



**IMSIS**  
International Master  
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**What are the challenges of countering  
transnational organised crime? A case study in  
the State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**

**June 2024**

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**Presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree  
of International Master in Security, Intelligence and Strategic Studies**

**Word count: 22,552**

**Supervisor: Dr Julie Berg**

**Date of Submission: June 27, 2024**



**University  
of Glasgow**



**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**



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## **International Master in Security, Intelligence and Strategic Studies 2022/2024**

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## **Abstract**

Public security in Brazil has been fundamentally flawed since its establishment in the federal constitution of 1988. The current structure fails to foster collaboration among essential stakeholders, particularly local law enforcement agencies. This disunity significantly benefits criminals, enabling them to establish robust and effective networks both locally and internationally. Despite substantial efforts by police forces, the state of Rio de Janeiro, renowned as Brazil's postcard, has experienced significant deterioration over the past decades. It is evident that police alone cannot uphold public order to desirable standards. Ensuring public security requires a collaborative approach involving multiple sectors, including civil society and international partners. This dissertation examines the multifaceted challenges of countering transnational organized crime (TOC), using Rio de Janeiro as a case study. It critically analyzes existing security policies and discusses strategic proposals aimed at improving the current public security framework. Emphasizing the necessity for governments to prioritize innovative governance measures, the study advocates for a comprehensive and integrated approach to combat TOC effectively and create safer, more resilient communities.

*Keywords: Countering transnational organized crime (TOC); law enforcement; nodal governance; networked policing*

## **Disclaimer**

The views and opinions expressed in this dissertation are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Rio de Janeiro State Military Police (PMERJ) or the Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro. Any content provided by the author is of their opinion and is not intended to malign any organization, company, individual, or entity.

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## Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the Rio de Janeiro State Military Police (PMERJ) for approving my participation in the Programme to Incentivize Qualification at the Postgraduate Level.

Secondly, I convey my deepest gratitude to the European Commission's Education, Audiovisual, and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) for awarding me the merit-based Erasmus Mundus EMJMD Partner Country scholarship for the two-year IMSISS joint degree programme.

To all my professors (and now friends) at the University of Glasgow, Dublin City University, Charles University in Prague, and the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies: As Newton said, if I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.

I extend special appreciation to my incredibly supportive academic supervisor, Dr. Julie Berg, Head of the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research at the University of Glasgow. The same goes to the 'CTOC Team' at the Marshall Center: Bob Knotts, Cüneyt Gürer, Tim Mason, and Danny Love.

To the GCMC Library Team: You are the best! Thank you for your unwavering support.

To all my classmates from Gen Z whom I met during this two-year Master's course: You made me feel decades younger! Thank you, Zoomers!

Last but not least, I am deeply indebted to my soulmate for supporting me constantly, even during the times when I was absent writing academic articles and this dissertation. Without the unwavering backing of my wife, Caroline Duton, this journey would have been untenable.

**This dissertation is dedicated to all Brazilian police officers who risk their lives every day in the fight for a safer and more just society. You are the true heroes, standing as the final barrier between civilization and chaos. Your bravery defines us.**

**Strength and honour!**

# **1 Introduction: The Labyrinthine Challenge of Countering Transnational Organized Crime (TOC)**

The world is witnessing a relentless rise in transnational organized crime (TOC). Operating across borders, these sophisticated networks engage in a plethora of illicit activities, destabilizing regions, eroding economies, and jeopardizing public safety (Sullivan, 2023). Countering this hydra-headed threat presents a complex and multifaceted challenge for law enforcement agencies worldwide. This dissertation delves into the challenges of countering transnational organized crime, the significance of addressing this issue, and the potential solutions, with a specific focus on the application of nodal governance theory.

## **1.1 The challenges of countering TOC**

TOC drives political, economic, and social changes on a global scale (Sullivan, 2023). It encompasses a vast array of criminal activities that transcend national borders. Drug trafficking, human trafficking, arms smuggling, cybercrime, and money laundering are just some examples of the illicit enterprises undertaken by these criminal networks. Due to advancements in technology and globalization, these organizations have become increasingly sophisticated in their operations, utilizing complex communication channels, financial networks, and logistical arrangements (Sullivan, 2023). Moreover, TOC groups often exploit weak governance structures, porous borders, and corruption within government institutions, further hindering effective policing efforts (Albanese, 2014).

