



## APPENDIX A Psychosocial Country-of-Origin Profile – GUATEMALA & EL SALVADOR

### §A1 Regional Context. The Northern Triangle of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador

The Northern Triangle is a term used by the United States and Organization of American States to refer collectively to these three states located between Mexico and Nicaragua. The graphic in **figure 1** provides a visual reference of these three countries and their capitals, which are approximately 200 kilometres from each other. The countries share an economic integration and a host of psychosocial, economic, cultural, political, and security challenges that have driven hundreds of thousands of residents into seeking asylum in



North and South America as well as Europe.<sup>1</sup> International observers and interventionists ascribe the causes as a collection of psychosocial-cultural breakdowns that include economic malaise, political corruption, human rights violations, crime, and climate change, amongst other reasons.<sup>2</sup>

While the underlying issues are not unique to these countries, they are most distinctly expressed in a manner that

has become an intractable violent social conflict. The USA's Council on Foreign Relations estimates that more than 2,000,000 people have fled the northern triangle since 2014.<sup>3</sup> In Honduras and El Salvador, the rates of femicide (killing of women and girls) are among the highest in the world.<sup>4</sup> Honduras is the deadliest of the three countries with a homicide rate of 38 murders per 100,000 residents annually since 2020, and Guatemala is the next deadliest, averaging between 250 – 280 murders per month in 2024. Approximately 95% of these murders go unpunished by dysfunctional systems of justice.<sup>5</sup> Some of the critical areas of the Northern Triangle, also known as 'red areas', are in effect conflict zones and exhibit high levels of violence and criminality, large numbers of injuries caused by firearms, physical and sexual abuse, torture, extortion, kidnappings, forced recruitment, curfews (unofficial), confinement, invisible borders, a population in fear of violent death or crime, lack of state rule, corruption and impunity, limited access to health and other basic services, and limited access to protection and justice. Significant portions of the population have been forced into displacement to escape threats

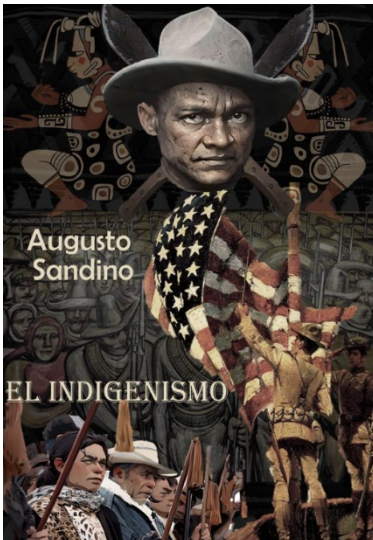


Figure 2 Augusto Sandino and the beginnings of El Indigenismo

<sup>1</sup> [Children and Families Fleeing Violence in Central America - WOLA](https://www.wola.org/analysis/people-leaving-central-americas-northern-triangle/)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wola.org/analysis/people-leaving-central-americas-northern-triangle/>

<sup>3</sup> [Central America's Turbulent Northern Triangle | Council on Foreign Relations \(cfr.org\)](https://www.cfr.org/central-america/central-americas-turbulent-northern-triangle/p27827)

<sup>4</sup> [Femicide or femicide | Gender Equality Observatory \(cepal.org\)](https://www.cepal.org/en/gender-equality/femicide)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.worldvision.ca/stories/child-protection/northern-triangle>

<sup>5</sup> [Northern Triangle | Gangs and Migrants | World Vision Canada](https://www.worldvision.ca/stories/child-protection/northern-triangle)



and violence, moving within the state, requesting asylum, or resorting to irregular immigration.<sup>6</sup> Over the past half-century, the type of psychosocial-political dysfunction described in the previous sections has resulted in the rise of criminalised societies that challenge the recognised UN state for power and influence in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. These three states geographically constitute key transit points for transnational drug trafficking. The leaders, members, supporters, and beneficiaries of these vast, net-centric criminal societies have penetrated state institutions, as evidenced by frequent cases of collusion between organized crime and high-level politicians.<sup>7</sup>

### §A1.1 United States and Civil Wars in Central America.

Beginning in the 1970s, the central American countries of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have been in a nearly constant state of social, cultural, and ethnic conflict. The U.S. had significant influence in Latin America, including training some of the most notorious dictators at the infamous School of the Americas, also known as the “School of Coups.”<sup>8</sup> For six decades, some 65,000 soldiers, dictators, assassins, and mass murderers counted themselves alumni of the school that was first created in Panama in 1946 to prevent the spread of communism in the Western hemisphere. The alumnus of this school included Roberto D’Aubuisson, a death squad leader who murdered thousands and gained the sadistic nickname of “Blowtorch Bob” for his methods of torture. Colonel Domingo Monterrosa, the first commander of the ATACATL — an elite paramilitary unit trained and equipped by advisors from the United States — also attended the school and was later fingered for directing the El Mozote Massacre, the bloodiest slaying of guerrilla sympathizers in the entire civil war.<sup>9</sup> In Nicaragua, the United States supported the 46-year long dictatorship of the Somoza family which finally fell to the followers of a murdered peasant farmer named Augusto Sandino (Sandinistas) in 1979 after decades of civil war.<sup>10</sup> The United States backed the Salvadoran military government with training, arms, and funding for decades against the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, which killed between 75,000 and 90,000 civilians, mostly rural indigenous farmers.<sup>11</sup> In Guatemala, the US’ Central Intelligence agency supported a military coup against President Jacobo Arbenz in the mid-1950s, igniting a 35-year civil war ensued between mostly indigent Mayan peasants and western



Figure 3 United States Army School of the Americas.

<sup>6</sup> [Northern Triangle violence: 17,422 homicides in 2015 \(ticotimes.net\)](https://www.ticotimes.net)

<sup>7</sup> (Aljazeera Staff, 2023; Blanco & Shenk, 2026; Mackey & Eisner, 2019; Phillips, 2019; Staff, 2023)

<sup>8</sup> The school is now called the United States Army’s Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) located at Fort Benning, Georgia.

<sup>9</sup> This researcher was assigned to the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group during this time and has personal experience in the USA’s support to civil wars in Central America. As green beret officers, we found our orders coming directly from Washington DC rather than normal chains of command. We were ordered to train and equip these Central American military forces who, in turn, fought guerrilla factions. However, they also operated on their own at times and controlled the civilian populace through brutal violence no matter the cost or human atrocities they committed. All our complaints and objections were overruled, and internal USG investigations into those decisions and actions continues to this day.

<sup>10</sup> (MacAulay, 1967)

<sup>11</sup> (S. Christian, 1985)



backed civil-military governments friendly to Wash DC. An estimated 200,000 Guatemalans were killed during the war, including at least 40,000 persons who "disappeared". 92% of civilian executions were carried out by government forces. The UN-sponsored Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) documented 42,275 victims of human rights violations and acts of violence from 7,338 testimonies. 83% of the victims were Maya and 17% Ladino. 91% of victims were killed in 1978 through 1984, 81% in 1981 through 1983, with 48% of deaths occurring in 1982 alone.<sup>12</sup> In its final report in 1999, the CEH concluded that a genocide had taken place at the hands of the Armed Forces of Guatemala, and that US training of the officer corps in counterinsurgency techniques "had a significant bearing on human rights violations during the armed confrontation", but that the US was not directly responsible for any genocidal acts.<sup>13</sup> the Guatemalan military officer that the US had supported, Rios Montt, was convicted of genocide and sentenced to 80 years in prison.<sup>14</sup>

The ongoing civil wars spread to Honduras, which led to constant coups and military dictatorships that employed extraordinarily violent suppression of the population.<sup>15</sup> The CIA backed Honduran Army's death squad Battalion 3-16 led the suppression effort though mass murder, torture, and disappearances of anyone accused of dissidence.<sup>16</sup>

### §A1.2 Psychosocial-Cultural Drivers of Conflict and Inhibitors of Resolution.

The population in the interrelated countries of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador consist of segmented societies with vastly different psychological organization and sociological constructions<sup>17</sup>. The pre-Columbian indigenous peoples are the Maya, a Mongoloid ethnolinguistic people who are indigenous to Mesoamerica.<sup>18</sup> Between 90% and upwards to 99% of all residents in the Northern Triangle identify as all or partially indigenous mestizo, or 'mixed blood'.<sup>19</sup> Approximately 12% of Salvadoreans, 5% of Guatemalans, and 1% of Hondurans identify as Caucasoid-European of Spanish descent

## MAYA Genocide



**The Secrets in Guatemala's Bones**  
Figure 4 OAS Genocide investigators exhume the bodies of Maya families and villages murdered during Guatemala's Civil War



Figure 5 mejorar la raza.

<sup>12</sup> (Amnesty International, 1981; T. P. Anderson, 1988; Grandin & Klein, 2011; Schirmer, 1988; United Nations, 1999)

<sup>13</sup> (United Nations, 1999)

<sup>14</sup> (Jonas, 2018)

<sup>15</sup> (Ching, 2016)

<sup>16</sup> (Fratius, 2020)

<sup>17</sup> Psychological organization refers to the sociocentric versus egocentric individual and collective identity. Sociological construction refers to the assembly and ordering of families, clans, and tribes versus constructed, often urbanized-industrialized societies. The former is inherited over thousands of generations and the latter is artificially constructed by modern humans to replace lost or abandoned inherited structures.

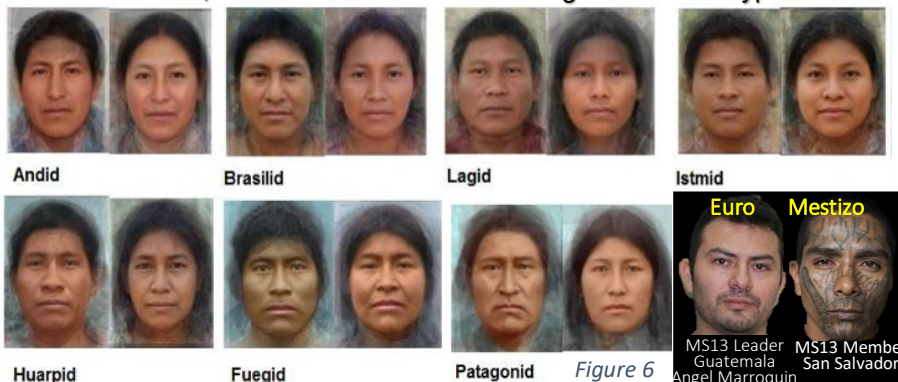
<sup>18</sup> Mesoamerica is a historical and important region and cultural area in southern North America and most of Central America. It extends from approximately central Mexico through Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and northern Costa Rica. Within this region pre-Columbian societies flourished for more than 1,000 years before the Spanish colonization of the Americas.

<sup>19</sup> (Bix, n.d.)



from the original colonial settlements.<sup>20</sup> Most of the political-military power, economic control, and national cultural expression rests with the small percentage of those who identify as Caucasoid-European. There are very few 'criollos' or pure Caucasian-European descendants left in these countries. Race, therefore, is subjective and based on claimed lineage and family

Mesoamerica, South & Central America Indigenous Phenotypes



wealth which is preserved at all costs to ensure the family does not slide downward into indigenous categorization and out from European privilege. The darker one's skin and the more one's facial features reflect one of the indigenous typologies of indigenous phenotypes as shown in **Figure 5**.<sup>21</sup> the more likely one is to be excluded from consideration as belonging to the power-holding Spanish culture. **Figure 6** offers an ethnic perspective of the Northern Triangle's indigenous Maya Quechuan versus its European and Mestizo populations. Notice that many (but not all) of MS13/B18s senior leaders appear to be more European while the foot soldiers usually bear phenotypes that are much less European. This is a phenomenon found in the criminal societies in the Northern Triangle, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela. In the Northern Triangle's violent criminal social societies and in the state-backed sociopolitical-economic-security structures, the racial orientation, real or self-perceived, works to malform social organisation. The indigenous communities of each state are relatively free of this malforming racial preference in their psychosocial construction. This socially malforming racial-cultural dynamics are further illustrated in **figures 7**, in the social, political, and economic practice of *Blanqueamiento* (whitening) to *mejorar la raza* (improve the race) so as to achieve a supposed ideal of biological and symbolic 'whiteness' or Europeaness.<sup>22</sup> Examples of this preoccupation by the Eurocentric minority in control of the states of the Northern Triangle include such practices as parents sending their children to the United States or Europe to find a marriage partner and the definition of beauty as light skinned, light haired, green-blue-grey eyed Europeans. While the practice of *Blanqueamiento* works to affirmatively change racial identity of the dominant segment of these societies, other practices work to defend against subconscious threats of racial identity disintegration such as demonizing darker-skinned segments of society. The president of Guatemala from 2016 to 2021, for instance, was Jimmy Morales, and-up comedian who came to local fame portraying a blackface character<sup>23</sup> that denigrated Afro- Latinos, which account for around .02% of the population.<sup>24</sup> The most popular heroes and heroines in film and literature are blond haired, blue/green-eyed

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/>  
<sup>21</sup> Andid, Brasilid, Legid, Istmid, Patagonid, Huarpid, and Fuegid.  
<sup>22</sup> (Rahier, 1999)  
<sup>23</sup> Called 'Black-Pitaya' or 'Black-Dragonfruit'  
<sup>24</sup> [Guatemala prosecutors pursue ex-president Jimmy Morales \(yahoo.com\)](https://www.yahoo.com/news/guatemala-prosecutors-pursue-ex-president-jimmy-morales-1200000000.html)



light-skinned European looking actors, even though those phenotypes have not been present in this region for decades. During interviews with members of Mara Salvatrucha-13 and Barrio-18, interviewees claimed to be neither Caucasoid-Europeans nor Mongoloid-Mayans. Their extensive body art (tattoos) is a principal symbol of their identity and that identity's expression in physical form. My research suggests that the affected population segments have (or are trying to) meld the two competing identities (Euro-Indigenous) in a violent form of social reconstruction. During individual in-depth interviews with members of these groups, I found that their competition with each other and with the



Former comedienne-turned Guatemalan president turned narco-trafficker Jimmy Morales' stage character is called "Black Pitaya", or Black Dragon fruit.



