your fair share in a compromise. You can pretend that you have more power at your disposal than you do. And you can barter on credit and never pay up, or give somebody something that is not what you said it was, such as counterfeit money or a bottle of wine that is not as rare as you had claimed.

C.3. Legitimacy of What?

Keeping all of these "alternatives" to legitimacy in mind, we can now turn to a discussion of legitimacy itself and how it might best be understood and analyzed. A proper analysis of legitimacy should begin by identifying or defining the *conferee* and the *referee.* The *conferee* is the entity upon which or upon whom legitimacy is or is not to be conferred. The *referee* is the person or group of people who are judging the degree to which the conferee is or is not legitimate. Too many authors of studies on legitimacy neither define the term itself, nor specify the conferee about whom they are writing, nor explicitly acknowledge whose views of legitimacy are accounted for in their work. For

the present study, I have endeavored not to follow that practice. The next section discusses the role of the referee; this section discusses conferees, which can be said to be the unit of analysis. Identifying the conferee answers the question: *legitimacy of what?*

For much of the 20th Century, most of the research on political legitimacy or the legitimacy of power has taken the state or a government or a political system as the appropriate unit of analysis. But things other than states can and do govern (see Appendix A), and things other than governments and states can be legitimized: "Over the course of the history of the subject, theories have in fact emerged not only of the legitimacy of power and rewards, but also of status, of inequalities in general, of procedures and procedural justice, of deviance and social control, of social protest, of social change, and in fact of almost any aspect of the structure of social groups," including "acts, persons, roles, and rules, hence the structure of relations and groups, and the groups themselves," up to and including the social order as a whole.[55] *Social structures* are usually defined as the persistent patterns and components of social relations at specific times and places (see § A.1).[56] This definition is broad enough to encompass organizations, borders, the division of labor, states, statelets, the distribution of economic and political goods, associations, regimes, mafias, systems, commands, the means of production, and institutions for marriage, education, law, justice, property, and the regulation of violence, among many others. Any one of these structures can be subject to legitimation, delegitimation, or illegitimation by the individuals and groups that make them up; any one of these structures, in other words, can be *conferees* of legitimacy.

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[55] Morris Zelditch, Jr., "Theories of Legitimacy," 39 (his citations omitted).

[56] Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s.v. "social structure," http://www.britannica.com (accessed 2 February 2009).

For the purposes of this study, I assume that legitimacy can be conferred upon a *role* (within a social, political, economic, or cultural structure or relationship), a *policy* (a plan of action, or a statement about what one will do under what conditions, how one will do it, or to what ends it will be done; see Appendix A), a *distribution* (of wealth, power, prestige, status, etc. across a defined set of individuals or groups), or more commonly a *structure* (which entails some combination of roles, policies, and distributions).

To understand the conventional view, taken by many authors who study legitimacy, about what counts as a conferee, consider the following analysis of social structures.[57] Social structures, especially political structures, can be said to be categorizable into three elements, corresponding to what might be described, colloquially and simplistically (but, for the purposes of this illustration, usefully enough), as the *rulers,* the *ruled,* and the *rules,* each of which has any number of subcomponents, any one of which can be subject to legitimation, delegitimation, or illegitimation:

- The *rulers,* or powerholders, include state and nonstate entities that hold and exercise power within the social structure; examples include political officials, policy makers, decision makers, and committees. At a subordinate or intermediate level (i.e. between rulers and ruled), this category can include the powerholders' agents or administrative staff, who play a role sometimes similar to that of the powerholders and sometimes similar to that of the groups who make up the next category. The legitimacy of rulers can be deficient in

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[57] Some of this terminology and the conventional conceptualizations they refer to are drawn from David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*; Leslie Green, *The Authority of the State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Jean Hampton, *Political Philosophy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997); Russell J. Dalton, *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices*; Herbert C. Kelman, "Reflections on Social and Psychological Processes of Legitimization and Delegitimization"; Bruce Gilley, "The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy."

any aspect of any level of analysis (e.g., local, national, transnational), branch

(executive, judicial, legislative), or function (e.g., commerce, law

enforcement, accounting, advising, etc.).

- The *ruled* are common people, the members or constituents of the political,

  social, cultural, or religious community who do not hold power, or the

  subjects from whom the holders of power can rightly expect support, loyalty,

  or compliance within established bounds; sometimes they play a role, as noted

  above, as agents or administrative staff of the rulers. Some have high status

  within the structure, others have low status. The legitimacy of the ruled can be

  deficient in their membership (i.e. who is included in or excluded from the

  recognized political, social, cultural, or religious community) or in their

  structure (the distribution of influence, resources, and status among members).

- The *rules* are the policies that regulate social life, the systems through which

  they operate, or the bounds of behavior that delimit both one's proper role in

  the social structure and the claims or demands that powerholders may

  legitimately direct toward their agents, staff, or subjects. Examples include

  regimes, rights, laws, and common or traditional practices that specify and

  regulate obligations and relationships. The legitimacy of the rules can be

  deficient by virtue of the regime or system through which they are expressed,

  the processes through which they operate, the policies that they produce (e.g.,

  laws, regulations), or the outcomes that they generate (e.g., how laws are

  enforced).

In conventional analyses of legitimacy, the proper unit of analysis — the answer to *legitimacy of what?* — is the powerholder (the ruler): that individual or institution will be considered legitimate if it has, or if the political community subject to its power (the ruled) believes that it has, a right to perform its role in the social structure or is worthy of occupying that role, as long as it came to occupy that role in the accepted way and acts within the proper, established bounds of that role (the rules). The essential legitimacy situation is conventionally said to take place when the powerholder makes a demand of some sort that requires compliance from subjects: the demand is considered legitimate to the degree that the subjects voluntarily comply because they believe the powerholder has the right to make the demand and they have a corresponding moral duty to comply with it. If they comply out of mere self-interest, their compliance is not based on the powerholder's legitimacy but on some other consideration (e.g. force, coercion, barter; see § C.2).

This conventional view is analytically satisfying and can be useful for understanding and influencing situations involving one-way demands and the stability of a political regime. But it misses some important dynamics. Legitimacy is not always — perhaps not usually — a one-way street. Not only do subjects have to recognize (and treat) powerholders as legitimately holding power; but powerholders also have to recognize (and treat) subjects as legitimate members of the community; and both have to recognize (and treat) the bounds as a legitimate guide to their relationship. In government, for example, rulers can legitimately make demands on the ruled to obey laws, but the ruled can legitimately make demands on the rulers to actually govern them — to make and implement policies, to build and manage institutions and networks, and to

deliver political goods that protect and improve their lives. Powerholders are also members of the political community; a president, for example, is not only a powerholder in the role of president but also a subject in the role of citizen: rights and duties cut across roles. (See Appendix A for an extensive discussion of these issues.) It is for this reason that I use the terms *conferees* and *referees* when discussing judgments made about legitimacy: it does not presuppose the identity or the role of the conferee: the referee, of any sort, makes a judgment about whether to confer legitimacy upon the conferee, of any sort: The president is a conferee in the analysis of the legitimacy of the presidency but a referee in the analysis of the legitimacy of the political community. This point becomes clearer in the analysis of the dynamics of legitimacy in Medellín (see Chapter 9).

C.4. Legitimacy According to Whom?

The *referee* is the person or group of people who are judging the degree to which the conferee is or is not legitimate. Identifying the referee answers the question: *legitimacy according to whom?* Referees include both *outsiders* and *insiders.* Outsiders are people who neither are members of, nor are affected by, the role, policy, distribution, or structure in question (i.e. the conferee); authors of academic papers written about legitimacy in other places are outsider referees. Insiders are people who are part of the structure or relationship in question, are affected by the actions of the entity occupying the role, or are affected by the policy or distribution. Insiders can be members of *high-status* or *low-status* groups.

For simplicity, I define *low-status groups or individuals* as those people who would be "better-off," somehow, under some distribution of wealth, power, prestige, or

status other than the one that actually exists; colloquially, they are the ones who got the short end of the stick. Some low-status individuals support the existing system despite their position within it, implicitly "blaming" themselves or other members of their in-group for their position in society; others, however, "blame" the system and either do not support it or actively oppose it. "For many disadvantaged groups, it is difficult to hold simultaneous beliefs about the goodness and legitimacy of the self, the ingroup, and the social system," wrote John T. Jost, Diana Burgess, and Christina O. Mosso. In a grand synthesis of the varied strands of system-justification theory and related research, they elaborated Jürgen Habermas's concept of a "legitimation crisis"[58] to

> cover the myriad ways in which people suffer from and attempt to cope with and resolve contradictory needs to (a) feel valid, justified, and legitimate as individual actors (ego justification), (b) develop group memberships that they and others believe to be worthwhile and legitimate (group justification), and (c) preserve a sense that the prevailing system of social arrangements is fair, legitimate, and justifiable (system justification). … [For] members of high status groups, motives for ego justification, group justification, and system justification are consistent and complementary, whereas for members of low status groups, these motives are often in conflict with one another … resulting in ambivalence [about their status in society], decreased ideological coherence, disengagement from the system, partial or total dis-identification with the ingroup, [or] individual mobility and group exit.[59]

Given this discussion, I define *high-status group* or *individuals* as those people for whom self-, group-, and system-justification motives are not in conflict because they are advantaged (relative to low-status members) under the system that exists.

To evaluate any claim that something is or is not legitimate, it is essential to understand who is making the claim. In every society, some groups are favored and

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[58] Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975).

[59] John T. Jost, Diana Burgess, and Christina O. Mosso, "Conflicts of Legitimation Among Self, Group, and System."

protected while others are neglected or mistreated. Such inequities are exaggerated in

oppressive societies, but they are present in democratic societies as well. The government

gives contracts to some people, their family benefits from those contracts, and they find it

difficult to oppose the government that is benefiting their family, even if it oppresses

others. Under the Somoza regime in Nicaragua during the 1970s, for example, labor

leaders, activists, leftists, and many others were routinely arrested, tortured, and killed,

while many business leaders, family and friends of the Somozas, political allies, and

other elites were permitted the freedom to profit and thrive. In their daily lives, many

elite Nicaraguans could go weeks without personally encountering a member of a

disadvantaged group, aside, perhaps, from household staff; given their range of daily

experience, it should not be surprising that many elites believed the Somoza government

was legitimate. It should be equally unsurprising that a family whose son had

"disappeared" would have a different opinion. Similarly, many Germans before and

during World War II were not aware of the scale of genocide their Nazi government was

undertaking; of those who were aware of it, some even approved, believing the Holocaust

was a legitimate response to the "Jewish problem." Normatively, one can state without

reservation that there is no galaxy in the universe where such a genocide is, in fact,

legitimate; but positively, we can nonetheless observe that there was, at the time, a

population within Germany who, however wrongly, did so believe.

This dynamic, partly captured by the common sentiment that "where you stand

depends on where you sit," was present in abundance in Medellín. And yet in Medellín,

as elsewhere, there were low-status individuals who might have been high-status

individuals under some different system, yet they supported or were neutral toward the

system as it existed; as mentioned earlier, the legitimacy of some conferee is often said to be indicated by the degree to which low-status insiders support it. The distinction between high-status insiders and low-status insiders is meant to capture these dynamics.

The distinction between insiders and outsiders is meant to correct an important pathology of many studies of legitimacy. Many authors — outsiders to the conferees they study — believe (or employ methods that imply a belief) that legitimacy is an objective attribute of powerholders or of certain types of social or political structures, and that subjective beliefs about legitimacy are not relevant because, for example, they are too easily manipulated. Since legitimacy is an objective attribute, they implicitly (sometimes explicitly) argue, judgments about legitimacy are better based on an objective analysis of the degree to which certain conferees conform to those objective standards; therefore, conferees have no referees. My response to this line of argument is that, in fact, it is the author making this argument who is the referee: any person, whether in a direct relationship with the conferee under analysis or some academic outsider writing about that conferee, is acting as referee whenever he or she specifies the standards upon which judgments about the conferee's legitimacy are to be based. Hence my use of the term *outsider referee.*

When measuring the degree to which something is legitimate or illegitimate, whose criteria should be used to make the measurement? The answer depends on whether one believes legitimacy resides in the beliefs of individuals, in the behaviors of groups, or in the attributes of social structures. There has long been a divide, for example, between those who assume that legitimacy resides in the objective features of the structure whose

legitimacy is being measured and those who assume that legitimacy resides in the
subjective beliefs of the people subject to its power[60]:

- The *macro* or *system-level* perspective "takes for granted the epistemic
  assumption that an outside observer, relying on fairly gross aggregate
  evidence, can measure the legitimacy of a political system and rank it in
  comparison with other systems."[61] As described in the previous paragraph, the
  macro researcher (an outsider referee) begins by specifying a set of
  supposedly universal criteria for legitimacy, then proceeds by measuring the
  degree to which the conferee under study meets those criteria.

- The *micro* or *individual-level* perspective relies on insider referees' reported
  opinions about the legitimacy of the conferee under study or on observable
  behaviors suggestive of a belief in legitimacy. The insider referees' criteria for
  legitimacy are generally accepted without question.

The assumptions underlying both approaches are problematic. The traditional micro
approach assumes that *legitimacy* is equivalent to *belief in legitimacy*. The traditional
macro approach either assumes the population under study shares the researcher's own
normative views about what counts as legitimate, or rejects their opinions on the matter
as being irrelevant. Neither view is correct. The experiences of counterinsurgents, for
example, demonstrate definitively that different populations have different opinions about
the kind of life that is worth taking up arms to defend: ignoring those opinions when
fighting an insurgency can be deadly. The suggestion that legitimacy is a matter of public

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[60] M. Stephen Weatherford, "Measuring Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 86, no. 1
(1992): 149; Bruce Gilley, "The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy."

[61] M. Stephen Weatherford, "Measuring Political Legitimacy."

opinion reduces legitimacy to approval ratings and ignores that reported opinions are often unreliable indicators of beliefs, and that beliefs themselves often reflect adaptive preferences rather than the preferences an individual would have under better social, economic, political, or personal circumstances.[62]

More recent efforts have been made to avoid some of these problems by incorporating both the objective attributes of conferees and the subjective beliefs of referees into theories of the determinants of legitimacy and assumptions about where legitimacy resides. Typical of this genre is Beetham: "A given power relationship is not legitimate because people believe in its legitimacy, but because it can be *justified in terms of* their beliefs" (emphasis in original):

> When we seek to assess the legitimacy of a regime, a political system, or some other power relation, one thing we are doing is assessing how far it can be justified in terms of people's beliefs, how far it conforms to their values or standards, how far it satisfies the normative expectations they have of it. We are making an assessment of the degree of congruence, or lack of it, between a given system of power and the beliefs, values, and expectations that provide its justification.[63]

To measure this "congruence," this approach first determines the referees' normative criteria for legitimacy, then measures the degree to which the conferee meets those criteria. It is a micro approach in that it assumes that the perspective that matters is that of the insider referees, but it is macro in that what it measures are the objective attributes of the conferee in question (specifically, its congruence with referees' values), not the opinions of the referees.

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[62] Jon Elster, *Sour Grapes: Studies in the Subversion of Rationality* (New York: Cambridge University Press Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1983), 109; Amartya Sen, "Rights and Capabilities," in *Resources, Values, and Development*, ed. Amartya Sen (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), 307; Martha Nussbaum, "Adaptive Preferences and Women's Options," *Economics and Philosophy* 17 (2001): 67.

[63] David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power*, 11.