Law enforcement agencies face a multitude of obstacles in their pursuit of dismantling or at least disrupting transnational criminal organizations. The very nature of their cross-border operations necessitates complex international cooperation, often hampered by jurisdictional disputes, varying legal frameworks, and bureaucratic hurdles (Albanese, 2014; Sullivan 2023). Furthermore, the vast resources and sophisticated counter-surveillance measures employed by these criminal groups pose a significant challenge for law enforcement agencies, often with limited resources and personnel. (Sullivan, 2023).

Beyond operational difficulties, corruption within police forces and government institutions can create a safe haven for organized crime, undermining public trust and hampering successful investigations and prosecutions (Albanese, 2014; Caparini, 2022;

Sullivan 2023). Additionally, the social and economic factors that increase vulnerability – poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities – act as fertile ground for recruitment by these criminal networks (Šileika and Bekerytė, 2013; Shah et al, 2019)

Countries across the globe are grappling with the impacts of TOC, but some regions, particularly in Africa and Latin America, are facing severe challenges due to the pervasive influence of such criminal networks. For instance, according to Caparini (2022) TOC exacerbates issues related to public health by promoting the trade of counterfeit medicines, which is especially problematic in low- and middle-income countries. It also undermines economic stability through tax evasion, illicit financial flows, and money laundering, further straining the public financing capacities of states and obstructing economic development. The environmental sector is not spared, with TOC contributing to deforestation, wildlife trafficking, and the illegal dumping of waste, which have both localized and global repercussions. The security landscape is significantly affected as well, with TOC fuelling violence, armed conflict, and contributing to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, thereby undermining peace and stability.

## **1.2 Justifying the Research: The Need for Effective Solutions**

The urgency of addressing the challenges posed by TOC requires a continual exploration of effective policing strategies. This dissertation focuses on the potential of network policing and nodal governance as novel approaches to tackle this complex issue. Nodal governance emphasizes collaboration and network-centric structures, fostering information sharing and coordinated action between diverse stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies, governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector (Shearing and Wood, 2003; Dupont, 2004; Gerspacher and Dupont, 2007; Wood, Shearing and Froestad, 2011; van Steden et al, 2013). This approach holds promise for breaking down silos, enhancing communication, and fostering a more comprehensive approach to combating TOC.

## **1.3 Structure of the Dissertation**

The subsequent chapters delve into the emergence of contemporary criminal gangs in Brazil, with a concentrated analysis on the state of Rio de Janeiro. Geographical, historical, and socio-political factors will be analysed to provide a comprehensive understanding. Initially confined to local regions, these gangs swiftly expanded their criminal operations



across state and national boundaries. The limitations of traditional policing methods, including the legal framework and implemented policies, will be addressed.

Subsequently, the concept of networked policing and nodal governance will be explored, examining its theoretical underpinnings and its potential benefits in countering TOC.

Through a thorough review of existing literature and empirical analysis, this dissertation aims to assess the effectiveness of nodal governance in countering TOC and its potential contribution to a safer and more secure global environment.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. First, this chapter has explained the background of this study, its importance, and the dissertation aim. Chapter two examines the challenges of countering TOC literature. First, it offers a summary on the definition and key characteristics of organized crime and the debate around its study, second, this study delves into the challenges that law enforcement authorities face in dealing with TOC. Chapter three covers the methodology of this project. First, it details the information of the data that is being used. It continues with the research design and the explanation for the selection of the sample. Next, it presents the ethical considerations and the method for the data analysis. Finally, the chapter shows limitations found for this investigation. Chapter four presents the context of Brazil and shows the findings from the data analysis. The broader context of Latin America will be examined, followed by an analysis of Brazil's influential and geographical significance within the region. A comprehensive overview of the historical development of TOC in Brazil will be provided, focusing on key elements and actors: the Red Command, the crime-terror nexus, militias, criminal gangs and politics, Brazil's legislative and policy environment, and networked policing and nodal governance as signs of hope and progress. Finally, chapter five will conclude this dissertation by providing a summary and reflecting on the need for networked policing and nodal governance initiatives to help countering TOC.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