Figure 7 Cognitive Dissonance within the mestizo elite: Emotional drivers of Blanqueamiento signify a preoccupation with being ethnically European and correspondingly, a terror of being black, darky, or mestizo.

established socio-political-economic power base is not so much about physical gain.<sup>25</sup> Rather, it is about psychological affirmation and distinction of their large group identities of 'not-white' but 'not-indigenous' but 'not-impotent' either. The confusion over individual and collective identity is strikingly illustrated in figures 14/15, with the dramatic body art worn by these members.<sup>26</sup> This underlying psychosocial-emotional driver of social disintegration and participation in violent conflict suggest that the dangers that asylum returnees face cannot be calculated using western, rational logic. This section attempts to illustrate how the psychosocial-cultural structures of the Northern Triangle countries are in the process of disintegration. Perhaps more controversial is the suggestion that this disintegration has been increased by great-power interference and a failure to ameliorate the effects of post-colonial social ordering based on racial and cultural preference. My professional assessment to the USA and UK foreign offices has been that these countries are in what may be thought of as a 'free-fall' into increasing levels of violence and disorder, that will continue until the underlying dissonance is finally resolved by those who survive.

<sup>25</sup> During coding of in-depth qualitative interviews, issues of respect, honour, collective agency versus alienation, shame, and rage predominated, while financial gain was hardly mentioned.

<sup>26</sup> My research and findings are published in USA, UK, CAN Army Special Operations Textbooks that have limited availability to the public based on security classifications. Figure 14/15 is an assembly of MS-13 gang body art that my research collects and works to translate into a psychosocial-emotional profile for non-lethal targeting by US and UK special operations forces.



## §A2 Corrupted Structures of Political Process & Justice in Countries-of-Origin Guatemala & El Salvador.

### §A2.1 Guatemala.

According to the United States Embassy country team in Guatemala City, over the past year, there were no “significant changes” in the human rights situation in Guatemala.<sup>27</sup> They recorded continuing significant human rights violations from all sectors of the ongoing civil society conflict. Common examples of violations involved credible reporting of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; transnational repression against individuals in another country; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including threats of violence against journalists and unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists; serious government corruption; serious government harassment of domestic and international human rights organizations; extensive gender-based violence, including femicide and other forms of such violence; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting members of Indigenous groups; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex persons; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting persons with disabilities; and significant restrictions on workers’ freedom of association, including violence and threats against union leaders.<sup>28</sup> As in previous years, the Government of Guatemala has not taken credible actions to “identify and punish officials who may have committed human rights abuses.”<sup>29</sup> The internal violent conflicts roiling the Northern Triangle states of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador are driving tens of thousands of asylum refugees northward to the border with the USA and Mexico. American National Guardsmen try to repel these asylum seekers with razor wire, chemical spray irritants, water obstacles, and increasingly, threats of the use of deadly force which has led to an ongoing constitutional crisis between the Federal and State Governments. The states try to prevent these asylum seekers from obtaining an audience with an immigration judge because so many of them have bona fide claims of asylum against violence and death that their own government cannot and or will not act to resolve. The United States foreign diplomatic service and military special operations forces are besieged by both political parties to rehabilitate/coerce/advise/re-educate those states of the Northern Triangle to shut down the flow of refugees fleeing from the violence within their states. Once these asylum refugees appear and present their case to a Federal Immigration Judge, as much as 50% or more are granted leaves of stay, much to the chagrin of both conservative and liberal administrations. The United States Government recognises that it can either change its laws to try and slow the flow of asylum refugees or ameliorate – resolve the violence that is driving the flows of refugees. The subsections below help to explain why the United States has been unable to resolve the violent conflicts whose refugees threaten the political stability of its federal and border states governance. The formal remarks by the American Ambassador to the Organisation of American States (OAS) Ambassador Francisco O. Mora, present a clear portrait of the conflict that suggests it (the conflict) is between an elected government and its

<sup>27</sup> (United States Embassy Guatemala City, 2023)

<sup>28</sup> (U.S. Department of State Bureau of Democracy, 2023)

<sup>29</sup> (Neau & Salomon, 2023)



voter population. This belief is illustrated by the criminal identification, indictment, and or sanctioning of more than 60 current or former senior officials of engaging or facilitating corruption in the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala (27), Honduras (13), and El Salvador (11). Among them are national presidents, lawmakers, judges, and

### USA Embassy *Guatemalan Corrupt and Undemocratic Actors Report 2023.2024*

- **Cynthia Edelmira Monterroso Gómez**, a current *prosecutor*, undermined democratic processes or institutions by bringing unsubstantiated, politically motivated criminal charges against journalists for exercising their freedom of expression as protected by Guatemalan law.
- **Edgar Humberto Navarro Castro**, a *former president* of Guatemala's energy wholesale market administrator, engaged in significant corruption by providing official benefits in exchange for bribes and kickbacks, at the expense of improving energy efficiency and taking effective action against climate change.
- **Fredy Raul Orellana Letona**, a *current judge*, undermined democratic processes or institutions by authorizing unsubstantiated, politically motivated criminal charges against journalists who were exercising their freedom of expression as protected by Guatemalan law.
- **Gendri Rocael Reyes Mazariegos**, a *former minister* of interior, engaged in significant corruption.
- **Joviel Acevedo Ayala**, the current head of Guatemalan Education Workers Union (STEG), engaged in significant corruption by providing STEG's political support in exchange for bribes from public officials.
- **Jimi Rodolfo Bremer Ramirez**, a *current judge*, undermined democratic processes or institutions by authorizing politically motivated criminal charges against journalists for exercising their freedom of expression as protected by Guatemalan law.
- **Lesther Castellanos Rodas**, a *former judge* and *current Guatemalan Rapporteur against Torture*, undermined democratic processes or institutions by retaliating against an anticorruption prosecutor for filing administrative complaints concerning Castellanos's handling of a criminal case.
- **Melvin Quijivix Vega**, the *current president* of the National Electrification Institute, engaged in significant corruption by using his position and connections to improperly and unlawfully direct government procurement contracts to specific companies, in several cases to a company he privately owns.
- **Omar Ricardo Barrios Osorio**, the *current president* of the board of directors of the National Port Commission, undermined democratic processes or institutions by conspiring to intimidate and harass an anticorruption prosecutor for denouncing corrupt activity.
- **Walter Ramiro Mazariegos Biolis**, the *Rector of the San Carlos University*, undermined democratic processes or institutions by accepting the position of rector of the public education institution in July 2022 following a fraudulent selection process.
- **Dennis Billy Herrera Arita**, a Guatemalan lawyer, undermined the democratic process or institutions by participating in the "Parallel Commissions 2020" scheme to stack the Supreme and Appellate Courts with corrupt judges.
- **Carlos Estuardo Galvez Barrios**, *former Rector of the University of San Carlos (USAC)*, undermined the democratic process or institutions by using his standing in the legal community to influence members of the judicial nomination commission in the facilitation of the "Parallel Commissions 2020" scheme to stack the Supreme Court and Appellate Courts with corrupt judges.
- **Jose Rafael Curruchiche Cacul (Rafael Curruchiche)**, the *current chief of the Public Ministry's Office of the Special Prosecutor* Against Impunity (FECI), obstructed investigations into acts of corruption by disrupting high-profile corruption cases against government officials and raising apparently spurious claims against FECE prosecutors, private attorneys, and former International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) prosecutors.
- **Axel Arturo Samayoa Camacho**, the *owner of several trucking and shipping companies operating in the government-run EMPORNAC* (Atlantic) and EPQ (Pacific) ports, engaged in significant corruption by improperly colluding with public officials and paying bribes to ensure his companies won lucrative port contracts.
- **Ramiro Mauricio Lopez Camey**, the *current co-owner of construction company Asfaltos y Petróleos S.A. (Aspetro)*, engaged in significant corruption by paying bribes to receive government construction contracts.
- **Ramon "Moncho" Campollo Codina**, a *current owner of Corporación Energías de Guatemala*, engaged in significant corruption by bribing public officials and in a manner that harmed U.S. commercial and policy goals to improve energy efficiency.
- **Geisler Smaile Perez Dominguez**, a *current judge* for the Third Criminal Court, undermined democratic processes by obstructing prosecutions of proponents of the "Parallel Commissions 2020" scheme to stack the Supreme Court and Appellate Courts with corrupt judges.
- **Sofia Janeth Hernandez Herrera**, the *current congressional representative* for the Union del Cambio Nacional (UCN) party, undermined the democratic process or institutions by misusing her official powers to intimidate her political opponents. She also solicited bribes and threatened to weaponize the legitimate purposes of Guatemala's congress to retaliate against her enemies for personal benefit.
- **Steffan Christian Emanuel Lehnhoff Hernandez**, a *current owner of Corporación Energías de Guatemala*, engaged in significant corruption by bribing public officials and in a manner that harmed U.S. commercial and policy goals to improve energy efficiency.
- **Mayra Alejandra Carrillo de Leon (Alejandra Carrillo)**, *current Director of the Victim's Institute*, undermined the democratic process or institutions by using her official position to facilitate the "Parallel Commissions 2020" scheme to stack the Supreme Court and Appellate Courts with corrupt judges.
- **Erick Gustavo Santiago de Leon**, a *former judge, and President of the Regional Appeal Civil Court*, engaged in significant corruption and obstructed investigations into acts of corruption by soliciting bribes in return for favorable court rulings in cases before him.
- **Nery Oswaldo Medina Mendez**, a *current Supreme Court of Justice magistrate*, undermined the democratic process or institutions by participating in the "Parallel Commissions 2020" scheme to stack the Supreme Court and Appellate Courts with corrupt judges.
- **Vitalina Orellana y Orellana**, a *current Supreme Court of Justice magistrate*, undermined the democratic process or institutions by participating in the "Parallel Commissions 2020" scheme to stack the Supreme Court and Appellate Courts with corrupt judges.
- **Mauricio Lopez Oliva**, the *current co-owner of construction company Asfaltos y Petróleos S.A. (Aspetro)*, engaged in significant corruption by paying bribes to receive government construction contracts.
- **Victor Manuel Cruz Rivera**, a *current Criminal Court Judge*, obstructed investigations into acts of corruption by improperly delaying court proceedings.
- **José Luis Benito Ruiz**, the *former Minister of Communications and Infrastructure* from 2018-2020, engaged in significant corruption when he solicited, accepted, and offered bribes in order to maintain his official position and receive kickbacks from contractors, and facilitated the transfer of proceeds of corruption.

Figure 8 Guatemalan Public and Civic Leaders barred from entering the USA because of participation in corruption and anti-democracy activities.



a wide range of sociopolitical elites who effectively represent the elite populations of each of these countries. **Figure 11** offers a list of some of these officials in Guatemala, and there are similar lists for Honduras and El Salvador. Beginning in 2007, the United Nations and OAS instituted one of the “*most ambitious justice projects in Guatemala’s history, and probably in all of Latin America*”, the **Comisión Internacional en Contra Impunidad en Guatemala CICIG**. With the goal of addressing the historic failures of the country’s justice system, the UN signed an agreement with Guatemalan authorities to create the independent body to work jointly with local personnel from the Public Ministry and the then-new Special Prosecutor’s Office against Impunity (FECI). The CICIG survived for 12 years (2007 – 2019) and investigated and dismantled dozens of criminal networks and structures, along with their links to state officials, resulting in 400 convictions. Among otherwise high-profile convictions was the one known as “La Línea” [The Line], involving the investigation of former President Otto Pérez Molina and Vice President Roxana Baldetti. Pérez Molina ended up resigning from the presidency in September 2015 and was then imprisoned and prosecuted for crimes of corruption. In 2019, Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales and his administration ended the project and shutting down the structures of the CICIG and FECI. The Morales administration directed the systematic process of closing civil space, with the Public Ministry closing corruption cases on a massive scale, and even the country’s principal media outlets landing in the crosshairs. In 2022, there were 3,754 attacks against human rights defenders, and at least 73 justice officials, journalists, and activists were forced into exile, according to data from the Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UDEFEUGUA). In many cases, the attacks resulted in baseless judicial proceedings, arbitrary detentions, or, increasingly, forced exile. It is estimated that at least 43 prosecutors, judges, human rights defenders, and journalists have been forced to flee Guatemala since 2018, the majority of whom continue fighting for justice in exile. The climate of corruption and impunity has permeated every facet of the country’s daily reality, including politics.<sup>30</sup>

## §A2.2 El Salvador.

Since taking office in 2019, President Nayib Bukele and his majority in the Legislative Assembly have systematically dismantled democratic checks and balances. A state of emergency adopted in March 2022 that suspended basic rights was adopted by the legislative assembly in March 2022, after a spike in gang violence reached an apex of deaths. The state of emergency has been extended 20 times, and government police and military forces have committed widespread human rights violations, including mass arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, ill-treatment in detention, and due process violations. The emergency provisions in force allow collective trials, authorises judges to imprison children as young as 12, and dangerously expanded the use of counterterrorism legislation and pretrial detention. During the state of emergency, police and soldiers have conducted hundreds of indiscriminate raids, particularly in low-income neighbourhoods, arresting over 73,000 people, including more than 1,600 children.<sup>31</sup> Authorities reported that 7,000 people had been released from prison since the start of the state

<sup>30</sup> (Duran, 2020)

<sup>31</sup> (Human Rights Watch, 2025)



of emergency. Human rights challenges include high levels of poverty and social exclusion, limited transparency and accountability, and violence against women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Many arrests appear to be based on the appearance or social background of detainees or on anonymous calls, and Salvadoran and international human rights groups have documented detentions of hundreds of people with no connections to Maras. Detainees include union and community leaders as well as environmental human rights defenders. The arrests raised El Salvador's incarcerated population to about 104,000, which is roughly 30,000 more than prisons' capacity. Historically poor conditions in detention—overcrowding, violence, and inadequate access to basic services, including food and drinking water—deteriorated. In February, the government began holding detainees in a new mega prison, known as the “Center of Confinement of Terrorism,” with a capacity of 40,000. Over 12,000 detainees were held there as of August. At least 189 detainees have died in prison during the state of

“A young man disappears on the migration route almost without a trace. A teenage girl survives a sexual assault and is too afraid to seek help. A family suddenly decides to leave their home to flee from violence. The common denominator: silence.”