In this same spirit, an alternative approach bridges micro and macro, not by reconciling objective attributes of conferees with subjective beliefs of referees, but by observing and measuring referees' public behaviors, which are assumed to be both a reflection of individual subjective beliefs (micro) and a response to objective facts about the structure in question (macro). An excellent variant of this approach, incorporating a *meso* or *group-level* measure, is Gilley's comparative study of the legitimacy of states, in which the author uses both attitudinal (micro) and behavioral (meso) indicators to develop an index of state legitimacy based on his own (macro) criteria for legitimacy, which he derives from the literature.[64]

The present study takes an approach that essentially combines these last two approaches. It treats legitimacy neither as solely "a direct property of political institutions" nor as solely "a property of individual psychologies"[65] but also as a measurable feature of the interaction between the two. This approach is *macro* in that it provides a "thin" or universalistic account of human reasoning about legitimacy and measures the objective attributes and behaviors of the different entities and agents upon whom legitimacy is being conferred (or withheld) to see how well they match insider referees' judgments about them; *meso* in that it recognizes that actual reasoning about legitimacy takes place in particular contexts and is expressed in interactions with other people and groups, and measures those judgments as expressed in actions; and *micro* in that it measures individual referees' private perceptions and expressions of legitimacy. In other words, it measures legitimacy at three levels of analysis: *public attributes,* or the

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[64] Bruce Gilley, "The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy."

[65] Robert Grafstein, "The Legitimacy of Political Institutions," *Polity* 14, no. 1 (1981): 51.

publicly measurable features of the conferees (a macro measure); *group behaviors,* or publicly expressed judgments of those attributes (meso); and *individual beliefs,* or private judgments about them (micro).

C.5. Legitimacy by What Processes?

Legitimacy has a substantive component and a procedural component. The substantive component is discussed at length in the next section. The procedural component of legitimacy can be considered a form or a driver of legitimation, delegitimation, or illegitimation. Many theories of legitimacy make the assumption that legitimacy derives from a set of essentially static conditions, and that if those conditions are present, legitimacy emerges. That is not usually the case. Legitimation processes are essential to getting all constituents of a social structure to accept decisions and support outcomes. Different social actors have different ways, processes, and methods of legitimizing decisions. The substantial content of an arrangement may be otherwise acceptable, but if it was not derived by fair or locally legitimate processes it could still be rejected by some parties as illegitimate.[66] Because *process* can (for the sake of convenience) be considered an attribute of the *justifiable* criterion discussed in the next section, it will not be discussed further here; further analysis will be left to future research.

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[66] Herbert C. Kelman, "Reflections on Social and Psychological Processes of Legitimization and Delegitimization"; Tom R. Tyler, "A Psychological Perspective on the Legitimacy of Institutions and Authorities," in *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations*, ed. John T. Jost and Brenda Major (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 416.

C.6. Legitimacy by What Criteria?

This section addresses the substantive component of legitimacy, the criteria against which something can be judged legitimate or otherwise. The vast literatures on legitimacy, authority, society, politics, culture, and identity are filled with discussions of lists and typologies of the substantive criteria, sources, or factors that contribute to beliefs about legitimacy. The most common themes (and key concepts) fall into a few categories:

- *Law.* Accordance with law is the oldest sense of the Latin word *legitimus*, dating at least as far back as Cicero in the first century BCE, and legal legitimacy continues to enjoy widespread attention today, particularly in writings in the philosophy of law but also in political theory generally. Relevant topics include, among others, the rule of law, the laws vs. morals debate, sovereignty, and political authority. Law can both be legitimate and contribute to legitimacy.[67]

- *Tradition* (custom, religion, wisdom, rules of succession, habit, divine right of kings). Legitimacy as conformity with tradition — the belief that a rule or ruler should be obeyed and an institution supported because they have always been obeyed and supported — predates the term "legitimacy" and probably

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[67] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 220; José Guilherme Merquior, *Rousseau and Weber: Two Studies in the Theory of Legitimacy* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 2; Friedrich A. von Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty: A New Statement of the Liberal Principles of Justice and Political Economy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982); Neil J. Kritz, "The Rule of Law in the Postconflict Phase: Building a Stable Peace," in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, ed. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela R. Aall (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001), 801; Ian Shapiro, *The Rule of Law* (New York: New York University Press, 1994); Anne-Marie Slaughter, *A New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Abram Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes, *The New Sovereignty: Compliance with International Regulatory Agreements* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); Stephen D. Krasner, "Sharing Sovereignty: New Institutions for Collapsed and Failing States"; Noah Feldman, *What We Owe Iraq: War and the Ethics of Nation Building* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 148; Lon L. Fuller, *The Morality of Law,* Revised ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Jean Hampton, *Political Philosophy*.

predates history itself, although the term did not begin to denote accordance with custom until the Middle Ages. Traditional societies have long considered such things as the counsel of shamans or wise men, rules of succession, the divine right of kings, patriarchy, and the authority of the Church to be legitimate features of their cultures. Many aspects of modern societies, too, retain this belief: if people have been using a private road for many years and the property's owner one day decides to prevent access, the public may sue for continued access and can reasonably expect a modern court to cite custom as a reason to decide in their favor.[68]

- *Leadership* (charisma, moral capital). A leader of heroic, extraordinary, or purportedly divine character can confer legitimacy upon an organization, a political or social movement, or a religious worldview simply through the force and attraction of his or her personality, a quality Weber called *charisma.* Entirely apart from the inherent justice of their causes, for example, Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. built up, and judiciously spent, great reserves of moral capital on behalf of their ultimately successful social movements. Likewise, Mohammad and Jesus Christ attracted followers who later founded what would become major world religions. And cults of personality have given tyrants such as Kim Il Sung and Saddam Hussein sufficient charismatic legitimacy to remain in power for longer periods, and perhaps with lower levels of coercion, than the injustice of their actions as leaders might otherwise suggest. Nelson Mandela's stature was a significant

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[68] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 226; José Guilherme Merquior, *Rousseau and Weber*, 2.

contributor to the success of South Africa's democratic transition after

Apartheid. A hero in one endeavor can win a broad following in another

simply by force of his or her heroism, as has been the case of military heroes

who have run for elected political office; likewise for individuals who come to

be seen as symbolizing or embodying some important value.[69]

- *Effectiveness* (efficiency, order, stability, prosperity, governance). Legitimacy

  as effective control over territory, or more broadly as effective governance, is

  a common theme in political theory and is closely related to, and for some

  authors identical with, the concept of sovereignty. The governments of

  Myanmar and China, for example, are sovereign over their territories, and

  much of the international community acts as if they consider those countries

  legitimate, despite evidence of weak or nonexistent consent from the

  governed. Within countries, it is often the case that people are willing to

  accept coercive forms of rule when they believe the alternative is widespread

  disorder. In places where anarchy reigns, people tend to seek out protective

  associations and to support whatever group is most capable of preventing

  theft, murder, rape, and armed attack in their community. When a new

  government demonstrates that it lacks the ability to govern, and crime begins

  to rise or the economy begins to fall, some citizens might begin to pine for the

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[69] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1111; Alejo G. Sison, *The Moral Capital of Leaders: Why Virtue Matters* (Northampton, Mass.: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2003); John Kane, *The Politics of Moral Capital* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

good old days of aristocracy or dictatorship, opening the door to a strongman

candidate, while others might begin to protest or otherwise press for change.[70]

- *Consent* (social contract, democracy, self-determination). This is the most

   commonly cited source of legitimacy, whether in writings about electoral

   democracy, participatory democracy, or other forms of "public reasoning." It

   captures the idea that power is legitimate to the degree that those affected by it

   have somehow consented to the way it is exercised. It need not derive from a

   system of representative democracy, and especially not merely from elections.

   What people care about is having a voice, having some say over how their

   lives are regulated. I prefer the term *access* rather than *consent* to reflect this

   broader idea, since much of the literature (in English and Spanish) on consent

   has a strong bias in favor of Western democratic norms.[71]

- *Norms* (sociocultural norms, sacred values, principles, hegemony, ideology,

   theology, justice, fairness, merit, human rights, false consciousness). Many

   people measure the legitimacy of the social order and their leaders against the

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[70] Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man*; Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy"; Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Daniel Kaufmann, "Governance Redux: The Empirical Challenge," in *Global Competitiveness Report 2003-2004* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2004); Robert I. Rotberg and Deborah L. West, *The Good Governance Problem: Doing Something About it*; Noah Feldman, *What We Owe Iraq*, 74; Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 12.

[71] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Parts One and Two* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958 [1651]); John Locke, "An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent, and End of Civil Government"; David Hume, "Of the Original Contract," in *Social Contract: Essays By Locke, Hume, and Rousseau*, ed. Ernest Barker, The World's Classics, No. 511 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960 [1748]); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Social Contract"; John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* revised ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999); Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*; Robert Alan Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Amartya Sen, "Why Democratization Is Not the Same as Westernization: Democracy and Its Global Roots"; Allen E. Buchanan, *Justice, Legitimacy, and Self-Determination: Moral Foundations for International Law,* Oxford Political Theory (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

norms, values, and principles they hold most dear; the closer the match, the greater the legitimacy. Because some norms are passed through generations, this origin is closely related to, but not identical with, traditional legitimacy, discussed previously. High levels of social capital and civic engagement within a community may signal that that community considers itself norm-legitimate. Some authors, however, argue that perceptions of norm-legitimacy exist only because the powerful impose "hegemonic" or "bourgeois" values upon the broader population to sustain their own advantages. Whatever the source of the norms, however, it is still the norms that are the source of legitimacy in this conception. Principles such as justice, fairness, merit, or respect for human rights can come into play, as can religious beliefs and political ideologies. Citizens of democracies often vote for political officials who share their values rather than their exact policy preferences, and many consider the subsequent policy outcomes, even those going against their economic or political interests, to be entirely legitimate. In a transitional government, a political official lacking either charisma or the sanction of tradition may wield influence by conforming to — or, better, standing as a symbol of — societal and cultural norms. Ahmad Chalabi had much more influence among U.S. officials than he ever did among the Iraqi population, partly because he was seen as an outsider whose values were at odds with their own.[72]

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[72] Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); Harry Eckstein, *Division and Cohesion in Democracy: A Study of Norway* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture Revisited: An Analytic Study* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980); David Beetham, *The*

- *Identity* (social identity, identity politics, respect, pride). A judgment of a
  worthiness of support sometimes comes simply from in-group identification
  or inter-group dynamics.[73]

Lists of such criteria appear all over the literatures on legitimacy across several
academic and policy disciplines, including political science, sociology, psychology,
philosophy, organizational studies, and military doctrine. For analytic purposes such lists
can be useful, as they can help identify the intellectual and cultural resources that can be
brought to bear upon real-world problems. But not always; in a sense, these lists and
typologies provide neither a "thick" enough nor a "thin" enough account of the sources of
legitimacy: not thick enough because they cannot be used as a field guide to any
particular population's reasoning about legitimacy, and not thin enough because they
cannot be used as a general guide to human reasoning about legitimacy across different
fields. A thinner account would provide a more useful starting point from which the
particular, complex, messy details can be hatched.[74]

Legitimation of Power; Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority,* Contemporary Issues in Asia and the Pacific (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995); Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995): 65; Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Theda Skocpol and Morris Fiorina, eds., *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1999); Bruce Gilley, "The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy"; Scott Atran, Robert Axelrod, and Richard Davis, "Sacred Barriers to Conflict Resolution," *Science* 317, no. 5841 (2007): 1039; Jeremy Ginges, et al., "Sacred Bounds on Rational Resolution of Violent Political Conflict."

[73] John T. Jost and Brenda Major, *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations*; David John Frank and John W. Meyer, "The Profusion of Individual Roles and Identities in the Postwar Period," *Sociological Theory* 20, no. 1 (2002): 86; Judith A. Howard, "Social Psychology of Identities," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 367; Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke, "Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2000): 224; *The Social Dimension: European Developments in Social Psychology*.

[74] Michael Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument At Home and Abroad*; Bruce Gilley, "Thick Or Thin? An Empirical Intervention."

Such an account is presented here. This thinner account, which was used as the basis for this study's analytic framework, was intended to demonstrate the very human reasoning that underlies judgments and behaviors about what counts as right or wrong, as worthy or unworthy to support, as a duty to comply or to oppose, and so on. By developing this thin account, I was able to capture and incorporate into a single, simple framework the broad range of sentiments and motives underlying the criteria for legitimacy identified in the existing literatures. This framework can provide a useful starting point from which the particular, complex, messy details of the dynamics of legitimacy in the real world can later be uncovered. If nothing else, it can provide a baseline for the types of questions that should be asked for any study of legitimacy: no fewer questions than are suggested by the framework, but no limits to the questions that can be asked beyond that.

This thin account identifies six criteria that can be considered causal indicators for legitimacy: *transparent, credible, justifiable, equitable, accessible,* and *respectful.*

- *Transparent* and *credible* describe the most basic criteria that motivate people to support a conferee, because together they make life predictable: people want to know, for example, what the rules are, and to know that they can be enforced non-arbitrarily, even if they don't agree with the rules, and even if they don't benefit from the rules. These two "predictability" criteria do not actually confer legitimacy; they are more like contributory or background conditions, necessary but not sufficient, that make it possible for people to live their daily lives and plan out personal projects within the given constraints. To put it another way: predictability will not generate legitimacy (and voluntary

support), but its significant absence will very likely generate illegitimacy (and active opposition).

- The *justifiable* criterion tends to be the central component of most accounts of legitimacy, as it captures the values people hold most dear — their judgments about what is right (in accord with valuable norms or rules), good (in accord with valuable outcomes), proper (in accord with valuable processes), and admirable (representative of their values) — and therefore worthy of their support or loyalty. Justifiability is a matter of connecting something about the conferee to something that the referee considers right, good, proper, admirable, or otherwise valuable.

- The *equitable* criterion reflects ideas about fairness: people want to be assured that inequalities are justified and that, if they have less of something than someone else has, it is for a good reason. It is important to recognize that equity is different from equality: equity implies that there is some standard against which the justice of a distribution is measured. People who are not well-off in a society often nevertheless consider that society's arrangements to be legitimate, believing that those who are better-off have gotten that way by merit or by right and that those who are worse-off lack the same merits or rights. This is implicit in Linz's conception of legitimacy, that those who would be better-off under another arrangement nevertheless support the current arrangement. When those who are worse-off believe that they are worse-off only because of the unfairness of the better-off, then that is an indication that the society's arrangements are not legitimate. Things can be

unequally distributed without there being any adverse influence on the level of

legitimacy, as long as that inequality is not unjustified according to the

standards of the community. In every community, there are people who have,

for example, more connections in their social network than others have, and

all else equal they will therefore tend to have more influence within the

community. Whether that inequality is accepted by those with less influence

will depend both on the sources of that inequality (e.g. the fact that some

people are more gregarious than others, or that wealthy or physically attractive

people will tend to attract more people, for example) and on views about

whether those sources are valid as a basis for inequality (e.g. some people

might judge others' higher levels of influence to be valid if it is due mainly to

their social skills and not to their wealth or beauty; for others, it simply might

not matter). Likewise, every community has people with more money than

others; whether that inequality is accepted by those who are poorer will

depend both on the sources of that inequality (e.g. inheritance, hard work,

connections, theft, etc.) and on views about whether those sources are valid as

a basis for inequality (e.g. in communities without moral prohibitions against

stealing from outsiders, disparities might be justified by an acceptance that

some people are simply better thieves than others; in communities where hard

work both is valued and reliably leads to greater wealth, disparities might be

justified by an acceptance that some people simply work harder than others).

Also, equalities that are unjustified can be considered inequitable: if two

people have the same level of influence over certain policy questions, that is

an equality; but if one of them has far greater knowledge about the substance of the issue in question than the other and yet has merely equal influence, then that, arguably, is an inequity.