Olivier Dubois, Head of Delegation for Mexico and Central America of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

emergency, human rights groups reported in October. Attorney General Rodolfo Delgado said in June that all investigations into such deaths had been closed. For decades, Maras exerted territorial control over areas throughout the country, committing homicides, forced recruitment of children, rapes and sexual assaults, abductions, extortion, and displacement. Official estimates place the number of gang members in El Salvador at between 60,000 and 86,000. Gang violence appears to have significantly decreased following the government's suspension of basic human rights, providing relief to the country's longstanding high homicide rate, which peaked at 105 per 100,000 people in 2015. The Bukele government states that the rate has sharply diminished since 2019, reaching a historic low in 2022, according to figures provided by the ministry of justice. The same reporting states that extortions have also decreased, however, the lack of transparency and reports of manipulation of data make it hard to determine the accuracy of government reports or to estimate the true extent of the decrease in violence. Prior to the suspension of basic human rights in 2022, the Bukele administration negotiated with the country's three largest Maras,

the prestigious digital outlet *El Faro* reported, offering prison privileges and employment opportunities in exchange for lowering the homicide rate and for electoral support during 2021 elections. Collapsed government negotiations with the MS-13 gang sparked the wave of violence in March, *El Faro* reported. Administrations previous to the Bukele regime responded to the mass violence of the criminal societies haphazardly, oscillating between obscure negotiations with Maras and iron-fisted security policies. Both types of responses resulted in renewed cycles of violence and human rights violations. The Inter American Commission on Human Rights of the Organisation of American States (OAS) has repeatedly called on the Salvadoran government to restore the suspended rights and adopt comprehensive measures to address the root causes and consequences of crime while also engaging in prevention, monitoring, and response efforts from an integrated, crosscutting perspective. The OAS and USA



continues to push for approaches that are part of a broader citizen security policy that prioritizes respect for and protection of human rights, with increased citizen participation and accountability.<sup>32</sup>

### §A3 Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador: Malformed Societies at War with Itself.

The four decades of civil war (1970 – 1996) in Guatemala can be understood as an attempt by the US and Europe backed post-colonial elites to maintain control over a mostly indigenous people. In 1988, researcher Jennifer Schirmer called Guatemala “a violence called democracy” and little has changed since.<sup>33</sup> This is my professional opinion based on four decades of participation in that civil war and research as a uniformed and civilian researcher.<sup>34</sup> The breakdown in post-colonial Guatemalan law, order, and community over the past several decades was, perhaps, unavoidable as issues of inclusion, exclusion, domination, submission, and resurgence of oppressed indigenous culture finally emerged into the public space, only via violent conflict that could no longer be suppressed even with genocidal actions. Ultimately, the conflict in Guatemala and the Northern Triangle is driven by psychosocial-political-historical narrative disintegration or disaggregation of Guatemala’s population segments within the boundaries of a sovereign civil state. Using the previous sections above, as a foundational analytical lens, this section explains how a UN recognised civil state could descend into a state of anarchy from which it may not be able to successfully rescue itself from. To be sure, the various levels of government (city and federal) have enough combat power to protect the Caucasian Spanish-cultural population segments that maintain the government, and its security services. Government security services also serve as a support backup to the privatized security that protects the national commerce structure. The majority remainder of the civil population are divided between those segments that identify and live as closed indigenous (as well as religious) communities and the remainder who identify as neither Euro-Spanish nor Mayan-Indigenous. The latter are often armed as well as government and private security services, from the flood of weaponry infused into the region by the United States and other countries during its decades of civil war.<sup>35</sup> As a consequence, the civilian population that is unable to obtain government or private security or are not under the protection of indigenous or religious communities living in closed societies, are left to survive on their own. This takes the form of *fight* (join a government or private security service, or one of the armed criminal Maras), *flight* (join caravans out of the Northern Triangle headed north to the United States), or *hide in place*, hoping that they will not be killed, abducted, forced into recruitment, or fed on by the conflict parties (rape, robbery, etc). Guatemalan society can best be understood as a series of interrelated population segments that are in various states of open conflict. At the top of the socioeconomic-political and security order are the country’s elites, followed by its western supported indigenous populations, then the collectives of organised armed men, women, and families that constitute ‘Maras’. The lowest segment of Guatemalan society is literally, everyone else. These four distinguishable social segments, with their

**A Violence  
Called  
Democracy**

<sup>32</sup> (IAHCG, 2024)

<sup>33</sup> (Schirmer, 1988)

<sup>34</sup> My participation in the historical disintegration of these Northern Triangle States was not from malign intent, but from ignorance of issues more complex than I understood then.

<sup>35</sup> (Fratius, 2020; Jonas, 2018)



differing psychosocial motivations, are individually and collectively, driving the conflicts that are driving Guatemala to the brink of a 'failed-state' status.

### §A3.1 Indigenous. Maya Quechua

The first segment consists of indigenous settlements and other colonies that are self-sustaining and disconnected from Guatemala's central economic and political life based in the capital city. This segment is often provided enhanced surveillance and protection from external entities such as the United Nations and sponsoring indigenous and religious organizations from the Americas. They are by no means, immune however, from the violent war within Guatemala, El Salvador, & Honduras. The Indigenous communities of the Northern Triangle have

been, and are, engaged in a struggle for their lands and sovereignty in contests that with greater frequency, end in assassinations and extra-judicial action by the respective military and police at the service of all three governments' elites and their business interests. Although Guatemala might superficially resemble its neighbour to the north, Mexico, the two do not have as much in common as might readily be believed. The Indigenous population of Mexico,



Figure 9

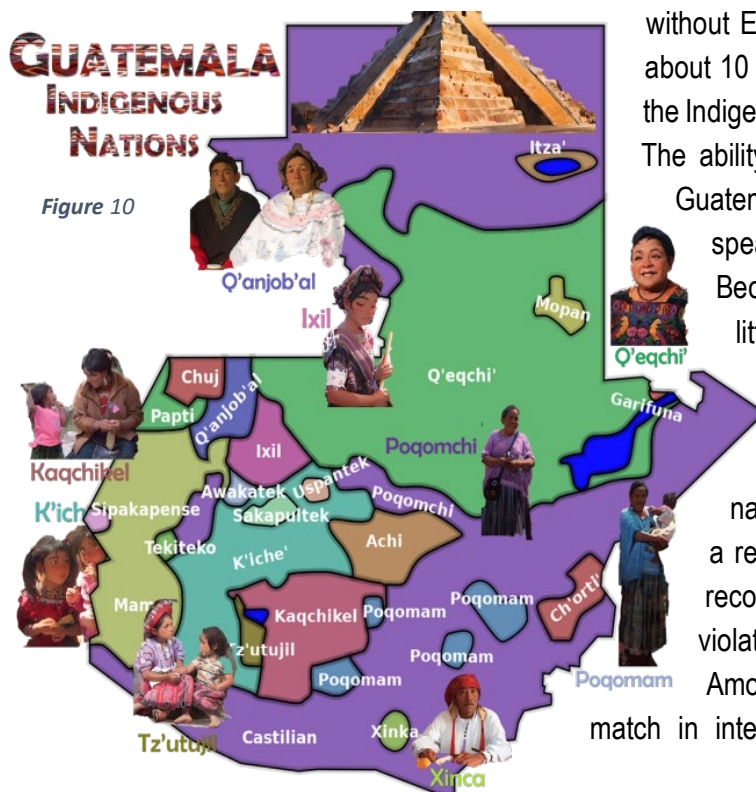


Figure 10

without European admixture, is believed to be no more than about 10 percent or so of the total. In contrast, in Guatemala, the Indigenous populations are estimated to be over 50 percent. The ability to speak Spanish is already a mark of status in Guatemala, whereas in Mexico the number of those who still speak Indigenous languages is comparatively small. Because of Guatemala's isolation, there is concomitantly little development outside of the two major cities, Guatemala City and Antigua, and even there the level of infrastructure does not approach, for example, the wealthier areas of many Latin American nations.<sup>36</sup> The story of the Indigenous in Guatemala is a remarkable one, and the past few decades are worth recounting for the light they shed on international violations of rights and egregious social constructions. Among ethnic disasters of the past few decades, few can match in intensity or have been reported in the media more

<sup>36</sup> (ELÍAS, 2023; OXFAM GB, 2008)



extensively than those of the Indigenous in Guatemala. The social structure of the nation—its hierarchy, driven by a light-skinned population, most of whom are ethnically mestizo but who do not identify with the purely Indigenous—its history, and its small size make it an important site for the documentation and reporting of ethnic disputes and differences. Mayan activist Lucía Ixchiú describes a reality that is not widely understood outside of the Northern Triangle. She lives in the western highlands of Totonicapán, Guatemala, immersed in the sacred communal forest she'd been taught to love, respect, and protect since she was a young child. The forest of Totonicapán is not only one of the most important water recharge sites of Mesoamerica; it's also a symbol of the collective fight of Q'eqchi communities against a colonial Guatemalan state that has repeatedly attempted to seize and destroy it. "We, as Q'eqchi people, recognize the trees as our ancestors," Ixchiú says. The word Q'eqchi literally translates to "a lot of trees." "That's what we are," she says.<sup>37</sup> In the last roughly two decades, illegal logging—facilitated by criminal structures and the government—has increasingly threatened the forest's survival and the livelihoods of the local communities that guard it. She fled Guatemala in 2021, after nearly 10 years of ongoing harassment and death threats from criminal organizations, culminating in an assassination attempt in September 2020. On that day, she was documenting illegal logging in the forest of Totonicapán with her sisters, Andrea, and Gabriela Ixchiú, and her partner, Carlos Ernesto Cano—all journalists and members of the collective *Festivales Solidarios*—as well as staff from Guatemala's National Council of Protected Areas and other local forest defenders. They were ambushed and badly injured by assailants armed with machetes after they confronted a group of men who were illegally smuggling tree wood out of the forest. Guatemalan authorities did nothing after the attack.<sup>38</sup> This violence is happening across Indigenous territories in Guatemala. In El Estor, Izabal, Q'eqchi' communities continue to resist a destructive nickel mine despite growing state militarization, killings, and arrests. And in the region of Quiché, Ixil Indigenous leaders are fighting against hydroelectric dams, illegal logging, and deforestation under the same threats. In 2019, a Mayan Mam indigenous woman named Thelma Cabrera ran for the presidency of Guatemala. The nation's supreme court ruled that she could not run as a candidate and disallowed her placement on the ballot. The decision was overturned under intense pressure from the USA, OAS, and UN, she was allowed to campaign a week before the election, winning 4<sup>th</sup> place despite polls and vote counts suggesting that Cabrera received enough support to make it to the runoff election where two final candidates face off. Former blackface comedian Jimmy Morales won the 2019 election and rolled back the UN instituted corruption reforms over his 4-year tenure.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 11 Indigenous Leaders under Fire

<sup>37</sup> (Duran, 2020; TARACENA, 2023)

<sup>38</sup> (Xunic & Sacatepéquez, 2022)

<sup>39</sup> (ISAACS & SCHWARTZ, 2013)

### §A3.2 Eurocentric Elites (Social • Economic • Ethnic • Political)

The second segment consists of the men, women, and families that make up the political, economic, artistic, and cultural upper segment from middle class and higher of Northern Triangle's three states. The unifying psychosocial characteristic of this population segment is their Eurocentric origin of mental reality. Adherence to a Roman Catholic papacy. A European structure of family, laws, banking, governance, music, art, business, jobs, and the roles of men, women, and children, in the organisation of society. This segment spans a range of physical wealth from ultra rich, downwards to a level where every member of the family is mobilised to build the family's economic and social fortunes as a shared responsibility. They have access to, and some have control over, the structural apparatus of government, security services, and all forms of legal industry. They are politically active in terms of party participation, funding, and organising voting. For the most part, this second segment lives, works, and plays in Zones 1, 4, 9, & 10. **The top tier** of this social segment are transnational elites who are first- and second-generation immigrants from Europe and the Middle East who operate the country's service, banking, media, and telecommunications sectors.<sup>40</sup> The photograph in **figure 12** illustrates the sort of living conditions that the top tier and most of the second-tier live in. Sections of the capitals of Guatemala City, Tegucigalpa, and San Salvador are secured by physical and securitisation barriers that protect the residents from the outside violence of life. These men and women have access and resources beyond what exists in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, or even Central America. They are able to use their states as a wealth generator because of their ability to control the structures of governance, law, justice, and mechanisms of commerce. **The second tier** of this segment is a closed inner circle of traditional elites with deep generational roots in Guatemala, and who are the principal beneficiaries of the top tier activities. Thus, there is a mutual beneficial relationship between these two categories of Guatemalans, Hondurans,



*Figure 12 Paseo Cayala, one of Guatemala City's many gated communities for the elite population segment in Zones 9 & 10.*

**Zone 1** is the historical centre of Guatemala City, where you will find the city's main square featuring the national Cathedral and National Palace, which is now a museum. Zone 1 has some of the best shopping full of international chains and local restaurants, oriented and priced for this segment and the modest tourist and business traffic in Central America. Zone 1 has a strong police presence with security and police officers at each shop and café entrance. Police and military guard all the important monuments and buildings. Zone 1 security blanket ends after dark and when the shops and café's close. Next is Zone 4, which can be described as an upcoming hipster area for the grown offspring of this segment, with loft apartments and younger people's living and playing locales. The owners and operators of many of the Zone 4 establishments are part of that 'emerging elite' group. Like Zone 1, **Zone 4** is secured by blanketed layers of security from dusk till dark/closing time for restaurants. The best-established portions of the elite segment of Guatemala live in **Zones 9 and 10**, as well as Embassies, the airport, the best stores, restaurants, apartments, gated living communities, expensive office buildings, and much of the national political, social, judicial, and cultural points of interest.