- The *accessible* criterion captures much of the literature on consent as the basis for legitimacy, but goes beyond what many authors consider to be a strictly or traditionally democratic basis; regardless of the specific system of consent or public reason, what people want is some assurance that they have a voice, some say in how the things that affect them operate; what people want is some sort of access to the system.

- Finally, the *respectful* criterion captures the literatures on human dignity and pride: consistently disrespectful treatment, even if everything else is justified, equitable, and accessible, tends to create tension with people's desire and ability to be loyal or offer support, or tends to be so demoralizing as to make the question of support nearly irrelevant.

These six criteria together represent a rather thin conception of legitimacy: everybody can agree in principle that, for example, the rules regulating political and social relations should be transparent, credible, justifiable, equitable, accessible, and respectful. Actually measuring legitimacy, however, is a matter of measuring what these adjectives mean in a real-world context according to real-world values and standards. What they mean will differ depending on whether the conferee is a role, a policy, a distribution, or a structure, as discussed in the next section.

Table C-1. A Framework for Measuring Legitimacy

Legitimacy of what? (conferee: role, policy, distribution, or structure)					
According to whom?	**Insider referee**				**Outsider referee**
	Low-status insiders		**High-status insiders**		
Measurement strategy Type of indicator (criteria)	**Individual beliefs**	**Group behaviors**	**Individual beliefs**	**Group behaviors**	**Public attributes**
Proxy	Var_{0A}	Var_{0B}	Var_{0C}	Var_{0D}	Var_{0E}
Causal$_1$	Var_{1A}	Var_{1B}	Var_{1C}	Var_{1D}	Var_{1E}
Causal$_2$	Var_{2A}	Var_{2B}	Var_{2C}	Var_{2D}	Var_{2E}
…	…	…	…	…	…
Causal$_n$	Var_{nA}	Var_{nB}	Var_{nC}	Var_{nD}	Var_{nE}

C.7. Measurement Framework

Among the greatest challenges to measuring a latent (unobservable) phenomenon such as legitimacy is measurement validity, the question of whether one can be certain that one is, in fact, measuring legitimacy and not something else. To support measurement validity in this study, I combined the approaches described in the last several sections into a more comprehensive framework than has been used in the past.[75] This framework measures the legitimacy of a particular conferee by, first, identifying both the outsider referee (usually the author of the study or the agency sponsoring the study) and the high-status and low-status insider referees whose views or behaviors are relevant to questions about the conferee's legitimacy; and, second, incorporating a measurement strategy that identifies an effect indicator (proxy) and a set of causal

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[75] The framework described here is a modified and expanded version of one that I had previously developed for analyzing legitimacy. See Robert D. Lamb, "Measuring Legitimacy in Weak States."

indicators that can be measured at the levels of individual belief, group behavior, and public attribute (see Table C-1).

Most authors who attempt to measure legitimacy acknowledge that they cannot be certain that it is legitimacy and not something else that they are measuring. Those who assert that legitimacy resides primarily in individual belief acknowledge the difficulties of recall and other biases inherent in measuring opinions. Those who assert that legitimacy resides primarily in group behaviors acknowledge the difficulty of determining whether certain behaviors derive from belief rather than coercion. And those who assert that legitimacy resides in the objective characteristics of the structure under study acknowledge that their outsider judgment of the system's legitimacy may well differ from that of insiders. Yet these authors draw the data or observations that underlie their studies of legitimacy from only one or, at best, two of these levels of analysis (micro, meso, or macro). But human life is lived at multiple levels simultaneously, and legitimacy, being a human phenomenon, is a multi-level phenomenon.

A proper analysis of legitimacy, therefore, should identify indicators across multiple level of analysis, and this framework is intended to be used to look for evidence at all three levels of analysis. By doing so, it provides a higher degree of certainty about what is being measured: if individuals say they believe some structure to be legitimate, and if groups act as if they believe that structure to be legitimate, and if that structure has characteristics that suggest it operates legitimately, then it is very difficult (albeit not impossible) to argue that legitimacy is not at work in the structure; but if one of those levels does not agree with the others, that suggests that something other than legitimacy is at play (coercion, for example).

Furthermore, this framework does not measure only proxies for legitimacy, nor does it measure only causal indicators: rather, it measures both a *proxy variable* and six *causal indicators* (transparent, credible, justifiable, accessible, equitable, and respectful).

Legitimacy is a latent variable. It cannot be measured directly, so variables need to be chosen to measure it indirectly. A variety of strategies is available for measuring latent variables,[76] but only two will be considered here. Bollen and Lennox distinguish between "indicators that influence, and those influenced by, latent variables," calling the former *causal indicators* and the latter *effect indicators*.[77]

Causal indicators — also called *constitutive* or *composite indicators*[78] — collectively determine the latent variable; that is, they collectively constitute a measure of legitimacy:

$$L_1 = \gamma_1 X_1 + \gamma_2 X_2 + ... + \gamma_Q X_Q + \zeta_1 \qquad\qquad (9\text{–}1)$$

where L_1, is the latent variable, legitimacy; X is an indicator in a composite that includes Q indicators; γ is the coefficient of X, or the effect that X has on legitimacy; and ζ_1 is the disturbance term.[79] By definition a legitimate conferee is one that meets the referee's *criteria* for support, and this approach is useful when indicators are available that can measure those criteria.

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[76] Kenneth A. Bollen, "Latent Variables in Psychology and the Social Sciences."

[77] Kenneth A. Bollen and Richard Lennox, "Conventional Wisdom on Measurement," 305.

[78] Bruce Gilley, "The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy."

[79] This and the effect-indicator equation are simplified versions of equations (2) and (1), respectively, in Kenneth A. Bollen and Richard Lennox, "Conventional Wisdom on Measurement: A Structural Equation Perspective"; following them, no subscripts are used to index individuals, but unlike them, nor are any used to index the indicators. See Ibid., 305. n. 303

Table C-2. Criterial Measures of Legitimacy

Indi-cator type:	Criteria: Is the conferee …	Conferee Type: Is the …		
		role or role-holder …	policy …	distribution …
proxy	legitimate?	worthy of support?	worthy of support?	worthy of support?
causal	transparent?	identifiable?	known?	known?
causal	credible?	capable?	enforceable?	stable?
causal	justifiable?	right, good, proper, or virtuous?	right, good, proper, or admirable?	right, good, proper, or admirable?
causal	equitable?	fair?	fair?	fair?
causal	accessible?	accountable?	amendable?	amendable?
causal	respectful?	civil?	elevating?	elevating?

Effect indicators — also called *proxy* or *substitutive indicators* — are measures of phenomena that come about as a consequence of the action of the latent variable; that is, the effect indicator is a proxy for the latent variable:

$$Y = \lambda L_1 + \varepsilon \qquad\qquad (9\text{–}2)$$

where L_1 is again the latent variable, legitimacy; Y is the proxy indicator; λ is the coefficient of L, or the effect that L has on Y; and ε is the measurement error associated with the indicator.[80] In this case, an effect indicator would measure something that is a result of a structure's having or lacking legitimacy, such as the size of the internal secret police (large size indicates low legitimacy) or rates of voluntary payment of taxes (high rates indicate high legitimacy).[81]

Table C-2 lists the causal criteria and suggests how basic questions might be formulated based on the type of conferee (it does not list structure, because structure encompasses roles, role-holders, policies, and distributions); for conceptual completeness, it additionally includes a generic proxy indicator. This framework and

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[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid; Bruce Gilley, "The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy."

these criteria were used as a guide to the sorts of questions to keep in mind as I read

reports and studies and interviewed experts and residents. Given the difficult research

environment in Medellín, not all of these questions could be answered. But the effort

yielded a more detailed analysis of the dynamics of legitimacy across different groups

than would have been possible using existing frameworks (see Chapter 9). That analysis

was meant both as an exposition of the dynamics of legitimacy in Medellín and an

illustration of the application of this framework to a real-world context.

Appendix D. Research Design and Hypotheses

The primary objectives of this study were to describe and to explain the patterns of violence in Medellín since 1984; secondary objectives were to identify the causal mechanisms driving those patterns and to determine what role, if any, legitimacy played. The research questions were: (1) *What have the overall patterns of violence been during the past 25 years?* (2) *What has caused those patterns to change?* And (3) *What role did legitimacy or illegitimacy play in those changes?* To answer these questions, multilevel, multidimensional measurement frameworks were developed for violence and legitimacy. Quantitative and qualitative data were drawn from published time series, published literature, and interviews with experts and residents. The case was studied over five time periods since 1984, using an embedded-case design to review evidence for both the city as a whole and for a sector within the city called Caicedo La Sierra.

The following sections describe the motivation behind this study and the method and data used to carry it out (§§ D.1-D.3). After defining the symbols to be used, this appendix discusses and analyzes the hypotheses that were tested, rejected, and ultimately synthesized regarding the relationship between legitimacy and violence (§§ D.4-D.7).

D.1. Motivation

Some of the most pressing and challenging security threats in countries at all levels of development have been given strange labels such as "irregular," "asymmetric," and "open-source," and are said to emerge from "failing" ("fragile," "lawless," "hollow,"

"paper") states, "ungoverned" areas, "feral" cities, and other "complex" security environments, which are often understood to include some otherwise well governed places such as the cities of North America and Europe.[1] While it is understood that some important threats do continue to come from strong states with organized militaries, it is increasingly recognized that some of the most difficult challenges emerge in places that, due to conflicts and weak or irresponsible governance, are hospitable to harmful activities by gangs, insurgents, terrorists, criminal enterprises, and traffickers in arms, humans, or drugs ("illicit activity" and "illicit actors" for short).[2] Yet the policies and strategies deployed against these challenges are oftentimes ineffective (or counterproductive),

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[1] "Irregular": United States Special Operations Command and United States Marines Corps, *Irregular Warfare (IW) Joint Operating Concept (JOC), Version 1.0* (Washington: United States Department of Defense, 2007), http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/iw-joc.pdf. "Asymmetric": Robert M. Cassidy, Major, U.S. Army, "Why Great Powers Fight Small Wars Badly," *Military Review* LXXX, no. 05 (2000): 41. "Open-source" warfare and "hollow" states: John Robb, *Brave New War: The Next Stage of Terrorism and the End of Globalization* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2007). "Failing" states: Stephen D. Krasner, "Sharing Sovereignty: New Institutions for Collapsed and Failing States," *International Security* 29, no. 2 (2004): 85; Robert I. Rotberg, "The New Nature of Nation-State Failure," *Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2002): 85; René Lefort, ed., *UNESCO Courier—When the State Fails: A Survival Guide* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2001). "Fragile" states: United States Agency for International Development (USAID), *Fragile States Strategy* (Washington: 2005), http://www.usaid.gov/policy/2005_fragile_states_strategy.pdf; United Kingdom Department for International Development, *Why We Need to Work More Effectively in Fragile States* (London: 2005). "Lawless" states: James Dao and Eric Schmitt, "A Nation Challenged: Strategy: U.S. Sees Battles in Lawless Areas After Afghan War," *The New York Times*, 8 January 2002. "Paper" states: Ken Menkhaus, "Beneath the Surface of Paper States," in *UNESCO Courier—When the State Fails: A Survival Guide* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2001). "Feral" cities: Richard J. Norton, "Feral Cities," *Naval War College Review* 56, no. 4 (2003): 97. "Complex" challenges: Consortium for Complex Operations, http://ccoportal.org (accessed 10 October 2008).

[2] A very small sampling of relevant works includes: Anne L. Clunan and Harold Trinkunas, eds., *Ungoverned Spaces? Territorial Statehood, Contested Authority and Softened Sovereignty* (forthcoming); David Kilcullen, "New Paradigms for 21st Century Conflict," eJournal USA: Countering the Terrorist Mentality, published electronically by U.S. Department of State, http://usinfo.state.gov/journals /itps/0507/ijpe/kilcullen.htm (accessed 18 October 2008); Angel Rabasa, et al., *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks* (Arlington, Va.: RAND Project Air Force, 2007), http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG561; John Robb, *Brave New War: The Next Stage of Terrorism and the End of Globalization*; Dale E. Lichtblau, et al., "Analyzing Adversaries as Complex Adaptive Systems," monograph, *IDA Papers* P-3868 (Alexandria, Va.: Institute for Defense Analysis, October 2006); John Rapley, "The New Middle Ages," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 3 (2006): 95; United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington: 2006); Richard J. Norton, "Feral Cities."

especially, as happens often, when undertaken in ways that undermine the internal

legitimacy of the people and institutions responsible for addressing them. There is a sense

among many in the development and defense communities that building legitimacy

should therefore be a central component of efforts to counter illicit activity.[3]

The difficulty with this emphasis on legitimacy-building is that few people can

say with confidence that they know how legitimation actually works in such

environments. Doctrines claiming that legitimation contributes to stabilization are

generally based on research and experiences that find a general correlation between the

two phenomena, but they are mostly silent about the causal mechanisms supposedly

linking legitimacy to stability. Most scholarly studies, meanwhile, assume that conflicts

take place only between a state and a competitor, focus on the legitimacy of only the

state, or operate at the level of general theory, providing scant guidance on how to

actually influence populations who live where no state governs, where the state governs

only very weakly, where state actors are despised, or where conflicts involve more

complex mixes of armed actors. Before deploying legitimacy-building policies to address

security issues at the local, national, or regional levels, policy-makers should have a

street-level understanding of how attitudes about legitimacy develop, how they change,

and how those changes affect efforts to stabilize areas that are plagued by violence and

contested or controlled by illicit armed actors.

This study focused on legitimacy at the street level, specifically on the micro- and

multi-level dynamics of legitimacy in Medellín, Colombia. Medellín was a nearly ideal

case for this study. For more than two decades, violence in and around the city has been a

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[3] Robert D. Lamb, *Ungoverned Areas and Threats From Safe Havens*.

devastating product of complex conflicts among street crews, gangs, militias, paramilitaries, insurgents, traffickers, mafias, and government forces; high levels of violence, intimidation, corruption, and a breakdown in the rule of law have facilitated dangerous illicit activities whose effects have been felt throughout the country and beyond. Global trends suggest that such environments are likely to become increasingly prevalent.[4] In Medellín, however, key indicators of violence and criminality declined dramatically between 2003 and 2007, when its homicide rate, for example, fell below that of some U.S. cities.[5] The barrios that experienced some of the most dramatic changes are small enough to permit a detailed look at the processes, attitudes, and events that drove them. It was an important case, therefore, for insight into the processes that produce violence or stability in complex urban environments, and to test propositions specifically about the role of legitimation, delegitimation, and illegitimation — especially now that the homicide rate has returned to 2003 levels and continues to rise. A fine-grained explanation of the patterns of violence in Medellín during the past 25 years could help policy makers facing complex urban violence — in Medellín and elsewhere — to understand and influence the processes through which that violence might be reduced.

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[4] One such trend is the growing diffusion of authority, identities, and loyalties away from the state, toward other types of institutions and other levels of governance, which greatly increases the complexity of the governance environment (see Appendix A). Another is urbanization: half of the world's population is now urban, and that proportion keeps growing. Samuel K. Moore and Alan Gardner, "Megacities By the Numbers," *IEEE Spectrum* 44, no. 6 (2007): 24; Stanley D. Brunn, Jack Francis Williams, and Donald J. Zeigler, eds., *Cities of the World: World Regional Urban Development,* 3rd ed. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003). These trends suggest that the most important security challenges might increasingly be complex urban conflicts, something U.S. policy makers, strategists, and defense analysts have said they do not yet have a handle on. For an excellent introduction and discussion of complex urban security environments, see Richard J. Norton, "Feral Cities."

[5] *Medellín en Cifras [Medellín by the Numbers]* (Medellín: Alcaldía de Medellín, 2007); Ralph Rozema, "Urban DDR-Processes: Paramilitaries and Criminal Networks in Medellín, Colombia."

This study was designed, therefore, to explain the changes in the patterns of violence there and to extract useful policy recommendations from the explanation.

D.2. Method: Single-Case Study with In-Case Variation

This dissertation is the report of a case study of the patterns of violence in Medellín, Colombia, between 1984 and the first six months of 2009, a period during which violence increased dramatically, fluctuated for some years, declined dramatically, and then rose again. The objectives of the study were, first, to *describe* the patterns of violence, something that, surprisingly, had not been done for the entire period for the full range of forms of violence; second, to *explain* the patterns of violence; and third to determine what particular role legitimacy or illegitimacy did or did not play in that explanation.

The case was defined as *changes in the patterns of violence in Medellín from 1984 to 2009.* The case was not *changes in homicide rates,* because violence takes multiple forms: While a drop in murder rates is an important policy goal, that drop can come about through undesirable mechanisms (e.g. consolidation of mafia control) and can be accompanied by a rise in other forms of violence (e.g. forced displacement, kidnapping, etc.). Normally, therefore, the policy goal is an improvement in the overall pattern of violence rather than in only one of its aspects.

An embedded-case design was chosen as the best method to capture the microdynamics and the multi-level dynamics of legitimacy and violence.[6] Because life

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[6] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* revised ed. (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1989).

takes place at multiple levels but is experienced most immediately at the micro level, the

case was studied at two levels of analysis: the city of Medellín as a whole, and a sector of

Medellín called Caicedo La Sierra. To capture within-case variation, both levels were

studied over five periods in recent history (yielding the equivalent of ten subcases),

divided according to whether homicides (as a proxy for violence) were declining or

rising: the period 1984 to 1992 experienced a dramatic increase in homicides at all three

levels of analysis; the period 1992 to 1998 witnessed fluctuations in the magnitude of

homicides but with an overall downward trend; this was followed by another spike in

violence between 1998 and 2003; the period 2003 to 2007 experienced a dramatic decline

in homicides at all three levels; and, finally, beginning in 2007 or 2008 homicides began

an ominous rise that continued into 2009. That design made it possible to compare the

three periods in which homicides were rising with each other and with the two periods in

which homicides were falling; and to compare the two declining periods with each other

and with the three rising periods. Other forms of violence turned out either to track the

patterns in homicides reasonably well or to go against them in ways that did not

invalidate the division of time.

The multilevel, multidimensional measurement frameworks introduced earlier

(see Appendices B and C) were used as a systematic way to analyze and organize the

quantitative and qualitative data that were collected. For each subcase, I tried to find

evidence about what forms of violence were present and how they were changing (i.e.

rising or falling in both absolute terms and relative to one another). Also for each

subcase, I tried to find evidence related to the legitimacy or the illegitimacy of

community actors, nonstate armed actors, and state actors. In addition to quantitative

data, qualitative data, and general impressions regarding changes in violence and legitimacy, I sought substantive information about the history of territorial control, the quality of governance, and the extraction of resources, especially illicit resources, in each subcase.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, data could not be found for all of the variables, or for all of the subcases, that both measurement frameworks called for. Using these frameworks, however, makes it possible for the researcher to be honest to his or her audience about exactly what the analysis was and was not based on, and helps to flag missing data to guide future data-collection efforts. While the missing data in this study did pose a serious obstacle to what could have been — in theory — a much more comprehensive analysis, this study nevertheless was the first even to attempt a comprehensive, multilevel, multidimensional analysis of the patterns of violence and the dynamics of legitimacy in a complex urban environment such as Medellín. As such, its findings provide a richer explanation of the causal mechanisms among territorial control, governance, legitimacy, and violence in Medellín than had previously been found (or sought), and therefore provides a sound foundation upon which future research on the dynamics of complex urban violence may be based — and more importantly, upon which sound policy might be designed.

Policy makers do not have the luxury of putting off difficult policy decisions about complex policy issues just because reliable data are not available for the methods that could be designed to study them. (See Appendix A for a discussion of the growing complexity of the policy-making environment.) If, in the real world, policy design for some issues must necessarily be impressionistic due to data and methodological

constraints, then social science should contribute to better policy design by ensuring that it is, at minimum, systematically impressionistic. For the present study of complex urban violence, I have endeavored to organize and analyze the relevant data and impressions as systematically as data and methodological constraints permitted.

D.3. Data Sources

Short of ethnography, the most important sources of data for a study about the dynamics of legitimacy and the experience of violence necessarily must come from interviews with human beings telling their life stories, feelings, beliefs, impressions, and opinions. In addition to 26 formal interviews that I did with residents of Caicedo La Sierra or experts on violence and legitimacy in Colombia, Medellín, and Caicedo La Sierra, plus countless informal conversations with people from a broad diversity of backgrounds, I was lucky to have found a number of autobiographies and interviews that provided rich primary-source materials:

- Patricia Nieto, ed., *Jamás Olvidaré Tu Nombre [I Will Never Forget Your Name]* (Medellín, Colombia: Alcaldía de Medellín, 2006). This edited volume contains autobiographical accounts of life in Caicedo La Sierra from the late 1980s to the mid-2000s, including personal and family histories of people displaced by violence in the countryside, written by the protagonists as part of a series of writing workshops led by the editor, a journalist.

- *La Sierra: Urban Warfare in the Barrios of Medellín, Colombia,* DVD, documentary film written and directed by Scott Dalton and Margarita Martinez (Medellín, Colombia: Human Rights Watch, 2005). This

documentary was filmed in Caicedo La Sierra and includes filmed interviews with a commander (Édison) and a fighter (Jesús) of the Metro Bloc paramilitary group. The interviews were taken during the group's victorious war against leftist militias and its subsequent defeat by rival paramilitaries of the Cacique Nutibara Bloc.

- Arleison Arcos Rivas, "Ciudadanía Armada: Aportes a la Interpretación de Procesos de Defensa y Aseguramiento Comunitario en Medellín: El Caso de las Milicias Populares" [Armed Citizenry: Contributions to the Interpretation of Community Protection and Defense Processes in Medellín: The Case of the People's Militias] (Master's thesis, Universidad de Antioquia, 2005). In the appendices to this political-studies master's thesis are transcripts of the author's interviews with the founder (Hugo) and a commander (alias 'Fernando') of the November 6-7 Militia (M-6&7: Milicias 6 y 7 de Noviembre), which controlled upper Caicedo La Sierra.

- Juan Diego Alzate Giraldo, "Algún Día Recuperaremos la Noche: La Construcción de la Amenaza y el Miedo en Barrio Caicedo–Las Estancias" [Someday We'll Get Back the Night: The Construction of Threat and Fear in Barrio Caicedo–Las Estancias] (Undergraduate thesis, Universidad de Antioquia, 2005). This anthropology undergraduate thesis includes extended quotes from the author's interviews with residents of barrio Las Estancias in lower Caicedo La Sierra.

- Alonso Salazar J., *No Nacimos Pa' Semilla: La Cultura de las Bandas Juveniles de Medellín [Born to Die: The Culture of Youth Gangs in Medellín]*,

5º ed. (Bogotá: Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular–CINEP, 1991). The author, at the time a student of communications but today the mayor of Medellín, compiled and edited these autobiographical accounts of life in Medellín's youth gangs in the late 1980s based on his extensive interviews with the subjects.

- Gilberto Medina Franco, *Una Historia de las Milicias de Medellín (Historia Sin Fin) [A History of the Militias of Medellín (A Never-Ending Story)]* (Medellín, Colombia: Instituto Popular de Capacitación–IPC, 2006), http://www.clacso.org.ar/biblioteca (accessed 10 April 2009). This autobiographical account of the history of Medellín's militias was written in fragments by a militant until 1994, when he demobilized, and was compiled and edited after his death by people who had known him.

Violence data came from both official government sources and from various non-governmental organizations and academic institutions. The main government sources were:

- the office of the Government Secretariat (Secretaría de Gobierno de Medellín), the administrative and record-keeping arm of the city of Medellín;
- the national public prosecutor's office (Fiscalía General de la Nación);
- the Department of National Statistics Administration (DANE: Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística), the Colombian census bureau, which publishes vital statistics (estadísticas vitales);
- the national police department (Policía Nacional), which has subunits in the country's departments and cities, and so is sometimes cited as Policía

Metropolitana del Valle de Aburrá (the Aburrá Valley Metropolitan Police);
and

- the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Sciences (Instituto Nacional
  de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses), Colombia's medical examiner,
  which operates the country's morgues (most commonly cited as Medicina
  Legal).

The Secretaría de Gobierno and the Fiscalía build their data sets from the same source:
public reports and prosecutions of crimes. DANE derives its data from multiple
governmental sources, including Medicina Legal and its own surveys. The Policía
Nacional's dataset is derived from crime reports; it does not make city-level data
available at the barrio level, but does release data by *comuna,* or ward (the four barrios
that make up Caicedo La Sierra are part of Comuna 8). Medicina Legal's data are based
on forensic analyses of corpses that enter the country's morgues; its data for Medellín are
disaggregated by date, time of day, and street address of incident, making it possible to
derive barrio-level data for almost the entire study period.

In addition to government sources, many NGOs collect data, although the quality
of their data, the transparency of their methods, and their willingness to share vary
widely:

- National Labor School (Escuela Nacional Sindical): Human Rights Data Bank
  (Banco de Datos de Derechos Humanos);

- Popular Education and Research Center (CINEP: Centro de Investigación y
  Educación Popular): Human Rights and Political Violence Data Bank (Banco
  de Datos de Derechos Humanos y Violencia Política);

- People's Training Institute (IPC: Instituto Popular de Capacitación): IPC

  Database (Base de Datos del Instituto Popular de Capacitación); and

- Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC: Centro de Recursos para el

  Análisis de Conflictos): Conflict Data Base (Base de Datos de Conflicto).

Barrio-level homicide data from Medicina Legal were derived by Maria Victoria

Llorente of the Center for Economic Development Studies (CEDE: Centro de Estudios

sobre Desarrollo Económico) of the Universidad de los Andes in 2006 and were used in

this study with her permission (I derived the barrio-level data for 2007 and 2008).

Finally, survey data were useful for tracking trends in, for example, opinions

about political actors and levels of fear over time. Most public opinions surveys in

Medellín do not collect data by barrio, or even by comuna, but by zone, even though the

surveys were conducted in the houses of the participants (and the survey-takers would

therefore have been able to collect that data).[7] The two most important sources were:

- Gallup Colombia Ltda., *Gallup Poll Bimestral: Poll 62* (Bogotá: Gallup

  Colombia, 2008); and

- *Encuesta de Percepción Ciudadana 2008 [Public Perception Survey 2008]*

  (Medellín, Colombia: Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2008),

  http://www.medellincomovamos.org.

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[7] Piedad Patricia Restrepo R., personal communication (Interview No. 2), 26 February 2009.

D.4. Symbols

The following abbreviations and symbols will be used throughout this appendix:

→ — causation (i.e. the left variable causes the right variable)

× — condition (i.e. the left variable enables the right variable)

↔ — positive feedback (i.e. the left and right variables are mutually interdependent, alternating between cause and effect)

↑ — an increase in the value of the variable that follows

↓ — a decrease in the value of the variable that follows

Δ — observed change in the variable it modifies

… — a continuation of the cycle from the beginning of the equation

$f(y,z)$ — read: "f as a function of, associated with, or with respect to, y and z"

x^y — read: "x of y" (example: L^v is "legitimacy of violence"), except for $t^r, c^r,$ and r^t

X — variable; other factors

L — legitimacy

$L(t^r, c^r, j, e, a, r^t)$ — legitimacy as a function of, respectively: transparency, credibility, justifiability, equity, accessibility, or respect

I — illegitimacy

$I(t^r, c^r, j, e, a, r^t)$ — illegitimacy as a function of transparency, credibility, etc.

P — policies or policy events initiated by state or nonstate actors, including illicit armed actors

G — quality of governance

$G(c^s)$ — quality of governance with respect to social control

V — overall patterns of violence in Medellín

V_s — self-inflicted violence

V_i — undifferentiated interpersonal violence

V_{if} — interpersonal-intrafamilial violence

V_{ic} — interpersonal-communal violence

V_c — undifferentiated collective violence

V_{cp} — collective-political violence

V_{ce} — collective-economic violence

V_{cs} — collective-social violence

D — conflict (D=dispute, which can be violent or nonviolent)

R — resources

T — territory

C^R — control of resources (e.g. primary commodity exports, illicit markets, extortion rackets, etc.) but not necessarily the territory containing them

C^T — control of territory, including the resources within it

C^S — social control or, more generally, social order

$D(C^R)$ — conflict (dispute) over control of resources

$D(C^T)$ — conflict over control of territory

$D(C^S)$ — conflict over social control

$v(D(C^R))$ — violence associated with a conflict over control of resources

$v(D(C^T))$ — violence associated with a conflict over control of territory (including the resources in it)

D.5. Model Hypotheses

No study will be considered credible by a reader if author and reader do not share a common understanding of the key terms used in the study's report. Here and throughout this report, terms are defined to be sure that there is no mistaking their meaning. A *theory* is a "causal law ('I have established that *A* causes *B*') or a causal hypothesis ('I surmise that *A* causes *B*') together with an explanation of the causal law or hypothesis that explicates how *A* causes *B*"; a *law* is an "observed regular relationship between two phenomena"; and a *hypothesis* is "conjectured relationship between two phenomena." An *explanation* is a statement about the *causal mechanisms* through which one phenomenon causes another, or a set of "causal laws or hypotheses that connect the cause to the phenomenon being caused, showing how causation occurs. (*A* causes *B* because *A* causes *q*, which causes *r*, which causes *B*)"[8] (see *intervening phenomenon,* below).

The purpose of this study was not only to describe (see Chapter 8) but also to *explain* the changes in the patterns of violence, ΔV, in Medellín and, in the process, to discover what role any changes in perceptions and expressions of legitimacy, L, played in those changes in violence. In this study, I focused primarily on increases and reductions in interpersonal-communal violence, V_{ic}, and in the three forms of collective violence, political, social, and economic, respectively, V_{cp}, V_{cs}, and V_{ce}, because insufficient data were available to make any meaningful observations about the other categories; the bias in the analysis is toward the physical manifestations of those categories, for the same reason, but as some good data do exist (along with substantial anecdotal evidence) for their psychological manifestations, it should be assumed that the use of terms such as

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[8] Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 9.

collective-economic violence or *interpersonal-communal violence,* in the absence of a

modifier, is meant to include both physical and psychological forms.

Efforts to describe or explain violence in Colombia had been almost exclusively

partisan affairs before the publication of *La Violencia en Colombia,* by Orlando Fals-

Borda, Álvaro Guzmán, and Luis Umaña in 1962, a non-partisan look at a broad range of

violent actors and acts of violence in the country.[9] What little was published in the two

decades that followed were generally either expositions of various violent actors or

partisan-flavored (e.g. pro-establishment or Marxist) explanations of the causes of the

country's civil war.[10] In the 1980s, amid the explosion of violence and new types of

violent actor countrywide, interest in the topic also exploded, and with it the quality and

variety of the scholarship (which is not to say that this was not also accompanied by an

explosion of crass polemics). Yet most works continued either to focus exclusively on

political violence or to attribute other categories of violence to political actors rather than

recognize that the mid-1980s were experiencing the beginnings of a convergence of

motives, types of violence, and types of violent actor: narcotraffickers hiring guerrillas to

guard coca crops, narcotraffickers using military-grade weapons and tactics normally

associated with insurgencies, politicians hiring gangs to assassinate political opponents,

paramilitaries massacring or displacing peasants suspected of guerrilla influence then

taking their land for economic gain, narcotraffickers forming self-defense groups and

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[9] Orlando Fals-Borda, Álvaro Guzmán, and Luis Umaña, *La Violencia en Colombia [Violence in Colombia]* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1962).