<sup>40</sup> [Honduras Elites and Organized Crime: Introduction - InSight Crime](#)



and El Salvadorians. This secondary tier constitutes a large collection of connected families (both related and unrelated) who are the principal landowning farmers, livestock, coffee, and cacao plantation owners.<sup>41</sup> Their family members populate the national and regional government bureaucracies to include the uniformed officer corps of military and police, and the national justice system. These traditional elite families “form the backbone of the traditional political groupings, the National and Liberal Parties.”<sup>42</sup> These two tiers of the ruling elites create and control the capital wealth of the nation and harbour the face of its external cultural (European) identity without oversight or scrutiny even by its own parliament.<sup>43</sup> Their activities are intricately tied together in a corrupted system of legal and illegal business operations that is protected and enforced by co-opted systems of justice and security.<sup>44</sup> It is also the segment that the United States government works to reform and discipline, as well as arm and protect it, usually with poor results<sup>45</sup> since Guatemala has been one of the most fragile states in the world with an 8-year fragile state index average of 80.45.<sup>46</sup> The second tier of this population segment uses their control of the political parties to capitalize the increase in state expenditures from foreign aid and control the flow of foreign capital that passes through the hands and desks of its members in the bureaucracy. Besides foreign aid, international loans totaling more than \$7 Billion USD have been directed into the business enterprises of this segment of the population with the state government as a vehicle for widespread, endemic corruption that is embedded into the entire national structure. The political bloc surrounding the most recent administration of President Alejandro Giammattei (2020-2024) is now the dominant power structure in Guatemala. In just a few years, this elite power structure has achieved an unprecedented consolidation of power across the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. This centralization of power is not a reflection of Giammattei’s popularity or that of his political party, Vamos, which has a minor voting bloc in Congress. The rise and power of this political block is a response to the attempt by the UN, OAS, USA to rebalance Guatemala’s population segments through breaking the hold of elites over the socioeconomic-political-justice-security structures. This inter-elite segment spans liberal and conservative ideologies that focus on keeping Guatemala on a uniform post-colonial Euro-Centric development course. This course is possible only through the marginalisation of the majority indigenous population and the elevation of the European aspirations of its mestizo and criollo segments. This alliance across the elite segment, took root during the Morales administration (2016-2020) when elites shared an interest in ousting the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (*Comisión Internacional Contra la Impunidad en Guatemala – CICIG*). The success in shutting down this drift towards non-European liberal development morphed into a systematic campaign to convert

<sup>41</sup> (ELÍAS, 2023)

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> In 2014, Transparency International ranked Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras 140 of 177 countries in its corruption perceptions index, noting that it has “scarce” or no budget openness. Available at: [https://transparency.org/country#HND\\_DataResearch](https://transparency.org/country#HND_DataResearch)

<sup>44</sup> (Bunck & Fowler, 2012)

<sup>45</sup> [Where Are the Northern Triangle Countries Headed? And What Is U.S. Policy? | Center for Strategic and International Studies \(csis.org\)](https://www.csis.org/analysis/where-are-the-northern-triangle-countries-headed-and-what-is-u-s-policy)

<sup>46</sup> The average value for Guatemala during that period was 80.45 index points with a minimum of 77.3 index points in 2023 and a maximum of 83.2 index points in 2016. The latest value from 2023 is 77.3 index points. The Fragile States Index measures the vulnerability in pre-conflict, active conflict, and post-conflict situations. The index comprises twelve conflict risk indicators that are used to measure the condition of a state at any given moment: security apparatus, factionalized elites, group grievance, economic decline, uneven economic development, human flight, and brain drain, state legitimacy, public services, human rights and rule of law, demographic pressures, refugees and IDPs, and external intervention. The higher the value of the index, the more “fragile” the country is.



the judicial sector into a shield for nefarious actors and a weapon for exacting revenge on those who once fought against impunity. The result has been a period of corruption and graft, gradually spiralling out of control as key branches of the state sink into ungovernability. Regardless of the change in elite political parties in power, the entirety of the civil, security, and economic structures of Guatemala remains the same as they are drawn from all the families of this 'elite' segment of the population. To be clear, not every family attributed to this 'elite' segment is wealthy or corrupt by any means. Being a part of this elite segment of Honduran life more often means that a person and his/her family is connected. I have interviewed middle/upper-middle class families whose rise from poverty was facilitated by a wealthy family whose children were taught; house was cleaned; or business was engaged by the assisted family. Once a helping hand is offered; once a wealthy family or individual decides that an otherwise impoverished family has value, is trustworthy, and loyal, the assisted family must become completely responsive to their benefactor(s). What makes this type of arrangement viable is the complete lack of ability to create legal success that is independent of this controlling elite population segment. It is the second tier of this elite's segment of Guatemala's population described above regarding their psychosocial motivations of individual and family life. The obsessions with *Blanqueamiento* and European cultural displays are not simple preferences, but rather pathological defences against individual and collective identity disintegration. The white(er) Europeans offer validation of their identity against the chaotic collapse of the Spanish-culture state of Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and others. It's not that they don't understand the other population segments that make up indigenous, Maras, and everyone else. These other population segments constitute the 'ugly-outer' that threatens their psychosocial-emotional hold over their own European cultural identity. For everyone in this second-tier elite segment, the bloodlines and family lines simply have too much non-European expression for them to be comfortable with their presence. Also, the attempts by indigenous populations to introduce non-European cultural expression of art, symbols, words, names, and ideas creates psychological terror of trauma. One example of the intransigence of the elite population segment is the 'Guatemalan project', a USAID initiative that is opposed at every turn by the legal and political alliances that hold sway over Guatemalan society. Under the two most recent presidents of Guatemala, every positive step taken to bring justice to Guatemalans and end corruption and impunity by the elite segment of the population has been dismantled. This remains a fact, even though a new president is nearing his first 200 days in office. The non-state actors of MS13/M or B18, and the hundreds of cliques are more of a nihilistic revolutionary

*Figure 13 Failures of protection and justice: A 16-year-old girl in Rio Bravo is beaten by a crowd and burned alive. 41 young girls in a state refuge from violent gangs, are raped and burned alive. Not a single person was successfully prosecuted.*





movement than a non-state actor and the government-elites structure and control adds fuel to this movement daily as both opponents of the movement and economic competitors to it. In 2022, at least one woman or girl died violently every day in Guatemala. The rate of violent deaths of women and girls was 4.9 per 100,000 females, which is higher than in 2021 and 2020, but lower than pre-pandemic rates. Homicides of women were more brutal than those of men. In Guatemala, reports show a daily average of 19 rapes of women and girls in 2022. Approximately four out of every 10 female victims of rape were adolescents ... Police had minimal training and capacity to investigate sexual crimes or assist survivors of such crimes, and the government did not enforce the law effectively. Rape, other sexual offenses, and other forms of gender-based violence were widespread and serious problems. Former Secretary of Social Welfare Carlos Rodas and former Deputy Secretary for Protection and Shelter Services Anahi Keller faced criminal charges for murder, abuse of authority, breach of duty, and abuse against minors following the deaths of 41 girls.<sup>47</sup> His charges were dismissed this past April 2023.<sup>48</sup> The country's justice system faces a growing demand from victims of gender-based and sexual; such cases increased by more than 20 percent from 2020 (68,861) to 2021 (82,828).

### §A3.3 Criminal Social Structures.

The third segment of Northern Triangle social life consists of the ubiquitous armed organised criminal Maras. The upper leadership of these armed social criminal structures are usually drawn from the Eurocentric elites, while the remainder are drawn from everyone else in the invisible middle. The two largest Maras in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador are the MS13 and the B18. For the former, the MS stands for Mara Salvatrucha, said to be a combination of Mara, meaning gang, Salva, for Salvador, and trucha, which translates roughly into street smarts. The 13 represents the position of M in the alphabet. For the latter, the B stands for Barrio and the 18 was derived from the street where the gang originated, 18<sup>th</sup> Street. Barrio 18 is also called Mara (gang) 18 and Calle (street) 18. Mara 18 therefore, is another term of Barrio 18 and I use the term interchangeably. Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS13), Barrio 18 (B18), and their subsidiaries are not unified organizations as much as they are chapters, affiliates, or franchises that are highly decentralised while sharing a common psychosocial-emotional composition. My research suggests that the mestizo population of the Northern Triangle are the recruitment and sustainment base of the violent criminal societies. This majority population segment is the most heavily victimised by the criminal societies as they are the least protected. This population segment is extremely vulnerable to traumatisation-through-victimisation, and subsequent weaponisation the leaders/organisers of the criminal societies. Their vulnerability is a result of weakened or malformed family and ethnic-cultural coherence. This weakness or malformation is because this majority population segment neither self-identifies as indigenous despite their phenotype, nor are they accepted

---

<sup>47</sup> (Ahmed, 2019a; staff, 2019)

<sup>48</sup> The incident happened inside a group home for at-risk girls, aged 14-17, who had been put there by the government, supposedly for their own protection from mara gangs. As fire swept through the classroom, the pleas from the 56 girls locked inside began to fade. Most were unconscious or worse by then, as an eerie silence replaced their panic-stricken shouts. The police officers guarding the door — who had refused to unlock it despite the screams — waited nine minutes before stepping inside. They got water to cool down the scorching knob. Inside, dozens of girls placed in the care of the Guatemalan state lay sprawled on the blackened floor. Forty-one of them died.

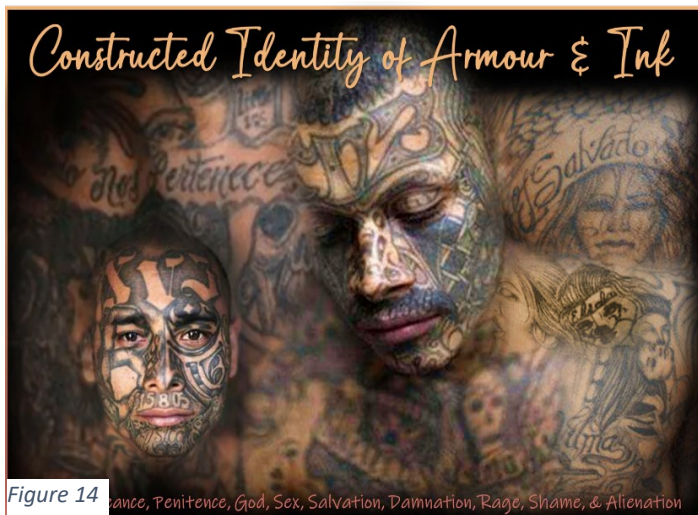


Figure 14 *ance, Penitence, God, Sex, Salvation, Damnation, Rage, Shame, & Alienation*

as European because of their phenotype. They are stranded in the middle of the two competing identities (Euro-Indigenous) in a violent form of social reconstruction. Data suggests that it is a mistake to consider Mara Salvatrucha 13 and Barrio 18 to be mere criminal Maras. In fact, they have long since evolved into complex “criminal-economic-military-political power[s] that poses an existential threat to the states of El Salvador and Honduras.”<sup>49</sup> The rival Maras MS-13 and La 18 control or influence every facet of life in El Salvador, making the small Central American nation the world’s most dangerous place outside a war zone<sup>50</sup>

The genesis of this force that has challenged the political state to a standstill emerged beginning in 1992, in the aftermath of a brutal 12-year-long civil war. El Salvador’s defence minister estimates that as many as 8% of Salvadorians are involved with and under the control of, MS13 and Barrio18, in a country of six and a half million residents. Salvadorians are recruited through violent coercion and extortion of family. The tens of thousands of murders and disappearances are all associated with a three-way gang civil war that involves MS13, Barrio18, and the El Salvadorian Government. During individual in-depth interviews with members of these groups, I found that their competition with each other and with the established socio-political-economic power base is not so much about physical gain.<sup>51</sup> Rather, it is about psychological affirmation and distinction of their large group identities and the creation of an existential narrative not based on colonial or indigenous histories. The gang members’ body art provided me as a research interviewer with a trove of breakthrough questions and physical symbolic objects that incited our gang member interviewees to psychologically and emotionally open up and describe their previously hidden, secret existence (Figure 14).<sup>52</sup> We found that this existence they described was or is ultimately a self-destructive collective identity and existential narrative that serves as an outlet for a psychosocially-emotionally malformed community that is at war with itself (fight), in full flight (mass emigration) from itself, or in denial of itself (governing elite). And neither the state nor international community seems to be able to respond to this slow-motion disintegration of these three states. This underlying psychosocial-emotional driver of social disintegration and participation in violent conflict suggest that the dangers that asylum returnees face cannot be calculated using western, rational logic. The psychosocial-cultural structures of the Northern Triangle countries are in the process of

<sup>23</sup> (Farah & Babineau, 2017)

<sup>50</sup> U.S.A. Department of State Report 2024.

<sup>51</sup> During coding of in-depth qualitative interviews, issues of respect, honour, collective agency versus alienation, shame, and rage predominated, while financial gain was hardly mentioned.