[10] Jaime Arturo Gómez Correa, et al., "Estado del Conocimiento Sobre la Violencia Urbana en Antioquia en la Década de los Noventa," ["The State of Knowledge about Urban Violence in Antioquia in the 1990s,"] in *Balance de los Estudios Sobre Violencia en Antioquia*, ed. Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas (Medellín, Colombia: Municipio de Medellín y Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 2001); Carlos M. Ortiz S., "Los Estudios Sobre la Violencia en las Tres Últimas Décadas"; Luis Fernando Medina, "A Critique of 'Resource-Based' Theories of Colombia's Civil War," *Análisis Político* No. 61 (2008): 44.

allying themselves with paramilitaries, and so on. The widespread assumption in the literature that the country's violence was primarily attributable to politics in the context of civil war — and derived either from mere "banditry" or from the underlying social conditions driving the conflict — was an error that is understandable given the country's history, but it was clearly incomplete.

This state of affairs began to change in 1986 when then-President Virgilio Barco Vargas appointed a national commission of respected academics — who came to be known as the first of Colombia's "violentologists" — to study the causes of the country's violence. The commission's report was released in August 1987 and its main impact was to recognize that Colombia suffered not from "violence" but from "violences" of many different types, involving many different actors, and with many different and complex causes, including, among others, what it termed a "culture of violence" that lowered the normative barriers to its use in Colombian society.[11]

Since then, studies of violence in Colombia — the only country where "violentology" has emerged as a distinct field of scholarship — have proliferated, offering no small number of causal explanations. One critical review of the literature on violence in the area found 43 articles, 39 books, 21 book chapters, 71 undergraduate theses, 11 masters' theses, and one doctoral thesis on the causes and consequences of violence in Antioquia alone — and those are just the ones published in Colombia, in Spanish, between 1953 and 1999; 76 of those works focused specifically on violence

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[11] Comisión de Estudios sobre la Violencia, *Colombia: Violencia y Democracia: Informe Presentado al Ministerio de Gobierno [Colombia: Violence and Democracy: Report Presented to the Ministry of Government]* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1987).

Medellín.[12] In most of these, legitimacy played either no role in the explanation or only

an implicit role; in fact, very few works have looked explicitly and systematically at the

role of legitimacy in Medellín's violence. The few that have done so were considering

primarily the legitimacy of the state (ignoring the dynamics of legitimacy in micro-

territories and statelets where the state was absent) and in some of those it is clear that by

"legitimacy" the authors actually meant "democracy."[13] The only recent work looking

specifically at the dynamics of legitimacy in Medellín focused only on one conflict in one

sector of the city, and it underspecified what was meant by *legitimacy:* did not define it,

did not specify the legitimacy *of what,* nor legitimacy *according to whom,* nor legitimacy

by what criteria (see Appendix C).[14] This, in fact, is a pathology of most studies in which

legitimacy plays a key role, and one I hoped to avoid in the present study. Moreover,

almost all existing efforts to explain violence have looked only at what has caused

increases in violence. It would be more illuminating to study what drives both the

increases and the reductions in violence, across different categories of violence, in

Medellín, and this is what I attempted here as well.

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[12] Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas, *Balance de los Estudios Sobre Violencia en Antioquia.*

[13] Alfonso Monsalve Solórzano, *Legitimidad y Soberanía en Colombia 1958-2003 [Legitimacy and Sovereignty in Colombia 1958-2003]*, 1a ed., Serie Estudios Políticos (Medellín, Colombia: Editorial Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, 2004); Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002,* trans. Richard Stoller, Latin America in Translation/en Traducción/Em Tradução (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Malcolm Deas, "Interpretation of the Recent Colombian Violence," in *The Legitimization of Violence*, ed. David Ernest Apter (Washington Square, N.Y: New York University Press, 1997); Eduardo Posada Carbó, *'Ilegitimidad' del Estado en Colombia: Sobre los Abusos de un Concepto ['Illegitimacy' of the State in Colombia: On the Abuses of a Concept]*, 1a ed., Libros de Cambio (Bogotá: Alfaomega Colombiana: Ideas para la Paz, 2003).

[14] Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas, et al., "Orden, Seguridad y Legitimidad," ["Order, Security, and Legitimacy,"] in *Dinámicas de Guerra y Construcción de Paz: Estudio Interdisciplinario del Conflicto Armado en la Comuna 13 de Medellín*, ed. Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas, Héctor Gallo, and Blanca Inés Jiménez Zuluaga (Medellín, Colombia: Universidad de Antioquia–INER, Universidad de Medellín, Corporación Región, y Instituto Popular de Capacitación–IPC, 2008), 107.

To identify the possible role that legitimacy might have played in the changes observed in the patterns of violence in Medellín, I identified six logical categories of hypotheses derived from the five types of "conjectured relationships" that can exist between any two given phenomena. In this case, the relationship in question was between L (legitimacy) and V (violence) and the question was, what kind of phenomenon was L? The possibilities are as follows:

- A *causal phenomenon,* or a *cause,* is the "phenomenon doing the causing"; in general theory, it is the *independent variable.* Hypothesis: changes in legitimacy caused changes in the patterns of violence ($\Delta L \rightarrow \Delta V$).

- A *caused phenomenon,* or an *effect,* is the outcome or output of a system or process: the "phenomenon being caused"; in general theory, it is the *dependent variable.* Hypothesis: changes in the patterns of violence caused changes in legitimacy ($\Delta V \rightarrow \Delta L$).

- An *intervening phenomenon* is the *causal mechanism* through which a *cause* causes an *effect:* it is "caused by the causal phenomenon and cause[s] the [caused] phenomenon"; in general theory, it is an *intervening variable.* To *explain* a hypothesis, one need only to identify its intervening variables: that discovery constitutes the explanation. Hypothesis: legitimacy was the means through which a policy, policy event, or other factor caused changes in the patterns of violence ($P \rightarrow \Delta L \rightarrow \Delta V$ or $X \rightarrow \Delta L \rightarrow \Delta V$).

- An *antecedent phenomenon* or *antecedent condition* is a phenomenon "whose presence activates or magnifies the causal action of the causal and/or [intervening] phenomena"; in general theory, it is a *condition variable,* an

interaction term, an *assumption,* or, if its emergence is fairly sudden, a *trigger.* Hypothesis: Legitimacy magnified or enabled a policy, policy event, or other factor to cause the changes in the patterns of violence ($\Delta L \times P \rightarrow \Delta V$ or $\Delta L \times X \rightarrow \Delta V$).[15]

- A *feedback phenomenon* is essentially an intervening phenomenon whose causal and caused phenomena are one and the same; put another way, it is a causal phenomenon in one moment and a caused phenomenon in the next. Such *feedback loops* or *feedback processes* are manifestations of the *bidirectional causality* or *mutual interdependence* common in *nonlinear* or *dynamic systems* (sometimes called *dynamical systems),* in which "the value of all the variables at a given time depend on the values of these variables at the immediately preceding time, [which in turn] determine the state of the system at the succeeding point in time,"[16] often leading to unexpected or seemingly inexplicable behavior of the system. *Positive feedback* or *positive loops* magnify the causal action of the variables involved and so "accelerate basic processes and bring some of them to ceilings at which they rest"; *negative feedback loops,* by contrast, "provide counteracting forces, which sometimes lead to a stable equilibrium, sometimes to oscillation [between or among multiple equilibria], and sometimes to chaos"[17] (a highly complex but

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[15] The terms and quotes of the first four bullets are from Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 7.

[16] Robin R. Vallacher and Andrzej Nowak, "The Emergence of Dynamical Social Psychology," *Psychological Inquiry* 8, no. 2 (1997): 73.

[17] Robert A. Hanneman, Randall Collins, and Gabriele Mordt, "Discovering Theory Dynamics By Computer Simulation: Experiments on State Legitimacy and Imperialist Capitalism," *Sociological Methodology* 25 (1995): 1.

non-random pattern). Hypothesis: Legitimacy and violence were in a feedback

relationship, so changes in one caused changes in the other, which in turn

caused changes in the first, and so on ($\Delta L \leftrightarrow \Delta V$), most likely with some policy,

policy event, or other factor involved as well ($P \leftrightarrow \Delta L \leftrightarrow \Delta V \leftrightarrow P$ or

$X \leftrightarrow \Delta L \leftrightarrow \Delta V \leftrightarrow X$).

The six sets of model hypotheses, therefore, are:

(1) not legitimacy, (2) legitimacy as a causal

phenomenon, (3) legitimacy as a caused

phenomenon (effect), (4) legitimacy as an

intervening phenomenon, (5) legitimacy as an

antecedent phenomenon, and (6) legitimacy as

feedback (see Table D-1). The correct explanation

turned out to involve illegitimacy more than

legitimacy, and illegitimacy operated as an

Table D-1. Six Model Hypotheses

Legitimacy's Relationship to Violence	Model Hypothesis	No.
none	$X \rightarrow \Delta V$	1
cause	$\Delta L \rightarrow \Delta V$	2
effect	$\Delta V \rightarrow \Delta L$	3
intervening phenomenon	$X \rightarrow \Delta L \rightarrow \Delta V$ $P \rightarrow \Delta L \rightarrow \Delta V$	4
antecedent phenomenon	$\Delta L \times X \rightarrow \Delta V$ $\Delta L \times P \rightarrow \Delta V$	5
feedback phenomenon	$X \leftrightarrow \Delta L \leftrightarrow \Delta V \leftrightarrow X$ $P \leftrightarrow \Delta L \leftrightarrow \Delta V \leftrightarrow P$	6

intervening phenomenon in a larger positive-feedback cycle. Nevertheless, it is useful to

review the logical hypotheses, to make explicit the possibilities that had been considered

and rejected, the better to state the study's conclusions with clarity and confidence.

Model Hypothesis 1: Not Legitimacy

The most prominent school of thought in this category is what one critic calls the

"supply-side" theory of civil war, so designated because of the emphasis it places on the

supply of resources as the primary driver of civil war; Luis Fernando Medina has

systematically (and in my view successfully) refuted the validity of the findings and

recommendations of most supply-side explanations of Colombia's violence by criticizing their results and policy recommendations as essentially *non sequiturs* to the evidence they produce.[18] But it pays to consider the possibility that some better-designed studies might find a reasonable explanation that excludes all legitimacy dynamics.

The touchstone of this school of thought is a 2000 paper by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," which found that civil wars are explained better by "greed" than by "grievance."[19] Their explanation of conflict, however, does involve an indicator of the presence of illegitimacy: grievance, in the role of intervening variable; therefore their model is discussed with the fourth set of hypotheses. Other works in this school that seem on their face not to find a role for legitimacy also turn out, upon closer examination, to include indicators of legitimacy in their explanations and are discussed under the appropriate headings.[20]

One can imagine an argument that attributes increases in certain categories of violence, particularly economic violence, to conflicts over resources or territory, conflicts caused by the mere availability (or perhaps triggered by the discovery) of those resources, without the intervention of any indicators for legitimacy or illegitimacy:

$$R \rightarrow \uparrow v_{ce}(D(C^R)), \text{ or} \qquad\qquad (\text{H-1.1})$$

$$R \rightarrow \uparrow v_{ce}(D(C^T)), \qquad\qquad (\text{H-1.2})$$

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[18] Luis Fernando Medina, "A Critique of 'Resource-Based' Theories of Colombia's Civil War."

[19] Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," working paper, *Policy Research Working Paper* 2355 (Washington: World Bank Group, May 2000), http://econ.worldbank.org/external /default/main?pagePK=64165259&theSitePK=469372&piPK=64165421&menuPK=64166093&entityID= 000094946_00060205420011.

[20] e.g. Mauricio Rubio, "Illegal Armed Groups and Local Politics in Colombia," *Journal of Drug Issues* 35, no. 1 (2005): 107.

which is read to say that the availability of (usually illicit) resources (such as drug markets, extortion rackets, or smuggling routes), R, has caused an increase in collective-economic violence, $\uparrow V_{CE}(\ )$, associated with disputes over control of either just those resources, $D(C^R)$, or the territory in which those resources are available (or are "lootable," in some studies), $D(C^T)$. While this amounts to making the trivial observation that resources are *necessary* for violent conflicts over resources, it is silent on whether resources or the discovery of resources are *sufficient* to generate such conflicts: to disprove it, one needs only to identify a place in Medellín where such resources were present but violent conflicts over them were not. And, indeed, there have been many such places in Medellín in the past 25 years; an example would be the upper-class neighborhood of El Poblado, which had many wealthy businesses, many of which were extorted by nonstate armed actors and so they counted as a resource; but El Poblado did not suffer nearly the levels of violence as the city's peripheral barrios. An additional explanation, therefore, is needed for why violent conflicts have broken out in some barrios but not in others. The presence or discovery of illicit resources may well turn out to play an important role, but it is not decisive.

Some authors suggest that violence derives from a desire for security (i.e. in-group defense against attacks by out-groups) or from the absence of effective social or political mechanisms to keep normal conflicts from becoming violent. The types of violence associated with this set of explanations tend to be either interpersonal-communal or collective-social, and their cause tends to be attributed to either a breakdown in social order, a breakdown in the rule of law, or, as noted earlier, a culture of violence. This set of explanations can be illuminated somewhat by the basic statistics for homicides in

Medellín between 1990 and 2002. During that period, 39.6 percent of all murders took place in barrios classified as "low" and "low-low" on the city's socioeconomic scale, and 46.2 percent took place in "middle" and "middle-low" barrios, indicating a low quality of life. In 89.7 percent of cases only one person was killed during the homicide event, and in 93.0 percent of those cases nobody else was even injured, suggesting that this was not organized violence — homicides were neither civilian casualties ("collateral damage") nor military casualties in urban warfare, nor indiscriminate violence due to terrorism — but rather a more diffuse phenomenon, small-scale attacks, primarily one-on-one, not centrally directed. In only 15.4 percent of cases could a motive for the murder could be identified, but the most common motives that could be identified were revenge (7.0 percent of all cases) and armed robbery (4.5 percent); the motives underlying the rest of the cases (84.6 percent in total) are unknown, which makes it difficult to identify the most important causes of homicides more generally.[21] Still, these descriptive statistics are strongly suggestive — but no by means conclusive — of a dynamic in which no political, social, or religious authority has been capable of preventing violence, punishing violence, or instilling norms of self-control.