<sup>52</sup> My research and findings are published in USA, UK, CAN Army Special Operations Textbooks that have limited availability to the public based on security classifications. Figure 2 is an assembly of MS-13 gang body art that my research collects and works to translate into a psychosocial-emotional profile for non-lethal targeting by US and UK special operations forces.



disintegration and this disintegration has been increased by great-power interference and a failure to ameliorate the effects of post-colonial social ordering based on racial and cultural preference. My professional assessment to the USA and UK foreign offices has been that these countries are in what may be thought of as a 'free-fall' into increasing levels of violence and disorder, that will continue until the underlying dissonance is finally resolved by those who survive. Another way of describing these violent criminal social organisations is as violent psychosocial-emotional movements of cliques that operate on an ideology of malformed, borderline personality disorder identity created by complex trauma of generations of violence, oppression, and cultural disintegration as described above. Each clique may exhibit different operating traits based on short term goals and objectives which cannot be generalized across all MS13 or B18 and related 'cliques'.<sup>53</sup> **Figure 15** offers a glimpse into the ever-evolving cliques of the criminal

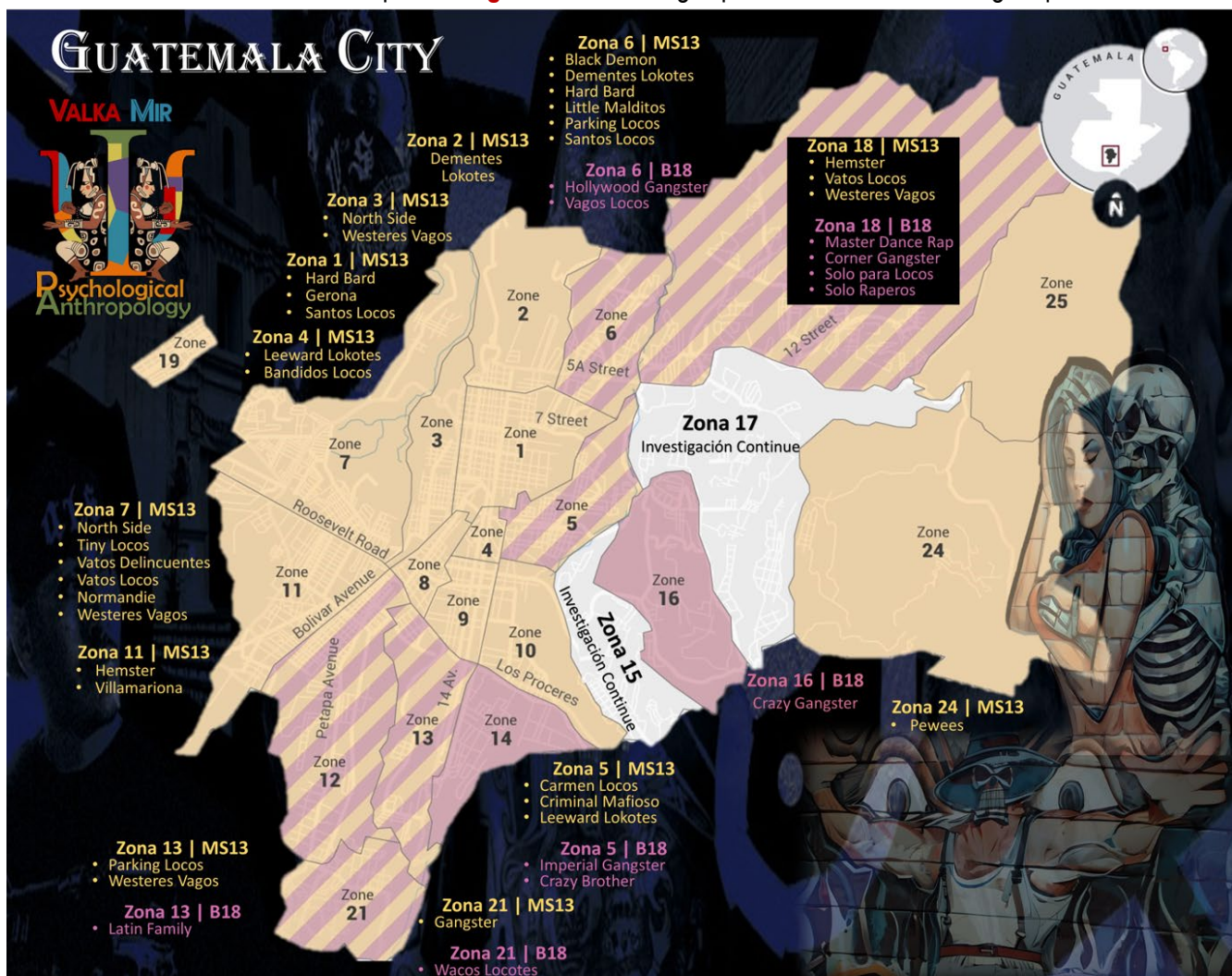


Figure 15 Social Criminal Organizations in Guatemala City

<sup>53</sup> (ReliefWeb, 2015)



social organisations in Guatemala that struggle for survival and the meeting of unmet human needs. The basic psychopathology of the movement and its members is stable and generalizable as the pathology deals with the malformation of a collective identity rather than a particular cognitive strategy employed by a clique to obtain a goal. The funding strategies of MS13 and B18 vary by clique and by neighbourhood, competing with government owned or supported criminal enterprises which routinely lead to spasms of episodic violence.<sup>54</sup> It is important to note that the financial extraction aspects of the gang members are secondary to other, deeper unmet psychosocial human needs.<sup>55</sup> MS13, B18, and their subsidiaries are firstly, psychosocial organizations made up of collectives of traumatized men and women, re-enacting violent, even psychotic fantasies of power and self-esteem. The graphic in **figure 16** is drawn from street art painted by gang members in the streets of Tegucigalpa, San Salvador, and Guatemala City. These images are displayed over the bodies of the gang members, describing their inner ideations of despair, evil, rage, alienation, or justice, against desires for dignity, honour, love, and salvation. The fact that their membership numbers are in the tens of thousands suggests that the underlying causations of this complex trauma syndrome are long-term and widespread within the societies of the Northern Triangle. Guatemala's president has used the national police PNC to prosecute MS13 and B18 through mass incarcerations of military aged males who pose the slightest suspicion. This has been possible through the suspension of civil liberties and the rule of civil law. The violent criminal social organisations of Guatemala adapted quickly by disaggregating into hundreds of smaller cliques as described in **figure 15**, with amusing, even nonsensical names.<sup>56</sup> In each of the neighbourhoods of Guate, however, while MS13 and B18 don't exist, the hundreds of smaller cliques are well known as to their alignment. Instead of gang members, there are emeeses, as the gang's members are known.<sup>57</sup> On the walls at the entrance to the various barrios, artistic graffiti informs the inhabitants and visitors of which clique is in charge there: "Mara Salvatrucha 13 – Tiny Locos" reads one such graffiti sign in Zona 7.<sup>58</sup> The following is an example of what it is like to visit these hundreds of gang-controlled



Figure 16 Graphic gang street graffiti

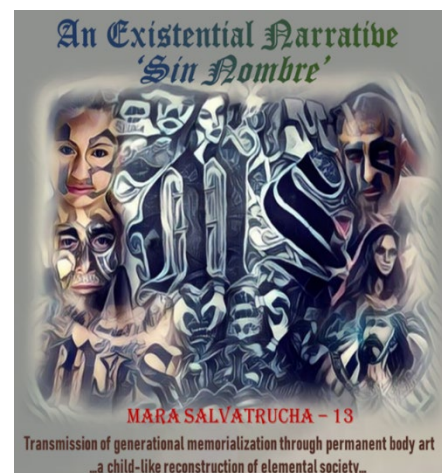


Figure 17 Mara Salvatrucha 13, Barrio 18 Existential Narratives

<sup>54</sup> (Ahmed, 2019b)

<sup>55</sup> (Casas et al., 2021; Roy & Cheatham, 2023)

<sup>56</sup> (Gurney, 2014)

<sup>57</sup> (Sanz & Martínez, 2023)

<sup>58</sup> (Lewis O'Neill, 2019)



neighbourhoods in Guatemala City. The author, Juan José Martínez D'Aubuisson, is an investigative journalist working in the Northern Triangle.

*“In a corner at the end of the wall, a boy wearing tall socks and a pair of knock-off Nike Cortez sneakers, the gang’s trademark shoe, scowled at me as he spoke through his headphones – likely announcing my arrival. I guessed correctly. Three more boys were waiting for me on the next block. They watched me pass by with scathing eyes and informed the others. The further I ventured into the neighbourhood, the more visible the MS13’s presence became. If the first guy had imitation shoes, those in the next alley wore originals. Those standing in the following pathway have tattoos and, even though it is cold, they take off their shirts to flaunt them. But, despite the undeniable presence of the MS13’s members, all of my sources agreed that the MS13 does not officially exist here. Caballo Loco (Crazy Horse), the most veteran emeese in the neighbourhood, guided me through the alleys and pointed out the gang members, their graffiti and their hideouts. He is protected by slum rules, those that grant veteran bandits a godlike status. The seasoned gang member recounts each of the street corner’s bloody tales and explains, with tremendous patience, the logic that allows dozens of neighbourhoods in the Guatemalan capital to be filled with gang members even though they don’t belong to the MS13.”<sup>59</sup>*

The current approach can be analogised to using a scalpel to try and cut away an infection of the body, with the knife spreading and deepening the infection with every slice. The deeper unmet psychosocial human needs that Guatemalan (and other countries) people attempt to fulfil with membership in these organised gang-groups are non-negotiable in their fulfilment, such as love, connection, belonging, esteem, pride, worth, meaning, remembrance, honour, nurture, and identity; male masculine and female feminine identity that they are unable to construct outside of participation in violent Maras. Such motivations and drivers of this population segment only ensure that it will grow until it encompasses a portion of the country that collapses the state and drives out the remaining populations. These Maras are emanations from, and inextricably linked to, the majority population. Our social science research affirms that the violent repressive strategies (lethality, incarcerations, prison conditions, cordon, and searches, etc) of successive government administrations works to increase the depth and strength of the armed Maras, worsening the plight of those Guatemalans who are caught in the middle. As news breaks of each highly publicised ‘win’ over

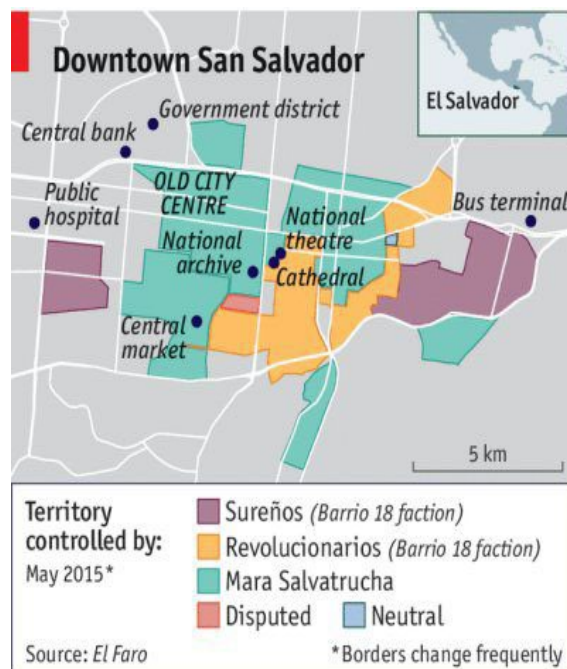


Figure 18 Social Criminal Organizations in San Salvador

<sup>59</sup> (D'Aubuisson, 2022; Sanz & Martínez, 2023)



the violent social criminal Maras in Guate, the population becomes ever more jaded about their reality. My research and experience suggest that most of San Salvador Metropolis and many of the larger population areas are in an open conflict that the government is unable to comprehend, much less control-secure or ameliorate. **Figure 18** illustrates the degree that MS13 and other such organizations permeate even the central capital of San Salvador which are in open combat between government forces and the violent social-criminal organizations contesting control over the city and its population.<sup>60</sup> The various levels of government (city and federal) marginally possess enough combat power to protect the Caucasian Spanish-cultural population segments that maintain the government, and its security services. Government security services also serve as a support backup to the privatized security that protects the national commerce structure. The majority remainder of the civil population are divided between those segments that identify and live as closed indigenous (as well as religious) communities and the remainder who identify as neither Euro-Spanish nor Mayan-Indigenous. The latter are often armed as well as government and private security services, from the flood of weaponry infused into the region by the United States and other countries during its decades of civil war.<sup>61</sup> As a consequence, the civilian population that is unable to obtain government or private security or are not under the protection of indigenous or religious communities living in closed societies, are left to survive on their own. This takes the form of fight (join a government or private security service, or one of the armed criminal Maras), flight (join caravans out of the Northern Triangle headed north to the United States), or hide in place, hoping that they will not be killed, abducted, forced into recruitment, or fed on by the conflict parties (rape, robbery, etc). Competing cliques infiltrate into the local tuk-tuk transportation systems trying to establish control over the dirt arteries that snake into rural hamlets like Ciudad Delgado, where Ana Marisol lived with her husband.

**FAMILY INTERRUPTED: Malformed Childhoods. Deformed Society.**

MS13 formed in the dystopian aftermath of El Salvador's brutal civil war. The USA backed government in San Salvador eventually destroyed the insurgency, but at the cost of the near complete destruction of social tissue.

Gangs formed in the country's postwar upheaval that remained mired in economic stagnation because of its destroyed commercial infrastructure base. Thousands of adolescents roamed the streets with no jobs and little else to do. The sense of belonging offered by the gangs was too much for many of them to resist. Most MS13 members are around fifteen years old when they join and pass initiation, however recruitment and grooming of potential members begins as early as age twelve. Girls are also targeted at an early age, either to join the gang or to become sex slaves.

The average MS13 member is around 25 years old and lives in either a house in a poor neighbourhood or an overcrowded jail. They have never held a formal job and likely did not finish secondary education. Most gang members are among the poorest people in Salvadoran society, living on less than \$250 a month. Despite the *mareros'* youth, their faces are scarred, and their eyes hollowed by years of dealing out death and takina abuse. making them look much older.

Figure 19 Malformed Societies in the Northern Triangle that result in the rise of violent, criminal societies in open opposition to the existing social order and its governance



<sup>60</sup> This map was produced by El Faro Research from local reports, interviews, and open-source information gathering.

<sup>61</sup> (Fratius, 2020; Jonas, 2018)



### Alma's Story

MS13 gang members had made it clear they wanted her dead. She had broken one of their rules. A gang wannabe had already hit her square in the head with the butt of a handgun, leaving a deep circular bruise in the middle of her temple, right at the hairline. The scar would stay with her for life. Her parents saw the injury and knew the implications. Her mom hustled Alma to a hotel in San Salvador with a backpack and some of her clothes. They would not see each other again for years.