Many authors, in fact, have observed that the majority of homicides in Colombia and Medellín in particular have had nothing directly to do with the country's civil war or with the battles over micro-territories that have been the city's most visible forms of violence: most have simply been examples of interpersonal-communal violence, related to common crime and private grudges. Saúl Franco Agudelo found higher rates of violent

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[21] Marleny Cardona, et al., "Homicidios en Medellín, Colombia, Entre 1990 y 2002: Actores, Móviles y Circunstancias."

deaths in Colombia in regions with higher indicators of impunity.[22] Francisco E. Thoumi attributed the rise of narcotrafficking (and its associated violence) to a culture and social order that instills no significant self-generated behavioral controls, or as he put it: in Colombia, "the rules of law are weak, social capital is poor, and solidarity and trust are lacking".[23] The most general form of this explanation would be as follows:

$$\downarrow c^S \rightarrow \uparrow v, \qquad\qquad (\text{H-1.3})$$

which could be interpreted as indicating either that low levels of social control (or a low quality of social order) has led to high levels of violence, or that a decline in social order has caused an increase in violence, usually interpersonal-communal or collective-economic violence. No social order can fully contain violence, of course, but this explanation is saying more than that. It is recognizing that violence results from a breakdown either in the social processes through which "conduct is defined as desirable or undesirable, approved or deviant, permitted or prohibited,"[24] whether that be through some system of *active* social control, through which norms are constructed and socialized by the institutions of society (family, school, church, media, recreation, etc.) or through some system of *reactive* social control, through which violations of those norms are punished, either formally by criminal justice institutions or informally by social

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[22] Saúl Franco Agudelo, *El Quinto, No Matar: Contextos Explicativos de la Violencia en Colombia [The Fifth, Thou Shalt Not Kill: Explanatory Contexts of Violence in Colombia]*, 1a ed. (Bogotá: IEPRI Universidad Nacional & Tercer Mundo Editores, 1999), cited in Jaime Arturo Gómez Correa, et al., "Estado del Conocimiento Sobre la Violencia Urbana en Antioquia en la Década de los Noventa," 175.

[23] Francisco E. Thoumi, "Introduction," *Journal of Drug Issues* 35, no. 1 (2005): 1; see also Francisco E. Thoumi, "The Colombian Competitive Advantage in Illegal Drugs: The Role of Policies and Institutional Changes," *Journal of Drug Issues* 35, no. 1 (2005): 7.

[24] "Mediante el control social se definen las conductas deseables e indeseables, conformes o desviadas, lícitas o prohibidas …" Hernando León Londoño Berrío, Ricardo León Molina López, and Juan David Posada, "Política Criminal y Violencia Juvenil," ["Crime Policy and Juvenile Violence,"] in *Balance de los Estudios Sobre Violencia en Antioquia*, ed. Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas (Medellín, Colombia: Municipio de Medellín y Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 2001), 31.

institutions and social pressures (shaming, mocking, etc.).[25] (See § 10.1 for a broader discussion of social control.) Yet this explanation risks being true by definition, as violence is almost always considered the best indicator of a breakdown in social order. To avoid its being trivial, one would need to say more than this.

A special form of Model H-1.3 says more, and it is perhaps the single most common explanation for the violence Medellín has experienced over the past 25 years: the absence of the state:

$$\downarrow G(c^T, c^S) \rightarrow \uparrow V, \qquad\qquad\qquad (\text{H-1.4})$$

which is to say that a low quality of governance with respect to territorial and social control (or that a decline in government control, interpreted here as control by state actors) has been the main cause of Medellín's high levels of (or increases in) violence. This suffers from a logical lapse, however: the *absence* of the state cannot be a *cause* of violence. It would be more accurate to say that in some places the state has not prevented violence or maintained order *and nobody else has either*. At best, the absence of the state has been a background condition that might have activated some other set of factors, X, to cause the violence:

$$\downarrow G(c^T, c^S) \times X \rightarrow \uparrow V. \qquad\qquad\qquad (\text{H-1.5})$$

What could X be? One possibility is that the state's absence has simply enabled existing, nonviolent disputes over social and territorial control to become violent: $X = D(c^T) + D(c^S)$, but to disprove that it is sufficient to show that, during some periods or in some places where the state has had no presence, normal, nonviolent disputes have not habitually turned violent. And there have, in fact, been such places in Medellín, particularly at the

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[25] Ibid.

very beginning of the study period when some "stateless" barrios (e.g. upper Caicedo La Sierra) had not yet been taken over by gangs and social order was maintained by the communities' own structures of social control, such as the family, the church, nosey neighbors, and so on.

If one recognizes that states are not the only kind of entity capable of maintaining order, then one may reinterpret $\downarrow G(C^T, C^S)$ to represent, not necessarily the state's absence, but also the absence or insufficiency of other structures of social control, or perhaps a decline in the quality of governance with respect to social and territorial control. In other words: a breakdown in *social order* or the *rule of law*. With this, a much more credible explanation for violence begins to emerge:

$$\downarrow G(C^T,C^S) \times [D(C^T)+D(C^S)] \rightarrow \uparrow v(D(C^T),D(C^S)), \qquad (H\text{-}1.6)$$

which is read to mean that a breakdown in social order or the rule of law in some places has removed the restraints that had kept preexisting disputes over territory or social structures nonviolent, and the removal of those restraints has made it possible for those disputes to become violent. This is plausible, but it raises the question of what has caused the breakdown in the rule of law; it's like saying the valley flooded because the levee broke: well, what caused the levee to break? If we want to keep legitimacy and illegitimacy out of the explanation, it would make sense to reach back to the beginning of this discussion: perhaps the presence or discovery of illicit resources is to blame:

$$R \times [D(C^T)+D(C^S)] \rightarrow \downarrow G(C^T, C^S) \times [D(C^T)+D(C^S)] \rightarrow \uparrow v(D(C^T),D(C^S)), \qquad (H\text{-}1.7)$$

which looks more complicated than it really is: the presence or discovery of illicit resources, R, has exacerbated, ×, preexisting disputes over territorial and social control, $[D(C^T)+D(C^S)]$, beyond the ability of local governance structures to manage them, leading

to a breakdown in either social order or the rule of law, $\downarrow G(c^T, c^S)$, that has accelerated, $\times$, the loss of the remaining restraints on those conflicts, $[D(c^T)+D(c^S)]$, and without those restraints those conflicts have become violent, $\uparrow v(D(c^T)+D(c^S))$). This, in fact, is a plausible explanation. But it might be shown to be incomplete if evidence were found to indicate that the breakdown in the rule of law has come about through the action of something other than the presence or discovery of illicit resources or the presence of preexisting conflicts. Model H-1.7 was the first hypothesis to be tested.

One thing that all of the hypotheses discussed so far have in common is that they represent efforts to explain *increases in* or the *onset of* violence. But what explains the *declines* in violence that have taken place in Medellín as well, such as those experienced during the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s? It cannot be simply that the causes disappeared: illicit resources have continued to be exploited even after the violence associated with their exploitation them has declined. It might make sense to say that violence driven by conflict has declined when the conflict has been resolved, and while this has been true in cases of negotiated settlements, it is also simple enough to identify cases in which the underlying conflict was not so much resolved as won: one side has defeated the other in the conflict over resources (or the territory containing those resources) and so the violence declined because the war was now over. This is consistent with Stathis Kalyvas's theory that violence in civil war is largely a function of territorial control, with areas of partially contested control tending to be the most violent, areas of full territorial control tending to be the least violent, and areas of equally contested control falling somewhere in between.[26] That theory, however, was not intended to apply

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[26] Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

to non-civil-war environments, such as the complex urban violence that is the subject of the current study. However, it is worth considering its merits in this case. This argument would be a variant of Model H-1.6 — when normal disputes over territorial control can no longer be governed, they turn violent — but with the vertical arrows reversed and a lower emphasis on governance. The simplified general form would be

$$\uparrow\!C^{T}\!\rightarrow\downarrow\!v(D(C^{T})),\qquad\qquad\text{(H-1.8)}$$

which is to say that an increase (beyond some unspecified level) in territorial control by one actor (i.e. that actor's victory) has led to a decline in violence associated with the dispute over territorial control. Asking what enables the increase in territorial control is equivalent to asking what causes victory in war: a mercantilist might suggest that superior resources caused the increase in control, but one can imagine other scenarios as well — superior strategy, superior morale, luck, etc. — and some of those will be considered in later hypotheses.

One popular explanation has it that the most important declines in violence have come when state actors have entered pacts of convenience with the major nonstate armed actors: the nonstate actors would keep violence below a certain threshold so the state actors could take credit for good governance and good policy, and in exchange the state actors would forgive the nonstate actors' past crimes and ignore their future crimes. There are two basic variants, the conspiratorial and the analytical, but they differ mainly with respect to what the speaker believes counts as evidence.[27] Structurally they are identical:

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[27] Luis Fernando Quijano Moreno, personal communication (Interview No. 5), 16 March 2009; Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Ana María Jaramillo, "Crime, (Counter-)Insurgency and the Privatization of Security: The Case of Medellín, Colombia," *Environment and Urbanization* 16, no. 2 (2004): 17.

$$\uparrow V \rightarrow [\uparrow \$C^{T} + \uparrow \$G] \rightarrow P(\downarrow D(C^{T}), \uparrow G(C^{S}, C^{T})) \rightarrow \downarrow V, \qquad \text{(H-1.9)}$$

which explains that high levels of violence have raised the costs of territorial control and governance for all actors, $[\uparrow \$C^{T} + \uparrow \$G]$, creating an incentive for a policy (the pact), $P(\ )$, in which the state actor agrees not to challenge the nonstate actor's control over territory (and, implicitly, the illicit resources in it), $\downarrow D(C^{T})$, in exchange for the nonstate actor's enforcing social order within that territory, $\uparrow G(C^{S}, C^{T})$, resulting in a (short-term) decline in violence, $\downarrow V$. (Clearly there are other effects of the pact — for example, the costs of control and governance would decline as well — but in this model those are by-products of the main dynamic leading to the decline in violence, and so are not represented.)

As for all good conspiracy theories, the absence of evidence of any pacts, and indeed, any evidence of their absence, is often taken as *proof* of their existence: people assume that there were pacts to decrease violence, and then trot out as evidence of those pacts the fact that the violence fell. Rather than beg the question, however, I took it seriously: Have there been explicit pacts? Or even, have there been *implicit* pacts — that is, without communicating directly, did the state and nonstate actors recognize their mutual interest in ending the contest for territorial control? Evidence for the existence of such pacts would tend to support this explanation, an easy matter in the case of the various peace negotiations of the mid-1990s, but somewhat more difficult in the more conspiratorial account of the paramilitary demobilizations of the mid-2000s. To reject this explanation, however, it is sufficient to demonstrate that the state actors continued to contest the nonstate actors' control, or that the nonstate actors were unwilling or unable to reduce violence directly. And here the evidence is mixed, as will be discussed at length in Chapters 4 and 6. Model H-1.9 was the second hypothesis to be tested.

One final explanation not involving legitimacy is worth pursuing. Sometimes referred to as the "self-cleaning oven" theory of violence,[28] it argues that when the perpetrators and victims of homicides in an area are all members of, say, warring gangs and their deaths take place in the context of their gang war, then sooner or later the killing will stop simply as a matter of attrition: the killers will keep killing each other off until there are no killers left — problem solved. (Technically, there would have be at least one killer left, unless his victory celebration involved suicide.) The problem with this theory (which could be modeled as $V \rightarrow \downarrow V$) is that it never happens that way: aside from the fact that innocent people are nearly always killed in addition to the gangsters (and therefore any policy, based on this theory, of ignoring the situation would likely be considered unjustifiable and unfair), it also is often the case that the gang-war violence generates more violence as surviving family members or friends of victims often join the war to get revenge, leading to a spiral of increasing violence.

Model Hypothesis 2: Legitimacy as Causal Phenomenon

This set of hypotheses suggests that some change in legitimacy — in the legitimacy of something, according to somebody, by some set of criteria — was the primary driver of the changes in patterns of violence, and that other considerations either were irrelevant, were dominated by legitimacy, or were themselves triggers of legitimacy:

$$\Delta L \rightarrow \Delta V, \text{ or} \qquad \text{(H-2.1)}$$

$$X \times L \rightarrow \Delta V, \qquad \text{(H-2.2)}$$

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[28] Popularized by an off-hand comment made by a police-officer character in *Clockers,* DVD, film directed by Spike Lee (1995).

which is to say that changes in legitimacy caused changes in violence without other intervening phenomena (Model H-2.1), or existing attitudes about legitimacy caused the change in violence but they were not activated until the appearance of some other factor (Model H-2.2).

However, there really is only one realistic argument to be made for how legitimacy might be such a direct cause of changes in violence, and it comes down to the question of *the legitimacy of what:* in this case, the answer is *the legitimacy of violence itself,* or to be more precise, the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the use of different forms of violence against different types of people under different circumstances. In a useful discussion of the legitimation of violence, Robin M. Williams Jr. noted that most of the violence that takes place in the world is considered by its perpetrators and their supporters not as "deviant behavior, not disapproved conduct, but virtuous action in the service of applauded values"; four general strategies, he argued, are employed to legitimize the use of violence:

- *recategorization,* by redefining violence or certain violent acts as "not violence";

- *rationalization,* by referring to "extenuating circumstances" (e.g. insanity) or "acceptable reasons";

- *validation*, by claiming violence is instrumental to protecting social values or achieving socially valued goals; or

  - *obligation,* by valuing violence as "a means to destroy evil" or a means to demonstrate virtue or social values.[29]

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[29] Robin M. Williams, Jr., "Legitimate and Illegitimate Uses of Violence: A Review of Ideas and Evidence," in *Violence and the Politics of Research*, ed. Willard Gaylin, Ruth Macklin, and Tabitha M. Powledge, The Hastings Center Series in Ethics (New York: Plenum Press, 1981), 23. Williams's terms are, respectively, *neutralization, justifiable, rightful,* and *"obligatory or dutiful";* I have changed the terms

There is a risk that this kind of explanation might be trivial: that violence results when people decide it's okay to use violence. That raises the question of what made people decide all of a sudden that it's okay to use violence (in which case legitimacy would not be the causal phenomenon but an intervening phenomenon, and that is discussed as the fourth set of hypotheses). Still, attitudes about virtue, social values, social goals, and "evil" — and whatever situations activate them — are among the strongest candidates for an explanation involving a direct causal link between legitimacy and violence.

A non-trivial form of this explanation, therefore, can be derived from Model H-2.2: certain attitudes about the legitimacy of violence are already present but are essentially dormant until something triggers their manifestation. For example, in a community with very conservative, traditional values, people might consider it legitimate to threaten, attack, or even kill people who violate or represent a threat to those values — usually drug dealers, prostitutes, homosexuals, vagrants, minorities, and other members of low-status groups. But if such people are not present in the community in any numbers that seem threatening, then the community might ignore them, or maybe perpetrate relatively low levels of violence against them. If, however, more of these low-status individuals start arriving, they might surpass the high-status groups' threshold of tolerance, triggering a backlash against them in the form of attacks or threats. This is extremely common throughout the world. The violence might be rationalized by a lone vigilante who recognizes, perhaps, that threatening and killing people is wrong but excuses it in this instance as the only solution to the perceived threat; or the violence

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for clarity and to ensure that his use of *justifiable* as a strategy of legitimizing violence is not mistaken for my use of *justifiable* as a criterion for legitimacy more generally, and that his use of *neutralization* is not mistaken for my use of the same term to refer to the process in which something becomes neither legitimate nor illegitimate.

might actually be validated by the community, as some members form "self-defense" or

"civil-defense" groups — often little better than death squads — as a noble means to

protecting the community against the deviants and criminals who, they believe, simply

deserve to die or disappear. In fact, there is substantial anecdotal evidence to suggest that

these things have actually happened in Medellín (e.g. the formation of barrio self-defense

groups) and in Colombia more generally (e.g. the corruption of paramilitaries by its

association with narcotrafficking):

$$X \times L^V \rightarrow \Delta V, \tag{H-2.3}$$

which says that some event, X, has activated attitudes about the legitimacy of violence,

L^V, to trigger some change in the levels or types of violence, ΔV, in Medellín. Model H-

2.3 was the third hypothesis to be tested.

Model Hypothesis 3: Legitimacy as Caused Phenomenon

The discussions of criteria and causal indicators for legitimacy provide some

background to this set of hypotheses (see Appendix C). The legitimacy framework

described there gives six general descriptors of phenomena that tend to contribute to

beliefs and behaviors that are strongly suggestive of the presence of legitimacy: the two

descriptors of predictability (transparent and credible) plus justifiable, equitable,

accessible, and respectful. How they contribute to legitimacy and the question of whether

they count as actual criteria for legitimacy or merely as enablers are addressed in those

discussions. Here, I take it as given that whatever factors contribute to the emergence of

legitimacy or illegitimacy do so through the action of one or more of these six criteria.

For example, people might be loyal to a particular politician because he talks about his

religious beliefs in the same way they do or because his life story and his rhetoric are inspirational, regardless of whether his actual policies benefit them in other ways: he is worthy of their support (i.e. their support is justifiable) because he embodies or promotes something they value. Or, people in a dangerous neighborhood who might otherwise have been inclined to share information with the police suddenly stop doing so after hearing an officer utter an ethnic slur: he showed them disrespect, and even though the police patrols had been keeping the peace, the community now demands that they stop — or goes farther and actually attacks police when they enter — even if the result is more violence and a lower quality of life. The findings of a scientific paper are likely to be considered unworthy of support — it should not be believed — if its methods and data are not adequately described, because without that transparency nobody has a basis on which to judge the findings. A government is likely to lose political support if it proves itself to be incapable of achieving its stated policy objectives, because people want to be able to trust that what a government says will happen, will happen: the loss of credibility leads to a loss of support at least in part because of the loss of predictability.

If violence somehow causes a change in legitimacy, therefore, it must do so through the action of one or more of these six criteria. The most logical candidates are *credible* and *justifiable:*

- An increase in violence makes life unpredictable: if you cannot get to work, go shopping, etc. without the risk or fear of getting mugged, raped, or killed, then you cannot reliably plan out your day or carry out long-term projects. As a consequence of the violence, the people whose role is to keep the peace will lose their credibility and any policies that had been implemented with the

intention of controlling violence will likewise lose their credibility. A loss of credibility tends to contribute to a loss of legitimacy. The reverse is true as well: success in controlling violence will tend to contribute to the credibility of the role or policy that achieved it, and the role or policy will tend to be considered more worthy of support as a result.

- Justifiability is a matter of connecting something about the conferee to something that the referee considers right, good, admirable, valuable, etc. As suggested in the discussion of the legitimation of violence in the last section, validation and obligation are two strategies that people sometimes employ to make violence not merely acceptable but valuable, admirable, even noble. Once violence — of a certain type, under certain circumstances, against certain categories of people — is considered valuable or noble within a certain community, then the people or groups within that community who engage in violence of that type, under those circumstances, against those people will tend to be considered worthy of support in that endeavor. This is a very common dynamic in gangs, for example, in which violence against rival gangs is considered noble and obligatory, and in those gangs the most warlike gangsters will tend to be considered the most admirable and the most worthy of, say, leadership. Similarly, people for whom nonviolence is a supreme virtue will tend to find any policy involving violence or any perpetrator of violence to be worthy of their opposition, and many policies or promoters of nonviolence to be worthy of their support.

Modeling these is a fairly straightforward matter:

$$\Delta V \rightarrow \Delta L(c^r), \text{ or} \qquad\qquad (\text{H-3.1})$$

$$\Delta V \rightarrow \Delta L(j), \qquad\qquad (\text{H-3.2})$$

although one can complicate both in any number of ways, for example by identifying the

many different ways that the patterns of violence might change, an exercise undertaken

for all of the other hypotheses in this section, and one that will not, therefore, be

elaborated here. Models H-3.1 and H-3.2 were the fourth and fifth hypotheses to be

tested.

Model Hypothesis 4: Legitimacy as Intervening Phenomenon

There are two ways legitimacy can intervene between a causal phenomenon and

violence: either as an effect of a phenomenon and then the direct cause of the change in

violence, or as an effect of a phenomenon, and then as the cause of some other factor that

is itself the direct cause of the change in violence:

$$X \rightarrow \Delta L^V \rightarrow \Delta V, \text{ or} \qquad\qquad (\text{H-4.1})$$

$$X_1 \rightarrow \Delta L \rightarrow X_2 \rightarrow \Delta V. \qquad\qquad (\text{H-4.2})$$

Elaborating on the discussion of the second set of hypotheses, what distinguishes the two

is the legitimacy *of what:* only the legitimacy *of violence* can act as a direct cause of

changes in violence, whereas the legitimacy of any other type of conferee can appear

earlier in the chain of causality.

In the first version — legitimacy as an effect of one phenomenon but then the

most proximate cause of violence — some significant change in some factor causes

people to change their behaviors and views of the legitimacy of violence such that the

barriers to its use either rise or fall. For example, in a neighborhood where crime is

rampant, some particularly heinous crime might push people beyond the limit of their

tolerance, and they might decide that the only solution is to fight fire with fire, by

forming a self-defense group to attack the drug dealers, rapists, extortionists, etc., and

rationalizing the violence as the only available means to protecting the community. A

longer-term version of this explanation might involve the delegitimation or illegitimation

of certain forms of violence over time: for example, the practice of social cleansing —

killing low-status people defined as deviant or dangerous — might enjoy a community's

support for many years, but as the number and variety of victims grows it might start

making more and more people uncomfortable to the point where it not merely loses

support (delegitimation) but actively triggers opposition (illegitimation). Or paramilitary

violence against certain populations — leftist political parties, villagers in guerrilla-

controlled areas, radical students — might be tolerated by a majority of the population as

long as it seems to be the only way insurgents might be defeated, but if it emerges that

the paramilitaries behind those killings are profiting economically from the practice (e.g.

massacring villagers to get their land) or that their behavior is now more of a threat to

society than that of the insurgents, then that particular form of collective-political

violence might lose its previous justification and become illegitimate, forcing the

paramilitaries to change their strategy (e.g. from massacres to more targeted killings).

Alternatively, as people's confidence in the government rises, they might begin to believe

that the state security forces should have a monopoly on violence, delegitimizing

collective political or social violence by nonstate actors in the process. There is

substantial anecdotal evidence to suggest that many of these things have actually

happened in Medellín (e.g. the formation of barrio self-defense groups) and in Colombia

more generally (e.g. the corruption of paramilitaries by its association with narcotrafficking, and their change of strategy after a delegitimation). As shown above, this explanation takes the following general form:

$$X \rightarrow \Delta L^V \rightarrow \Delta V, \tag{H-4.1}$$

which says that some event or situation, x, has caused people to change their attitudes and behaviors about the legitimacy of violence, ΔL^V, which in turn has led to a change in the levels or types of violence, ΔV, in Medellín. Model H-4.1 was the sixth hypothesis to be tested.

The second way legitimacy can be an intervening phenomenon, as noted, is for it to appear earlier in a longer chain of causation, as shown earlier:

$$X_1 \rightarrow \Delta L \rightarrow X_2 \rightarrow \Delta V, \tag{H-4.2}$$

which says that some factor, X_1, has caused a change in attitudes about legitimacy, ΔL, which has resulted in a change in some other factor, X_2, that is itself the proximate cause of the change in violence, ΔV.

The Collier-Hoeffler "greed vs. grievance" model of conflict, introduced briefly in the discussion of the first set of hypotheses (and adapted here as a model of violence due to conflict), is a prime example of this type of argument: they found that rebellions are not initiated by people who are unhappy with some facet of the way they are governed (grievance), but rather, "opportunities for primary commodity predation cause conflict, and … the grievances that this generates induce diasporas to finance further conflict" (greed)[30]:

$$R \rightarrow \uparrow V(D(C^R)) \rightarrow I \rightarrow \uparrow R \times V(D(C^R, I)) \rightarrow I \ldots, \tag{H-4.3}$$

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[30] Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War."

which is read to mean that the discovery or availability of certain types of resources, R, has generated violence associated with conflicts over those resources (greed), generating among the "aggrieved" victims a duty of opposition (i.e. illegitimacy), I, which has attracted resources from abroad, $\uparrow R$, that have exacerbated the violent conflict (now over both resources *and* grievances), $\uparrow V(D(C^R,I))$, which has generated further grievances as the cycle, …, repeated. Model H-4.3 was the seventh hypothesis to be tested.

Model Hypothesis 5: Legitimacy as Antecedent Phenomenon

There are few situations in which an exogenous change in legitimacy has activated some other factor's ability to affect violence. The most promising, however, would be an anti-violence policy of some sort that had been tried repeatedly without success, but suddenly succeeded because now those who were implementing it had the backing of some key population:

$$\Delta L \times P \rightarrow \Delta V. \qquad\qquad (H\text{-}5.1)$$

An example might be intelligence-gathering. In urban warfare (or irregular warfare more generally), in countering organized crime, and in many other situations that result in violence, an important factor of a successful strategy is reliable human intelligence: knowing who is a member of the armed group, knowing the group's habits or where they hide their weapons, knowing their smuggling routes for illicit trade, and so on. One side in the fight, say the state, can be trying for years to recruit inside informants without success; sometimes this is because the state actors are considered outsiders, even enemies, by those on the inside, somebody not worth working with. But if something changes and attitudes about the state's legitimacy change — or if attitudes about the

legitimacy of the insiders who control the area change — recruiting informants might suddenly become easier for the state. To see if there were any policies that experienced breakthroughs as a result of people's changing attitudes about the legitimacy of nonstate actors or state actors in Medellín, Model H-5.1 was the eighth hypothesis to be tested.

Model Hypothesis 6: Legitimacy as Feedback

Here, the changes in violence are said to have been caused by dynamic interactions among legitimacy, violence, and some other factor:

$$\Delta V \rightarrow \Delta L \leftrightarrow X \leftrightarrow \Delta V, \tag{H-6.1}$$

or any number of variations on this model. It might have worked as follows, for example: Some convergence of different trends and events, X, tipped the balance of local judgments about legitimacy (of some state or nonstate actors) to a point where certain anti-violence policies (e.g. targeting selected perpetrators of violence) could finally succeed, $\Delta L \times P \rightarrow \downarrow V$; this preliminary success initiated virtuous cycles in which the relative stability generated some legitimacy, $\uparrow L$, which both facilitated policy and was enhanced by the policy it facilitated, $\uparrow L \leftrightarrow P$, while the policy itself both lowered violence and was made easier to implement as a result of the stability it created, $P \leftrightarrow \downarrow V$, which itself was further legitimizing, $V \rightarrow \uparrow L$, and so on, …, as follows:

$$X \rightarrow \Delta L \times P \rightarrow \downarrow V \rightarrow \uparrow L \leftrightarrow P \leftrightarrow \downarrow V \rightarrow \uparrow L \ldots, \text{ or} \tag{H-6.2}$$

$$P \rightarrow \Delta L \times P \rightarrow \downarrow V \rightarrow \uparrow L \leftrightarrow P \leftrightarrow \downarrow V \rightarrow \uparrow L \ldots, \tag{H-6.3}$$

which says the same thing but that, instead of some "convergence of different trends and events" starting the cycle, it was some particular set of policies or policy events that shifted people's judgments about legitimacy and began the cycle (e.g. a local killing that

led to an attitude of "enough"; the failure of Pastrana's *despeje* strategy; police stepped

up patrols in the barrios and kept residents safe). For example, it is possible that some set

of policies by a militia in a barrio (e.g. setting up neighborhood-watch patrols, helping

people buy groceries, chasing drug dealers off of street corners, circulating moralistic

propaganda, etc.) shifted those barrio residents' views of the relative legitimacy of the

militants versus the gangs who had been in control (e.g. the militants seem to be

committed so it might be worth supporting them, while the gangsters truly are a menace

to the community and should be opposed), leading to a breakthrough in local fundraising

and human intelligence that made it possible to succeed in their anti-violent-crime

campaigns (i.e. it lowered interpersonal-communal violence, but actually increased

collective-social violence in the short-term), which greatly increased their credibility

according to the community, which further supported the policies, and so on. Different

variations are possible, but Model H-6.3 was the ninth and final hypothesis to be tested.

D.6. Rejected Hypotheses

The introductory chapter to this study discussed the six model hypotheses, into

which a total of 21 hypotheses found in the literature were categorized, 12 of which were

immediately rejected for either logical lapses or the presence of fairly obvious

contradictory evidence. That left nine plausible hypotheses to test: two from the first of

the six categories, one from the second, two from the third, two from the fourth, one from

the fifth, and one from the sixth. Each of these hypotheses was analyzed and rejected in

whole or in part, and parts of those hypotheses that were not wholly rejected were

synthesized into the two models that constitute the major explanations of the patterns of

Table D-2. Nine Rejected Hypotheses and Two Synthesized Models

No.	Rejected Hypothesis	Old No.
i	$R \times [D(C^T)+D(C^S)] \rightarrow \downarrow G(C^T, C^S) \times [D(C^T)+D(C^S)] \rightarrow \uparrow V(D(C^T), D(C^S))$	H-1.7
ii	$\uparrow V \rightarrow [\uparrow \$C^T + \uparrow \$G] \rightarrow P(\downarrow D(C^T), \uparrow G(C^S, C^T)) \rightarrow \downarrow V$	H-1.9
iii	$X \times L^V \rightarrow \Delta V$	H-2.3
iv	$\uparrow V \rightarrow \downarrow \Delta L(C^r)$ or $\downarrow V \rightarrow \uparrow \Delta L(C^r)$	H-3.1
v	$\Delta V \rightarrow \Delta L(j)$	H-3.2
vi	$X \rightarrow \Delta L^V \rightarrow \Delta V$	H-4.1
vii	$R \rightarrow \uparrow V(D(C^R)) \rightarrow I \rightarrow \uparrow R \times V(D(C^R, I)) \rightarrow I \ldots$	H-4.3
viii	$\Delta L \times P \rightarrow \Delta V$	H-5.1
ix	$P \rightarrow \Delta L \times P \rightarrow \downarrow V \rightarrow \uparrow L \leftrightarrow P \leftrightarrow \downarrow V \rightarrow \uparrow L \ldots$	H-6.3
Synthesized Models		
I	$\downarrow G(C^T:t^r,c^r) \rightarrow \uparrow I(t^r,c^r) \rightarrow \uparrow \$(C^T) \times D(C^T) \rightarrow \uparrow v_c(D(C^T)) \times G(C^T, C^S) \rightarrow \uparrow V_{ic} \leftrightarrow \downarrow G(C^T, C^S) \ldots$	
II	$\uparrow C^T \rightarrow \downarrow v_c(D(C^T)) \times G(C^T, C^S) \rightarrow \downarrow V_{ic} \leftrightarrow \uparrow G(C^T, C^S)$	

violence in Medellín: one that explains most of the increases in violence, and one that explains most of the decreases in violence. The nine hypotheses that were tested, and the two models that were synthesized, are represented in Table D-2. In the sections that follow, the reasons for rejecting the nine hypotheses are provided, and the two synthesized models are explained.

Hypothesis i

Hypothesis i, claiming legitimacy played no role, argued that the presence or discovery of illicit resources, R, exacerbated preexisting disputes over territorial and social control, $[D(C^T)+D(C^S)]$, beyond the ability of local governance structures to manage them, which led to a breakdown in either social order or the rule of law, $\downarrow G(C^T, C^S)$, which

accelerated the loss of the remaining restraints on those conflicts, $[D(C^T)+D(C^S)]$, and without those restraints those conflicts became violent, $\uparrow v(D(C^T)+D(C^S))$.