Figure 20 Context of El Salvador's Violence as Social Order

They monitor residents, tracking families' financial conditions for potential extraction they call taxation. A new car, a sudden purchase of cattle, could bring a resident and his/her family to the attention of MS13 or B18 clique. New cliques that move into unclaimed hamlets often choose and move into the best homes as respites and hiding places, setting up in people's living rooms and "helping themselves to the contents of their refrigerators."<sup>62</sup> In the metropolis centre of San Salvador, the Ciudad Soyapango, MS13 controls the supply of gasoline, through distribution of fuel to local shops. MS13 owns the taxis and extorts the bus lines in and out of the town. Anyone with a car is charged \$10 per month and \$15 a month for a truck, for parking fees. The three service garages in town are also owned by MS13 members, as are three of the bakeries in town. And MS13 controls the supplies of flour and wheat deliveries to the non-MS13 owned bakeries and provides bottled water in a town where the public supply is marginally potable, at best. MS13 and B18's evolution has restructured the social map of San Salvador with invisible borders that continuously shift with the organizational growth of new members, chapters, and splinters. In the neighbourhoods<sup>63</sup> that have extensive and mature gang activity with protection rackets organized in hierarchical fashion, emerging leaders and new chapters of the larger organization will penetrate nearby areas that are lesser protected. Depending on support from the more mature organizational segments, MS13/B18 spread like tendrils of criminal-economic-military-political undertakings that spread, thicken, and mutate. Where they encounter rival Maras, to include Salvadorian government forces, violence ignites. Even Nayib Bukele, the current president of El Salvador's home Neighborhood of Nuevo Cuscatlán, which houses the military academy is fair game. Last February 2022, authorities discovered a clandestine mass grave containing 26 bodies, all apparent victims of MS13. In even the smallest villages in El Salvador, the MS13 has cliques that "extort everyone from auto repairman to cotton candy sellers."<sup>64</sup> MS13's evolution from youth groups defending neighbourhood turf to decentralized hierarchical organisations that coerce, threaten, and kill. Many members and sympathisers, particularly from MS-13, become teachers, lawyers, local government officials and even police officers who serve the gang's interests. Their influence has grown so great that every major political party in El Salvador and Honduras has at some point paid Maras during elections. It is nearly impossible to arrest high-ranking gang members,

who are protected by layers of government corruption and disfunction. Senior USA and El Salvadorean officials can sense the magnitude of the challenge, but domestic and international pressure inhibit resolutions that are not based on ever increasing amounts of lethal kinetic coercion. Over the last fifteen years, various Salvadoran governments

<sup>62</sup> (Dudley, 2020; Zaidi, 2019)

<sup>63</sup> Called colonias, barrios, cantones, ciudades.

<sup>64</sup> (Dudley, 2020)



have tried to crush MS13 and others with *con mano dura* – with an iron fist. They have mounted massive joint military and police operations in the capital and other cities, arresting thousands, and creating massive prison-housing areas for each gang to cohere and deepen their solidarity. The fact that the government leaders of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala have been indicted for public corruption and large scale narco-trafficking, has only placed them into the ongoing war as a competitor in a three-way civil war.

### §A3.4 Everyone Else – The Invisible Middle

The fourth segment of Guatemalan life consists of everyone else in the country whose lives are ruled by the violent criminal societies and equally violent criminalized government security services.<sup>65</sup> This segment is distinguished from the elite segment in that they are in a transition state of social organization between rural and urbanized; and between indigenous Mayan Mongoloid and colonial European Caucasoid. They will usually have some levels of formalized education but limited access to university or trade schools. Most importantly, they have acculturation into a national Spanish-European oriented cultural identity of uncertain provenance.<sup>66</sup> Most of the small family businesses are in this segment of the population; below the elites, do not consider themselves to be indigenous, but neither do they think of themselves as European. They are not part of a gang, and lead lives that range from bare survival to profitability that allows them to save money. Finally, they attempt to organize and manage their family and work lives in the model established by the Euro-centric elites who control the levers of sociopolitical-economic sustainment. It is this segment that is in perpetual fight (join the elites, Maras, or indigenous segments) or flight (flee into asylum).<sup>67</sup> Dr. Robert Kirkland is a scholar and consultant supporting USG programming in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. He writes that:

*“Small business owners ... are targeted constantly by gangs for protection payments in order to allow their businesses to keep running. Gangs exert influence over neighbourhoods by requiring an impuesto de guerra or “war tax” on businesses. Failure of businessmen to pay the gangs has resulted in pilfering of merchandise, destruction of the business, or at worst death to the owner and his family. In particular, gangs target small business owners who are seen as profitable. In the vast majority of communities ... successful small business owners clearly stand out from the average person in the population.”<sup>68</sup>*

Compare Dr. Kirkland’s findings with the stories of refugees fleeing the Northern Triangle, leaving thousands of business closures collapsing the social structures that support the region’s population below the levels of the elite.

<sup>65</sup> “The dependence of the elites on the state security forces to protect their enterprises led to the emergence of the military as a political and an economic player.

<sup>66</sup> Uncertain provenance in the sense that many poor Hondurans, Guatemalans, and El Salvadoreans are not sure how much of their ancestry is indigenous Mayan and how much is colonial Spanish. All they know for sure is that they are not particularly welcome by either.

<sup>67</sup> For this segment of Guatemala’s population, the decision to fight by joining one of the other population segments is not always up to them. If a family in this segment is employed and under the protection of a wealthy elite family, then joining the elite segment can be an option offered to them. If their level of indigenous bloodlines and their acculturation to indigenous ideas of social organization are adequate, they can choose to abandon their Euro ties (psychosocial-economic-political) and forge/renew/deepen their indigenous aspects of individual and collective identity. This can be difficult as it means transitioning from an egocentric to a sociocentric psychosocial orientation. Joining the gangs is much easier, especially for young unattached males and females who’ve no where else to turn.

<sup>68</sup> (Kirkland, 2021)



The decisions made by this population segment to ‘fight or flight’ appears to be based on their connection to the Euro-centric or Indigenous-centric identity structures (fight) or abandon it and flee elsewhere. My field research shows that some portions of this population segment have adjusted to this ‘middle identity’ space and have been able to become educated, find jobs, start small businesses, and raise families. Their individual and family collective identity is progressive, modern, and subordinates their inherited ethnic and cultural identity which is confusing with varying levels of mixed blood and culture. Instead, they focus on constructed identities that allow for survival. These constructed identities are based on archetypal concepts of family-community personhood in what Benedict Anderson calls “Imagined Communities” of national formation.<sup>69</sup> These imagined communities would, if successful, relegate the inherited aspects of individual and collective identity to the personal sphere of social life in favour of constructed economic and cultural identities that transcends both colonial and indigenous identity. Unfortunately for these imagined communities, the bulk of Guatemalan culture, theatre, education, arts, and social life is based on inherited identities of race, ethnicity, and the culture of colonial family life. The oppositional (to European) cultural identity in Guatemala and Honduras is Indigenous and operates in stark contrast to the dominant European structure of global identity that is quite foreign to most Guatemalans. This educated and or compliant portion of adaptive Guatemalans serves as a labour force for the elites that includes service as soldiers, policemen, clerks, managers, and all manner of functionaries. The perceived value of these roles to this population segment is their opportunity to grant their children an opportunity to enter the bottom level of the elite segment, where their survival will be more assured physically, culturally, and generationally. Their ability to transition into the elite segment is mediated by their phenotype, family ties, intellect, ambition, and luck. They have few if any enforceable rights outside of what they are granted by the elites and those who work for the elites. Their rapes, robberies, assaults, injustices, and indignities are not normatively of concern to the municipal and federal police forces, even when cases are brought to trial by the abogados of the civil fiscalia.<sup>70</sup> The rural members of this segment live in subsistence mode,

**LPL PRENSA LATINA**  
HEADLINE NEWS Guatemala dismantles 34 extortionist structures  
Guatemala City, Jan 9, 2024

Guatemala’s National Civil Police (PNC) has dismantled 34 criminal extortionist structures, as it has arrested 2,882 of their members until 2023, an official source announced Tuesday.

The military forces have been coping with 16,626 cases, over those 13,329 by 2022; in addition, they reported 779 domestic raids in collaboration with the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the Interior Ministry unfolded.

The Ministry added that along with other PNC units, 129 firearms, 1,313 mobiles and 233 vehicles had been seized, all related to those illicit activities.

Much of the credit goes to the National Division against the Criminal Development of Gangs, the spokesperson for the Interior Ministry Jorge Aguilar underscored a few days ago.

Aguilar noted that most of the members of the criminal groups belong to the Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio 18 gangs.

The authority added that there are individuals who imitate those organizations though and use intimidating phone calls to extort money from the population.

The Deputy Director General of Criminal Investigation Edis Fabian highlighted in recent statements the effectiveness of the plans of actions taken, “fundamental to counteract the aforementioned criminal phenomenon at the national level,” Aguilar assured.

<sup>69</sup> (B. Anderson, 1983)  
<sup>70</sup> See paragraph 11.3.2 below.



surviving on approximately £1.25 per day. Most of the members of this segment of Guatemalan society are at the mercy of any member of the elite segment and their security forces as well as the socio-criminal organizations competing for control of this part of the population.<sup>71</sup> They often fear government security forces as much as the Maras and are caught in the middle of a violent existential war. They flee Guatemala in caravans of 3-4,000 at a time.<sup>72</sup> United Nation High Commission for Refugees has issued eligibility guidelines for Guatemala that implicitly recognizes this middle segment of Guatemalan society as a distinct and at-risk segment of the population:

*“Gangs are reported to exercise extraordinary levels of social control over the population of their territories [...] In these zones, inhabitants are reportedly required to ‘look, listen and keep quiet’ and often face a plethora of gang-imposed restrictions on who they can talk with and what about, what time they must be inside their homes, where they can walk or go to school, who they can visit and who can visit them, what they can wear, and even, reportedly, the colour of their hair.” UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines<sup>73</sup>*

The UNHCR’s eligibility guidelines specifically details persons who are perceived by a gang as contravening its rules or resisting its authority as identified risk profile for Guatemala. The asylum claimants in this case clearly belongs in this protected category of persons under UN conventions.

#### **§A4 Exploration of the Armed Organisations (MS13/B18) at War in the Northern Triangle.**

The invisible middle of the populations of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, constitute at least 50% of the potential electorate, if they were either able to, or willing to, cast their vote. For these majority populations however, they have little idea of what type of a candidate they would vote for as they have little capacity to visualise a future outside of subsistence survival. They work, love, pray, eat, sleep, make and raise babies, in a state of learned hopelessness achieved from decades of intimate violence from government and non-government sources. They exist in ‘no-man’s land’ with both government and anti-government militias working to recruit their children into service as foot soldiers. The families from this ‘invisible middle’ are the preponderance of the flows of asylum refugees fleeing into exile, under pressure from both government and from criminal societies (Maras). To understand these pressures, we must understand these armed criminal organisations and the role played in their growth and sustainment by the governments of the Northern Triangle. The state of El Salvador is in not in the throes of a violent internal armed conflict, which their national army has temporarily subdued through the employment of widespread violence and the construction of mass holding facilities of human beings. Tens of thousands of men, women, and children have been seized by the El Salvadoran Army and Police, far greater than any capacity to hold them. Each human prisoner is packed into less space than livestock for the remainder of life. This is an experiment that cannot succeed from my expert opinion as a psychoanalytical anthropologist. This system is untenable and will breakdown. Meanwhile, tens of

<sup>71</sup> (Cordova Arauz, 2020; Staff, 2023; Staff at Cultural Survival [www.cs.org](http://www.cs.org), 2010)

<sup>72</sup> (Verza, 2018)

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/5943f0444.pdf>



thousands of Salvadorians have been killed by MS13, B18, and government forces that have been let loose on the population. The government of El Salvador has long proven that it does not understand the violent conflict that is disintegrating its society. Internal corruption within the national and local governments have placed it in direct criminal competition with MS13 and other Maras. Former President Mauricio Funes (2009-2014), who has been living in Nicaragua since 2016, faces criminal charges including corruption, embezzlement, and money laundering.<sup>74</sup> Now, banned from U.S. soil are five more of El Salvadoran President Bukele's closest confidants, businessmen and former corrupt officials linked to Giammattei, an advisor to Xiomara Castro and two of her party's top legislators. In February of 2020, Bukele himself led an armed military assault against the country's legislative parliament.<sup>75</sup> Despite massive and continuing crackdowns by El Salvador's Army and Police, Maras continue to exercise territorial control over some neighbourhoods and extort residents throughout the country.<sup>76</sup> They forcibly recruit children and sexually abuse women, girls, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Maras kill, disappear, rape, or displace those who resist.<sup>77</sup> Over the past five years, police alone have committed 179 extrajudicial killings, the Ombudsperson's Office reported. Yet only twenty-five resulted in convictions.<sup>78</sup> As President Bukele's use of Salvadorian Armed Forces against his own citizens continues, oppositional support to the Maras-as-insurgents grows and the violence deepens.<sup>79</sup>

#### §A4.1 Normal Crime.

The nature of the criminal organisations that are challenging the legitimacy of governance in the Northern Triangle, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, is central to the question of whether these states will survive; whether their civil populations will continue to flee into exile despite enormous risks and penalties; and how western intervention might reduce this flow of refugees. Every human society, at some point in its growth, develops some levels of individual and collective (organised) crime. Below the level of crime, there are issues of parental fairness, access to equal shares of family resources based on capacity and input, amongst other considerations. At its least destructive, crime is simply the violation of established rules for individuals and collectives. Crime is also relative in that, as rules change, so do actions that constitute crime. Normal organized crime in a healthy society is parasitic and driven by rational motives. Such organizations feed off the societal host without a desire to destroy it, as doing so would eliminate its source of