This was a plausible explanation, but it was rejected because access to resources simply was not the main driver of all of the city's violent disputes: some groups wanted to control territory not because (or not only because) they wanted to control its resources, but because they wanted to protect their families and neighbors from violence (e.g. some street crews and militias), or as part of a larger political strategy (e.g. some militias and the political paras), although many were indeed interested mainly in the resources (e.g. the drug gangs and narco paras). Moreover, it did not account for interpersonal-communal violence, only collective violence. Still, this hypothesis did correctly identify disputes over territorial control and problems of governance as significant factors that influenced both each other and much of the city's violence, and it was clear that resources were needed to get or keep territorial control and so would have had to play some role. So those parts of this hypothesis were worth keeping in mind.

Hypothesis ii

Hypothesis ii also claimed that legitimacy played no role. It argued that high levels of violence raised the costs of territorial control and governance for the nonstate armed actors who controlled the territories and for the state actors who were supposed to be controlling them, $[\uparrow \$C^T+\uparrow \$G]$; the high costs created an incentive for a policy (usually a negotiated agreement of some sort), $P(\ )$, in which the state actors agreed not to challenge the nonstate actors' control over territory (and, implicitly, the illicit resources

in it), $\downarrow D(C^T)$, in exchange for the nonstate actors' enforcing social order within that territory, $\uparrow G(C^S, C^T)$, resulting in a (short-term) decline in violence, $\downarrow V$.

As Part I demonstrated, many such agreements were negotiated explicitly and some implicit agreements existed as well; but this hypothesis was rejected because, in the vast majority of cases, these agreements fell apart pretty quickly as one or more parties to the agreements almost invariably broke their promises (see Chapters 4-6). Moreover, most declines in violence had nothing to do with agreements. Finally, it was pretty clear that legitimacy and illegitimacy did play some role in the patterns of violence (the urban militias made this point explicitly), and these first two hypotheses did not account for that at all. Still, this second hypothesis correctly identified the costs of territorial control as something that somehow interacts with governance, violence, and the need for resources, and so that was something else to keep in mind as well.

Hypothesis iii

Hypothesis iii claimed that legitimacy was a causal phenomenon and argued that, in a given territory, some event, X, activated dormant attitudes about the legitimacy of certain types of violence, L^V, which lowered the moral barrier to their use, which increased the frequency of their use, ΔV.

This was a common process in Medellín: in communities with very conservative, traditional values, many people considered it legitimate to threaten, attack, or kill people who violated or represented a threat to those values — usually drug dealers, prostitutes, homosexuals, vagrants, minorities, and other members of low-status groups. And increases in the number of such low-status people into certain barrios and increases in

transgressive behaviors there did indeed trigger violent backlashes. Moreover, it was clear that the nonstate armed actors who controlled territory had their own views about the circumstances under which it was legitimate to use violence (e.g. to protect territory), and violence often was triggered by those very circumstances (e.g. an increase in attempts to infiltrate their territory).

In fact, this hypothesis could be accepted as valid if we were to think of it as an auxiliary process that explains individual decisions to use violence. As a broader explanation, however, it was incomplete, because it suggested that attitudes about the legitimate use of violence were static (and were merely triggered by changing circumstances), when in many cases both the circumstances and the attitudes changed over time. (Hypothesis vi, however, did account for such changes.)

Hypothesis iv

Hypothesis iv claimed that legitimacy and illegitimacy were *caused* phenomena, specifically that they emerged as a consequence of violence: As violence rose, $\uparrow V$, life became unpredictable (i.e. if you cannot get to work, go shopping, etc. without the risk or fear of getting mugged, raped, or killed, then you cannot reliably plan out your day or carry out long-term projects). As a consequence, the people whose job was to keep the peace lost their credibility, or any policies that had been implemented with the intention of controlling violence likewise lost their credibility, and this loss of credibility tended to undermine residents' motivation to support those in power, $\downarrow L(C^r)$.

The reverse could be claimed as well: success in controlling violence, $\downarrow V$, tended to contribute to the credibility of the role or policy that achieved it, and the role or policy

tended to be considered more worthy of support as a result, $\uparrow L(c^r)$. But this hypothesis failed to account for the feedback that would logically occur in this process, especially in the more extreme cases in which violence led to a loss of credibility that did not merely undermine support but actually sparked opposition, and oftentimes that opposition involved violence. It also does not adequately account for the effect of violence on governance, the rule of law, or social order, any of which could, in fact, have been an intervening phenomenon through which violence undermined legitimacy.

Hypothesis v

Hypothesis v, also claiming that legitimacy was a caused phenomenon, argued that violence, ΔV, either directly legitimized or directly neutralized or illegitimized its perpetrators, ΔL, or that nonviolence directly legitimized nonviolent conferees: Wherever violence under certain circumstances was considered valuable or noble within certain communities, then people or groups within those communities who engaged in violence under those circumstances tended to be considered worthy of support in that endeavor. This was a very common dynamic in gangs, for example, in which violence against rival gangs was considered noble or obligatory, and in those gangs the most warlike gangsters tended to be considered the most admirable and the most worthy of, say, leadership. Similarly, this hypothesis argued, people for whom nonviolence was a supreme virtue tended to find any policy involving violence or any perpetrator of violence to be worthy of their opposition, and many policies or promoters of nonviolence to be worthy of their support.

The only real problem with this was that it failed to identify what else might have generated the legitimacy or illegitimacy in any given instance: both phenomena have multiple causes, and this identifies only one. At best, this could be considered an auxiliary process to more general processes of legitimacy-building. But it was rejected as the best-fit explanation.

Hypothesis vi

Hypothesis vi, which claimed that legitimacy was an intervening phenomenon, argued that some event or situation, x, caused people to change their attitudes and behaviors about the legitimacy of violence, ΔL^V, which in turn led to a change in the levels or types of violence, Δv. In a short-term version of this hypothesis, some significant change in some factor caused people to change their behaviors and views of the legitimacy of violence such that the barriers to its use either rose or fell. In many neighborhood where crime was rampant, for example, it often happened that some event (e.g. a particularly heinous crime) pushed residents beyond the limits of their tolerance, so they formed self-defense groups to attack the drug dealers, rapists, extortionists, etc. In a longer-term version, certain forms of violence were neutralized or illegitimized over time: for example, the practice of social cleansing — killing low-status people defined as deviant or dangerous — enjoyed the support of many communities for many years, but as the number and variety of victims grew it started making more and more people uncomfortable to the point where it not merely lost support (neutralization) but actively triggered opposition (illegitimation). Similarly, militia and paramilitary violence against certain populations was long tolerated by many in Medellín as long as it seemed to be the

only way crime could be controlled or insurgents defeated. But after it emerged that the militias or paramilitaries behind those killings were profiting economically from the practice, or after their behavior became a greater threat to residents than their victims had been, then that particular form of collective-political violence lost its previous justification and become illegitimate. Similarly, as people's confidence in the government rose during the 2000s, they began to believe that the state security forces should have a monopoly on violence, delegitimizing collective political or social violence by nonstate actors in the process.

The only real problem with this set of explanations was that it was incomplete; it did a better job than Hypothesis iii of describing an important auxiliary process that accounted for the effects on violence of both changing circumstances and changing attitudes about legitimacy. But neither the short-term nor the long-term versions adequately accounted for interactions with the issues of governance, rule or law, and social order that clearly played a part in the majority of cases.

Hypothesis vii

Hypothesis vii, which also claimed that legitimacy was an intervening phenomenon, argued that the discovery or availability of certain types of resources, R, generated violence associated with conflicts over those resources, generating among the victims a duty of opposition (i.e. illegitimacy), I, which attracted resources from outsiders, $\uparrow R$, that exacerbated the violent conflict (now over both resources *and* grievances), $\uparrow V(D(C^R, I))$, which generated further grievances as the cycle repeated.

The only real problem with this hypothesis was its emphasis on resources as the main driver of violent conflicts, when, as was pointed out in the criticism of the first hypothesis, most of the conflicts really revolved around territorial control, which often was desired as a means of controlling resources within territories, but not always. The most important contribution this explanation made, however, was its recognition that Medellín's violence requires a dynamic, not a static, explanation: some factors affected other factors, which affected other factors, which affected the initial factors, and so on. It also identified some of the factors that ended up being involved in most of the city's violence.

Hypothesis viii

Hypothesis viii claimed that legitimacy was an antecedent phenomenon. It argued that some exogenous change in legitimacy, ΔL, activated the ability of some policy or strategy (that was already being tried), P, to somehow finally work and thereby affect violence, ΔV. And in fact there were some strategies — by both state and nonstate armed actors — that experienced breakthroughs as a result of people's changing attitudes about the legitimacy of nonstate armed actors or state actors in Medellín. An important set of examples were strategies of infiltration by competing nonstate armed actors: when outside armed actors wanted to control some territory, they knew they needed access to insiders to be able to take over, but it was often the case that they would try for many months or many years to get that access without success — until those who had been controlling the territory delegitimized themselves to insiders, and those insiders were suddenly open to outside help.

This hypothesis correctly recognized that attitudes about legitimacy and illegitimacy affected different actors' ability to take or keep territorial control, but it failed to identify any mechanisms through which that might take place. Moreover, its explanatory power was limited because the process it described did not seem common.

Hypothesis ix

Hypothesis ix, which claimed that legitimacy was a feedback phenomenon, argued that some particular set of policies or policy events, P, tipped the balance of local judgments about legitimacy (of some state or nonstate actors) to a point where certain anti-violence policies (e.g. targeting selected perpetrators of violence) could finally succeed, $\Delta L \times P \rightarrow \downarrow V$; this preliminary success initiated virtuous cycles in which the relative stability generated some legitimacy, $\uparrow L$, which both facilitated policy and was enhanced by the policy it facilitated, $\uparrow L \leftrightarrow P$, while the policy itself both lowered violence and was made easier to implement as a result of the stability it created, $P \leftrightarrow \downarrow V$, which itself was further legitimizing, $V \rightarrow \uparrow L$, and so on. The clearest example of such virtuous cycles was the peace camps, in which urban guerrillas set up neighborhood-watch patrols, helped people buy groceries, chased drug dealers off of street corners, circulated moralistic propaganda, and so on, policies that shifted those barrio residents' views of the relative legitimacy of the militants versus the gangs who had been in control, leading to a breakthrough in local fundraising and human intelligence that made it possible to succeed in their anti-violent-crime campaigns, which greatly increased their credibility according to the community, who further supported the policies, and so on.

This is a compelling but ultimately limited explanation, for two reasons: first, while many anti-violent-crime campaigns did lower interpersonal-communal violence, the campaigns themselves also usually increased collective-social violence in the short-term; and second, more generally, this process did take place, but not terribly often outside of the peace camps. More commonly, violence fell only after one side or another won a war over territorial control.

D.7. Synthesized Models

While none of the rejected hypotheses seemed to have enough evidence to support it as the best overall explanation, pieces of many of them did seem to be relevant. The challenge, therefore, was to determine how they might fit together to account for most of the relevant dynamics.

An overall look at the city's patterns of violence (Chapter 8) and dynamics of legitimacy (Chapter 9) yielded three key observations that seemed to be common to most instances in which violence rose or fell in the city's micro-territories and statelets:

1. Territorial control has reduced violence.

2. The cost of territorial control has been positively correlated with illegitimacy.

3. Illegitimacy has been positively correlated with unpredictability in the manner and outcomes of governance.

A synthesis of these findings yielded the two synthesized models (see Table D-2), which explain the relationship between territorial control and violence and account for the role of illegitimacy. The first model explains most increases in collective and interpersonal-communal violence:

$$\downarrow G(C^T:t^r,c^r) \rightarrow \uparrow I(t^r,c^r) \rightarrow \uparrow \$(C^T) \times D(C^T) \rightarrow \uparrow V_c(D(C^T)) \times G(C^T, C^S) \rightarrow \uparrow V_{ic} \leftrightarrow \downarrow G(C^T, C^S) \dots \qquad (I)$$

Model I explains that when those in control of territory have governed in a manner

characterized by a lack of transparency and credibility, $\downarrow G(C^T:t^r,c^r)$, they have made it

very likely that the people they governed would decide they should be opposed because

they had made life intolerably unpredictable, $\uparrow I(t^r,c^r)$, and this illegitimation has raised

the cost of territorial control, $\uparrow \$(C^T)$, making feasible a contest for control by rivals,

$D(C^T)$, and thereby triggering a collective-violent conflict over control of territory,

$\uparrow V_c(D(C^T))$, which has complicated efforts to govern in a manner consistent with the rule

of law and social order, $G(C^T, C^S)$, which has removed the restraints on (and therefore has

enabled) an increase in interpersonal-communal violence, $\uparrow V_{ic}$, which further exacerbated

and was further exacerbated by problems of governance, social order, or the rule of law,

$\downarrow G(C^T, C^S)$, which caused the cycle to start over again. Illegitimacy, then, was an

intervening phenomenon in a positive-feedback cycle.

What about the relationship between territorial control and *declines* in collective

and interpersonal-communal violence? Here, the Kalyvas model[31] prevailed, with one

elaboration:

$$\uparrow C^T \rightarrow \downarrow v(D(C^T)) \times G(C^T, C^S) \rightarrow \downarrow V_{ic} \leftrightarrow \uparrow G(C^T, C^S) \qquad (II)$$

Model II explains that an increase in territorial control by one actor (i.e. that actor's

victory), $\uparrow C^T$, has led to a decline in collective violence associated with the dispute over

territorial control, $\downarrow v(D(C^T))$, making it possible to govern in a manner consistent with the

rule of law and social order, $G(C^T, C^S)$, and therefore to better control interpersonal-

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[31] Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War.*

communal violence, $\downarrow V_{ic}$, a decline that both further enabled and was further enabled by improvements in governance, social order, or the rule of law, $\uparrow G(C^T, C^S)$.

A narrative description of these findings is as follows. Within Medellín, control over micro-territories has required resources (e.g. money, weapons, communication, transportation) and people (e.g. recruits, financiers, facilitators, denouncers, informants, etc.) to counter opposition from external rivals (i.e. external to the micro-territory), from internal rivals, and from rivals to the internal allies of the controlling group. For resource-rich groups (for example, a mafia-backed gang with access to narcotrafficking income), legitimacy has not been necessary to hold territory because whatever support was needed for these fights could be purchased or coerced using resources they already had. To maintain control, therefore, the controlling group needed only to engage in a strategy of illegitimacy-avoidance. However, when that strategy has failed — when their abuses, moral transgressions, or losses of credibility have caused life in the micro-territory to become intolerably unpredictable — then the level of morally driven non-compliance and outright opposition has risen, increasing both the number of rivals and the level of resources required to coerce or purchase needed support. This has provided strategic opportunities for existing external and internal rivals to recruit more people and resources into their own fight against the controlling group, making a real contest for control tenable. As a consequence, the controlling group and its rivals then engaged directly in collective violence against each other and each other's supporters, or allowed themselves to be drawn into private grudges through false denunciations. Moreover, as the controlling group focused on defense against rivals, it necessarily shifted resources and attention away from maintaining general order in their micro-territories. Inattention to

order entailed a breakdown in social order and the rule of law that created an atmosphere of impunity for common crime associated with interpersonal-communal violence, which both fed back into problems of governance and further damaged the credibility and therefore the legitimacy of the controlling group. Thus have both collective violence and interpersonal-communal violence risen as a consequence of contests over control of micro-territories (Model I).

When one side or another in such contests has managed to prevail and take (or retake) full control over the micro-territory, it no longer had a need for violence against rivals or rivals' supporters. As a consequence, collective violence associated with the conflict has fallen, and the controlling group could again dedicate attention and resources to protecting internal allies and maintaining order, so interpersonal-communal violence associated with the breakdown in social order or the rule of law has fallen as well, which has fed back into improvements in governance in a virtuous cycle. Thus have both collective violence and communal violence fallen as a consequence of control over micro-territories (Model II).

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