Figure 21



<sup>74</sup> (Dudley, 2020; Farah & Babineau, 2017; Zaidi, 2019)

<sup>75</sup> The Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, El Salvador Country Report 2022. <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/SLV>

<sup>76</sup> (Human Rights Watch, 2022)

<sup>77</sup> (Human Rights Watch, 2022)

<sup>78</sup> (Farah & Babineau, 2017)

<sup>79</sup> (Human Rights Watch, 2022)



sustainment. In fact, normal organised crime members support and even nurture the cultural society they feed on, with donation to arts and contributions to its defense from foreign invaders. Organised crime leaders and members operate in a logical, profit-motive pattern of activities that can be mapped and tracked (though not always proven) by criminologists. They may employ violence to protect their own commercial activities from other crime organizations or security services. Such organizations may attract members who display unusual levels of violent hostility but are controlled or eliminated as needed to protect the organization and its goals. Most importantly, organized crime members have psychological identities that are consistent with societal norms, albeit, with moral reasoning structures that allows them to operate criminally sanctioned commercial activities that are socio-culturally disapproved without personality disintegration. They often have families and homes that operate compliantly with social laws and norms. They serve in their communities alongside other community members who are not employed in criminal enterprises. Finally, they seek respect, admiration, and even love from the very society that they are illicitly feeding on.<sup>80</sup> There are 'normal' rational organised crime groups in Guatemala and many of their members are in prisons. These types of inmates are called 'paisas', Spanish for civilians and are usually linked to members of the elites in the public or private sectors of society. An example of this alternate type of criminal in Guatemala's prisons is Captain Byron Lima Sosa, who was once a staff officer on former President Álvaro Arzú's General Staff. Captain Sosa had been convicted, along with his father and three others, of murdering the bishop and human rights defender Juan José Gerardi in 1998 on the orders of someone with enough power to avoid implication and ensure that his former staff officers were cared for. As an important paisa inmate, Captain Sosa, his father and his former sergeants, were able to avoid expected disgrace and retain thier key connections with elite political circles and the Guatemalan Army. Where the paisa inmates remain connected to the society whose laws they broke, MS13/B18 inmates are called 'cholos' and are loathed by the paisas who are often given control over them. Anyone with gang related tattoos who end up in Guatemala's prisons are subjected to daily humiliation, extortion, and dominance, which serves to incite psychological-emotional resistance to the point of kamakaze or even suicidal behavioural outplay. Any hint of resistance or pride would be met with a beating sufficient to build an ever deepening capacity to withstand pain and suffering without surrender. Imprisoned gang members describe how indiscipline was often punished with torture: electric shocks, administered while the guards looked the other way.



**INVISIBLE BOUNDARIES**

“Do you see that place across the road? I could never get in there since it's the 18<sup>TH</sup> Street gang's territory. If they see me in there without permission, they might think that I'm a spy or trying to take something from them. For sure, I'd get beaten up, raped, and I would easily get killed.”

– Maryia Journalist

**§A4.2 Criminal Insurgency.**

<sup>80</sup> Criminal history research shows that these organised crime organisations in developed world countries are often, quite patriotic.



By contrast, the growing violent criminalised societies of MS13/B18 in the Northern Triangle are *revolutionary malformations of society* that are driven by generations of *traumatic psychological and sociological traumas* that have morphed into new and terrifying realities of human life. My research into Mara Salvatrucha 13 and Barrio 18, suggests that they operate as a collective pathological cultural-identity group that exhibits traits of identity diffusion present in BPD (borderline personality development).<sup>81</sup> Every MS13/B18 member interviewed expressed complex trauma<sup>82</sup> with effects of frantic thoughts of avoidance of real or imagined abandonment. They reported patterns of unstable family relationships that alternated between extremes of idealization<sup>83</sup> and devaluation<sup>84</sup>, often interspersed with domestic violence. The MS13/B18 interviewees recounted their early family lives and reasons for entering the Maras to overcome persistently unstable self-image or sense of self that were marked by self/family-damaging behaviour involving sex, substance abuse, self-harm, or suicidal ideations. Interviewees verbalized feelings of emptiness alternated with inappropriate, intense anger that they found difficult to control and attributed to stress related paranoid ideations of impending violence from (consciously) members of the competing Maras or security services and (subconsciously) from family trauma remembrance and repetition. We found that the membership of MS13 mirrors the membership of Barrio18 in terms of ethnic mix of indigenous-Spanish, and socioeconomic status.<sup>85</sup> They are, in most respects identical in terms of phenotype and archetype and require external physical signs (tattoos) to distinguish themselves from each other.<sup>86</sup> The pandillas and cliques of Mara Salvatrucha 13, Barrio 18, cannot be compared to organized crime in the UK, US, or Europe from a psychosocial-emotional analytical lens. These organised social-criminal



*"The cry of the grandmother was gut-wrenching as she watched the burial of her grandson, the second killed in just days in a horrific wave of violence against children in. Kids, even very young kids, are often killed if they refuse to join powerful street gangs, a scourge plaguing the poor Central American nation reputed to be the world's most violent place. "Don't leave me, my children!" the woman cried. This second grandson was only seven years old. He was shot and tortured, his body found wrapped in a sheet and dumped in a vacant lot. The grandmother and the mother of the child were already in shock after the death three days earlier of another of their children, aged thirteen, in similarly grisly circumstances. In the space of a month, six more school-age children were murdered, and authorities say the reason was the same -- they had refused to join a street gang. Last week members of gang called the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) burst into a youth detention center, overpowered guards, and detonated a grenade, killing five members of the rival Mara 18 (M-18). That same day, a man stabbed a 13-year-old girl to death, and killed her siblings aged ten, seven and two. The heart-breaking scene of the grieving grandmother consumed with pain was broadcast on television."*

Figure 22 AFP News Story: Context of life for 'everyone else'

<sup>81</sup> (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR)*, 2000b)

<sup>82</sup> Complex trauma is multiple traumatic events over the course of years, rather than just a single event.

<sup>83</sup> Religious, metaphysical imaginations from generational stories amplified by the effects of trauma.

<sup>84</sup> Often, racial-ethnic devaluation based on societal stimulus that is culturally pervasive in the urban sprawls of the Northern Triangle capital cities.

<sup>85</sup> My research was conducted in concert with my colleagues in Valka-Mir Human Security under contract with the United States Army Special Forces Command at Fort Bragg NC.

<sup>86</sup> (Mohor, 2023)



movements are “not about generating revenue as much as [they] are about creating a collective identity that is constructed and reinforced by shared, often criminal experiences, especially acts of violence and expressions of social control.”<sup>87</sup> While these organizations do in fact, illegally extract large sums of financial resources from the communities that they operate in, they are a psychological, sociological, and emotional phenomenon that is reshaping the collective cultural identity into one that creates a malformed version of love and family life and a deformed version of social interaction and personhood. The latter is malformed into pain-as-love and the latter is deformed into compliant helplessness that is anesthetized by drugs, promiscuity, and casual violence..<sup>88</sup> The central question posed by immigration tribunals in the UK, Americas, and Europe, is how is it possible that these governments of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, are unable to regain a monopoly over criminal violence within their borders in the absence of an external aggressor? My research into Mara Salvatrucha 13 and Barrio 18, on the other hand, suggests that they operate as a collective pathological cultural-identity group that exhibits traits of identity diffusion present in BPD (borderline personality development).<sup>89</sup> Every MS13/B18 member interviewed expressed complex trauma<sup>90</sup> with effects of frantic thoughts of avoidance of real or imagined abandonment. They reported patterns of unstable family relationships that alternated between extremes of idealization<sup>91</sup> and devaluation<sup>92</sup>, often interspersed with domestic violence. The MS13/B18 interviewees recounted their early family lives and reasons for entering the Maras to overcome persistently unstable self-image or sense of self that were marked by self/family-damaging behaviour involving sex, substance abuse, self-harm, or suicidal ideations. Interviewees verbalized feelings of emptiness alternated with inappropriate, intense anger that they found difficult to control and attributed to stress related paranoid ideations of impending violence from (consciously) members of the competing Maras or security services and (subconsciously) from family trauma remembrance and repetition. We found that the membership of MS13 mirrors the membership of Barrio18 in terms of ethnic mix of indigenous-Spanish, and socioeconomic status.<sup>93</sup> They are, in most respects identical in terms of phenotype and archetype and require external physical signs (tattoos) to distinguish themselves from each other. ted and unbearable thoughts and emotions about their own identity devaluation and disintegration.<sup>94</sup>

### §A4.3 Criminal Pathologies

The rage and violence perpetrated against each other is a projection of their own self-hatred borne of continuous devaluation and dehumanization by two opposing cultures (indigenous and colonialist) that they are neither

**MS13/B18 and their related affiliates, on the other hand, perceive only self-loathing from both their indigenous and European expressions of self-identity.**

<sup>87</sup> (Center for Latin American & Latino Studies, 2018) Page 3

<sup>88</sup> (Center for Latin American & Latino Studies, 2018) Page 3

<sup>89</sup> (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR)*, 2000b)

<sup>90</sup> Complex trauma is multiple traumatic events over the course of years, rather than just a single event.

<sup>91</sup> Religious, metaphysical imaginations from generational stories amplified by the effects of trauma.

<sup>92</sup> Often, racial-ethnic devaluation based on societal stimulus that is culturally pervasive in the urban sprawls of the Northern Triangle capital cities.

<sup>93</sup> My research was conducted in concert with my colleagues in Valka-Mir Human Security under contract with the United States Army Special Forces Command at Fort Bragg NC.

<sup>94</sup> Also referred to as trait dissociation. (Lensvelt-Mulders et al., 2008; Marmar, 1997)



part of nor separate from.<sup>95</sup> The individual and collective identity diffusion of MS13/B18 is readily apparent in the gang-membership rituals as new and existing members work to cohere (pull-together) their subconscious-self through recreations of traumatic violence.<sup>96</sup> The psychological dynamic at work here is called an Adversary Symbiosis between themselves and their 'Enemy-Other' gang or government security.<sup>97</sup> Essentially, MS13 and Barrio18 psychologically recruit and use each other to 'cast-off' or rid themselves of unwanted and unbearable thoughts and emotions about their own identity devaluation and disintegration.<sup>98</sup> Each ingroup casts off unwanted feelings of terror, fear, weakness, and helplessness through projection onto a psychologically-safe 'other.'<sup>99</sup> This 'cast-off' psychological material is then destroyed through outplays of violence upon the group that is projected on. The projection of self-loathing traits or attributes onto a an 'enemy-other' is a psychologically safe way for one ingroup to dissociate an unbearable reality of existential being.<sup>100</sup> Namely that they are unworthy of being alive. 'It is not me/us who are weak, dirty, ugly...it is the enemy-other who is these things.'<sup>101</sup> Psychologically, when this enemy-other is destroyed, so too are the traits that were dissociated and projected onto them.<sup>102</sup> This process offers a powerful and needed psychological relief to the large population of marginalized men and women who are disconnected to either of the two identities that make up their genetic heritage – indigenous or colonizer.<sup>103</sup> The resulting gang identity individually and collectively is in a state of BPD as described above. It is fragile, unstable, and highly volatile, which accounts for the uncontrolled displays of irrational violence and uncontrolled rage.<sup>104</sup> This explains why the violence and growth of the violent crime organisations in the Northern Triangle "defies logic" and "resists destruction."<sup>105</sup> This also informs us as researchers about the dangers that asylum claimants face on their involuntary return to Guatemala<sup>106</sup> because the underlying drivers are subconscious psychological and emotional ideas of alienation and feelings of deep shame from irrational feelings of self-disrespect. Most often, these feelings of disrespect are ignited when they were met with refusal by victims to comply with whatever demands they made to share in the social burden of providing governance and security to the neighbourhoods ruled by the Maras. Such disrespect shown towards one member must be avenged by all members of the in-group to not threaten the artificial psychological construct of strength, unity, and collective agency.<sup>107</sup> The vengeance to be extracted over identified victims' refusal to participate in their tormentor's psychodrama is not about money, but his or her challenge to that

---

<sup>95</sup> (Moreno, 2024)

<sup>96</sup> (B. Anderson, 1983)

<sup>97</sup> (Stein, 1982)

<sup>98</sup> Also referred to as trait dissociation. (Lensvelt-Mulders et al., 2008; Marmar, 1997)

<sup>99</sup> This psychological process is discerned through lengthy phenomenological inquiry, or qualitative psychological inquiry interviews, that we can code and compare to other cultural-ethnic groups who are in the same psychosocial conditions. We validate our finding by revisiting our interviewees and introducing stimuli (pictures, phrases, stories) that are designed to test individual identity diffusion through reinforcing preferred identity archetypes and measuring the interviewees reactions on a Likert scale.

<sup>100</sup> (Birtchnell, 1997)

<sup>101</sup> (P. J. Christian, 2016; Steiner, 1982)

<sup>102</sup> (Marmar, 1997)

<sup>103</sup> (Fonagy et al., 2017; Luyten et al., 2020; Marcia, 1966)

<sup>104</sup> (Luyten et al., 2020)

<sup>105</sup> (Center for Latin American & Latino Studies, 2018)

<sup>106</sup> How this situation came to be is beyond the scope of this research report but can only be understood through the combination of the effects of post-colonial domination and indigenous identity destruction that was compounded – made intractable – through the century long involvement of the United States and its 19<sup>th</sup> Century predatory capitalism and 20<sup>th</sup> Century fixation with communism in any form.

<sup>107</sup> (Center for Latin American & Latino Studies, 2018)

psychodrama that coheres and sustains them. The flip side to this vengeance is opportunity by members of organised Maras to find and punish victims as a means of adding to or increasing the collective feelings of value and validation of their collective power and respect, thus furthering their internal psychosocial-emotional coherence. As the construction of these violent organisations' <sup>108</sup> collective identity is so tentatively constructed based on what they are not, rather than what they are, this collective identity requires constant reassurance and total vigilance against external encroachment or internal malaise. This collective identity, BPD as it may be, is the bulwark against psychological disintegration and potential collective suicide, the most normal outcome of personality-identity collapse. The more well known MS13 and B18 are more like a brand than a formal organisation. This 'brand' offers young people in Guatemala something they don't have...an identity. An idea of who they are that is worthy of being alive. In the barrios and maras of Guatemala, life is cheap unless you are somebody. Somebody who has respect, influence, love, admiration. If you have no valued identity, then your life is meaningless, and it can be taken away at someone else's whim. In the phenomenological reality of MS13/Mara18, one must earn respect, admiration, love, and influence...they are not entitlements or birthrights. They are earned through the force of will that is evidenced



*Figure 23 Guatemala City's casual violence is a primary symptom of large-scale psychosocial trauma. The emotional affects and psychological effects are transmitted generationally, creating malformed psychosocial realities that are easier to mold into existing and evolving criminal societies that challenge the legitimacy of the Euro-centric government and its social order.*

<sup>108</sup> BPD Borderline Personality Development

using physical power which obviates the generational social order of the elites, to which they are not a part of. The cliques that unsuspecting victim's disrespect, do not hate their victims, and in the cases of women, the clique's males are often attracted to them. But they can't accept love from someone else until they first earn that right to be loved; by finding and punishing her for her disrespect to them. This entire report seeks to explain the psychological pathology (illness) of the members of the Northern Triangle's violent criminal societies in an admittedly imperfect manner. The full monstrousness of this pathology is still beyond my/our research reach. By the numbers, violence against females occurs in no greater amount than against males. The violence against females, however, is usually more intimate in its savagery because the feminine holds the power to most seriously undermine a male's sense of masculinity. The more fully an offending female is reduced in her femininity; her private parts and face destroyed, the more the avenging male will perceive his masculinity to be recovered. This, of course, is why it is called a 'pathology'.

*"María Isabel Veliz Franco was a 15-year-old student and worked in a shop in the holidays. On the night of 15 December 2001, she was kidnapped in the capital. Her body was found shortly before Christmas. She had been raped, her hands and feet had been tied with barbed wire, she had been stabbed and strangled and put in a bag. Her face was disfigured from being punched, her body was punctured with small holes, there was a rope around her neck and her nails were bent back. When her body was handed over to me, I threw myself to the ground shouting and crying but they kept on telling me not to get so worked up. With the help of witnesses, the authorities identified two of the culprits and a luxury car and obtained details of the house where she had been held. The case was passed to two prosecutor's offices but those responsible are still at liberty".<sup>109</sup>*

The story of Maria Isabel is introduced here to illustrate the extreme psychopathological motivations behind the violence to women in Guatemala, a country with the highest rate of femicides in Central America, of which, more than two-thirds of the cases are never solved.<sup>110</sup> After two decades of pressure by the US, OAS, and an official condemnation of Guatemala and its government by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2014, the perpetrators were finally arrested and sentenced to 30-years in prison for Maria Isabel's abduction, torture, rape, and murder.<sup>111</sup> As part of the international court's judgement, the Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo, offered an official apology to the court and the family of

Figure 24



<sup>109</sup> (AI GTM UPR, 2005)

<sup>110</sup> (Rodriguez, 2024)

<sup>111</sup> (Escobar, 2019; Rodriguez, 2024)



Maria Isabel on behalf of the nation.<sup>112</sup> As a psychological anthropologist, the time and attention that Guatemalan male perpetrators put into their violent deeds against women signify complex and highly emotional motivations. While every society has some greater or lesser number of serial psychopaths, the difference in Guatemala is both their number and the normalization of violence against women. Turn back to the gang section and review the sheer alienated-shamed-rage perpetrated by the paisan prisoners against the cholo prisoners. Casual, cheerful attitudes to extreme violence and the infliction of suffering as symptoms of pathological trauma that do not just occur for no reason. Now turn back to psychosocial drivers of violence and the social obsession with *Blanqueamiento* amongst the elite segment of the population. While I cannot accurately diagnose individuals without extensive clinical interaction, there is more than enough psychological and sociological indicators to authoritatively assert that the violence against the population generally and against females specifically, will continue as will the flight of those Guatemalans who are caught between the established elites, the emerging indigenous peoples, and the revolting Maras. In meteorology, the power of a storm continues until the underlying instability (heat, cold, moisture) is resolved. This analogy also applies to Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

## Sources Cited

- Ahmed, A. (2019a). A Locked Door, a Fire and 41 Girls Killed as Police Stood By. *New York Times*.
- Ahmed, A. (2019b, May 13). Inside Gang Territory in Honduras: "Either they kill us or we kill them." *The New York Times Magazine*.
- AI GTM UPR. (2005). *Guatemala: No protection, no justice: Killings of women in Guatemala*.
- Aljazeera Staff. (2023, June 19). Anti-corruption advocate flees Honduras after receiving threats. *Al Jazeera*.
- Amnesty International. (1981). *Guatemala: A Government Program of Political Murder*.
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities*. Verso.
- Anderson, T. P. (1988). *Politics in Central America: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Blanco, A. R., & Shenk, T. (2026). *LAND GRABBING IS KILLING HONDURAS' INDIGENOUS PEOPLES*.
- Casas, S., Castellanos, L., & USSOUTHCOM Writer Anonymous. (2021). *THE MS-13 INFLUENCE IN HONDURAS*.

---

<sup>112</sup> (Lang, 2024)



- Cordova Arauz, D. (2020). *A Quiet Revolution: Land justice for Miskito Indigenous peoples in Honduras*.
- D'Aubuisson, J. J. M. (2022, February). When the MS13 Played Possum in Guatemala. *InSight Crime*.
- Dudley, S. (2020). *MS-13 The Making of America's most notorious gang*. jHanover Square Press.
- Duran, J. (2020). A Violent Guatemala. *MONTHLY REVIEW*.
- ELÍAS, S. (2023). Clinging to colonialism: the State of Guatemala and plunder of Indigenous Peoples' lands. *DEBATES INDÍGENAS IWGIA*.
- Escobar, I. (2019, July 24). 18 años después capturan a supuesto responsable de muerte de María Isabel Véliz Franco. *Prensa Libre*.
- Farah, D., & Babineau, K. (2017). The Evolution of MS13 in El Salvador and Honduras. *PRISM Journal of Complex Operations, National Defense University, US DoD*, 7(1).
- Grandin, G., & Klein, N. (2011). *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*. University of Chicago Press.
- Gurney, K. (2014). Mapping MS13, Barrio 18 Territory in Guatemala City. *InSight Crime*.
- Human Rights Watch. (2022). *World Report 2022 El Salvador*.
- Human Rights Watch. (2025). *World Report El Salvador*.
- IAHCG. (2024). *IACHR Issues Report on State of Emergency and Human Rights in El Salvador*.
- ISAACS, A., & SCHWARTZ, R. (2013). Repression, Resistance, and Indigenous Rights in Guatemala. *Americas Quarterly*.
- Kirkland, R. P. (2021). *Small Business Owners and Gangs in Honduras*.
- Lang, M. J. (2024, April 1). Guatemalan president apologizes to slain teen's mom, who fled to D.C. area. *The Washington Post*.
- Lewis O'Neill, K. (2019). Disenfranchised: Mapping red zones in Guatemala City. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 51(3), 654–669. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X18800069>
- Mackey, D., & Eisner, C. (2019, December 21). INSIDE THE PLOT TO MURDER HONDURAN ACTIVIST BERTA CÁCERES. *The Intercept*.
- Mohor, D. (2023, May 17). Surging gang violence across Latin America challenges aid sector to respond. *The New Humanitarian*.



- Moreno, F. (2024). Moral reasoning about gang violence in context: A comparative study with children and adolescents exposed to *maras* in Honduras and not exposed in Nicaragua. *Child Development, 95*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13984>
- Neau, A., & Salomon, J. (2023). *It's hunting season against justice officials in Guatemala.*
- OXFAM GB. (2008). Indigenous Women against Impunity. In *Speaking Out, Programme Insights.*
- Phillips, J. (2019). State Violence and Indigenous Resistance in Honduras. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development, 48*(3/4), 343–378.
- ReliefWeb. (2015). *Situation of Human Rights in Guatemala: Diversity, Inequality and Exclusion.*
- Rodriguez, L. (2024, March 26). La historia del caso de María Isabel Véliz Franco y cómo la lucha de su madre logró avances en contra de la impunidad. *Agencia Guatemalteca de Noticias.*
- Roy, D., & Cheatham, A. (2023). *Central America's Turbulent Northern Triangle.*
- Sanz, J. L., & Martínez, C. (2023). The Day MS-13 Betrayed the Guatemalan Sur. *El Faro.*
- Schirmer, J. (1988). *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy.* University of Pennsylvania Press.
- staff. (2019). 41 GIRLS BURNED TO DEATH IN GUATEMALAN "SAFE HOME,," *Fund for Global Human Rights.*
- Staff. (2023, April 29). Violence against Honduran human rights defenders "alarming," OAS group says. *Reuters.*
- Staff at Cultural Survival [www.cs.org](http://www.cs.org). (2010). *Observations on the State of Indigenous Human Rights in Light of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.*
- TARACENA, M. I. (2023). Indigenous Leaders Are Being Forced Into Exile. *The Nation.*
- United Nations. (1999). "Press Briefing: Press conference by members of the Guatemala Historical Clarification Commission."
- United States Embassy Guatemala City. (2023). *2023 Human Rights Report for Guatemala.*
- U.S. Department of State Bureau of Democracy, H. R. and L. (2023). *2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Guatemala.*
- Verza, M. (2018, October 24). In Honduras, poverty and gangs help drive migration. *Associated Press.*
- Xunic, A., & Sacatepéquez, S. (2022). *Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Alternative Report Submission: Violations of Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Guatemala.*



Zaidi, T. (2019). A Nation Held Hostage. *Foreign Policy*.

## Other References

Beale, G. K. (2008). *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism*. Crossway.

Birtchnell, J. (1997). The psychology of shame: Theory and treatment of shame-based syndromes. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 22(5), 781. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0191-8869\(97\)85593-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0191-8869(97)85593-6)

Birx, J. H. (n.d.). *21st Century ANTHROPOLOGY A Reference Handbook* (Vol. 1). Sage.

Bunck, J. M., & Fowler, M. R. (2012). *Bribes, Bullets, and Intimidation: Drug Trafficking and the Law in Central America*. Penn State University Press.

Center for Latin American & Latino Studies. (2018). *MS13 in the Americas: How the World's Most Notorious Gang Defies Logic, Resists Destruction*.

Ching, E. (2016). *Stories of Civil War in El Salvador: A Battle over Memory*. University of North Carolina Press.

Christian, P. J. (2011). *A Combat Advisor's Guide to Tribal Engagement*. Universal Publishers.

Christian, P. J. (2014). A Reformulated Model of Narrative Mediation of Emerging Culture Conflict. *The International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution*, 2(2).  
<https://doi.org/10.5553/IJCER/221199652014002002002>

Christian, P. J. (2016). *Failing Archetypes of Memorialization, Heroism, and Sacrifice*.  
<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.29977.57442>

Christian, P. J. (2019). Qualitative research in the shadow of violent conflict. In *Experiences in researching conflict and violence* (pp. 31–46). Bristol University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/lj.ctt1zrvhdn.8>

Christian, P. J. (2021). *Psychosocial-Emotional Motivations of Indigenous Communities in Violent Conflict* (3rd ed., Vol. 1). US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School.

Christian, S. (1985). *Nicaragua*. Random House.

*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR)*. (2000a). American Psychiatric Association. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890423349>

*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR)*. (2000b). American Psychiatric Association. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890423349>

Fonagy, P., Luyten, P., Allison, E., & Campbell, C. (2017). What we have changed our minds about: Part 1. Borderline personality disorder as a limitation of resilience. *Borderline Personality Disorder and Emotion Dysregulation*, 4(1), 11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40479-017-0061-9>



- Fratus, M. (2020). A brief history of the CIA in El Salvador during the 1980s. *Black Rifle Magazine* .
- Jonas, S. (2018). *The Battle for Guatemala - Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power: Vol. 5th Latin American (Perspectives Series)*. Routledge.
- Koenigsberg, R. A., & Stein, H. F. (1988). Developmental Time, Cultural Space: Studies in Psychogeography. *Political Psychology*, 9(3), 553. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3791732>
- Lensvelt-Mulders, G., van der Hart, O., van Ochten, J. M., van Son, M. J. M., Steele, K., & Breeman, L. (2008). Relations among peritraumatic dissociation and posttraumatic stress: A meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 28(7), 1138–1151. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2008.03.006>
- Luyten, P., Campbell, C., & Fonagy, P. (2020). Borderline personality disorder, complex trauma, and problems with self and identity: A social-communicative approach. *Journal of Personality*, 88(1), 88–105. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12483>
- MacAulay, N. (1967). *The Sandino Affair: Vol. d (1st ed.)*. Quadrangle.
- Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3(5), 551–558. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0023281>
- Marmar, C. R. (1997). *Trauma and Dissociation*. American Psychological Association (APA). <https://doi.org/10.1037/e593652007-001>
- Rahier, J. M. (1999). Body politics in black and white: *Señoras, Mujeres, Blanqueamiento* and Miss Esmeraldas 1997–1998, Ecuador. *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 11(1), 103–120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07407709908571317>
- Shorack, M., Kennedy, E. G., & Frank-Vitale, A. (2020). A State of Mistrust. *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 52(4), 404–409. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714839.2021.1840168>
- Stein, H. F. (1982). Adversary symbiosis and complementary group dissociation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 6(1), 55–83. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(82\)90007-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(82)90007-4)
- Stein, H. F. (1986). The influence of psychogeography upon the conduct of international relations: Clinical and metapsychological considerations. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 6(2), 193–222. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07351698609533627>
- Steiner, J. (1982). *The Mask of Shame*. By Leon Wurmser. London: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1981. Pp 345. 17.50, 31.25. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 141(4), 433–434. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0007125000112978>