This dissertation explores the challenges of countering TOC, a significant threat to global security and prosperity. Traditional policing methods often struggle to keep pace with the evolving nature and extensive reach of these complex criminal networks. By adopting a networked policing and nodal governance perspective, this study aims to deepen understanding of how collaboration and enhanced communication between diverse

stakeholders—including law enforcement agencies, governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector—can be leveraged to counter TOC more effectively. This multi-actor approach holds promise for dismantling transnational criminal networks and building a safer, more secure global environment. However, it also recognizes the need for specific studies on nodal governance and networked policing, with data collected specifically for this purpose, to fully grasp the complexity involved in addressing TOC in Brazil.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Complex societal challenges**

Addressing complex societal problems presents a multifaceted challenge that extends beyond the capability of simple solutions or quick fixes. Such issues are deeply rooted in the interwoven fabric of societal norms, economic structures, political landscapes, historical, geographical, and cultural contexts. They are characterized by their persistent nature, resistance to change, and the intricate web of contributing factors that make isolating a single solution impractical. As articulated by the 1998 Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen (2009) in his work "The Idea of Justice" understanding the complexity of social issues requires a comprehensive approach that considers the diversity of human experiences and the plurality of perspectives involved.

Furthermore, addressing complex societal problems calls for a participatory approach, engaging those who are most affected by the problems in the solution process, thereby ensuring that interventions are contextually relevant and culturally sensitive (Levy, Lerman, and Dixon, 2023). By adopting this strategy, it is possible to enhance the legitimacy of the interventions.

In summary, addressing complex societal issues is an inherently challenging endeavour that demands a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. These challenges highlight the need for patience, persistence, and a readiness to embrace complexity, which are essential for driving meaningful change. Countering TOC is arguably one of the greatest challenges facing modern society.

### **2.2 The nature of TOC**

What follows is the necessity to grasp the nature of TOC, including its concept, distinctive features, fundamental conditions, and objectives.

The understanding of organized crime has shifted back and forth between two rival notions: A set of stable organizations illegal per se or whose members systematically engage in crime and a set of serious criminal activities mostly carried out for monetary gain. In addition, depending on the time and place, some authors, as well as national and international policy and law enforcement agencies, have emphasized either the "Who" (individual

offenders and their variable partnerships) or the "What" (the criminal activities conducted) (Maguire, Morgan, and Reiner, 2002; Paoli and Beken, 2013).

Furthermore, the understanding of organized crime has evolved from a focus on criminal organizations to a focus on criminal activities. The concept of organized crime has also been used interchangeably to refer to both sets of criminal organizations and sets of activities. The search for a universal definition of organized crime has eluded both academics, criminal justice agencies, as well as international bodies (Hagan, 2006; Paoli and Beken, 2013).

Moreover, Paoli and Beken (2013) mention that the meanings of organized crime have changed in terms of territorial scope and legitimacy. The territorial scope of organized crime has shifted from being equated with racketeering and local activities to being recognized as transnational in nature. The policy and scientific legitimacy of the concept of organized crime have also varied over time, with organized crime becoming an accepted policy and scientific concept in the late 20th century (Paoli and Beken, 2013).

The term "organized crime" has been interpreted in multiple ways, reflecting its complex and evolving nature. Academic definitions range from Cressey's view of it as a continuous criminal conspiracy using force and corruption for profit (Cressey, 1969), to the UN's description of structured groups committing serious crimes for financial gain (UNODC, 2004). Europol (2021) highlights its networked, adaptable nature, while Albin (1971) emphasizes its social system aspects. Hagan (1983) focuses on significant criminal activity by coordinated groups, and Block (1980) sees it as an economic enterprise providing illegal goods and services, part of a social system often characterized by reciprocal services performed by the criminal, the client and the politician.

These varied definitions underscore the multifaceted challenges in addressing organized crime. The differing interpretations lead to diverse policing strategies, complicating international cooperation and effective law enforcement. Understanding organized crime's evolving nature and inconsistent legal frameworks is crucial for resource allocation and developing adaptive, comprehensive strategies to combat it. By recognizing its various dimensions, policymakers and law enforcement can better address the complex issues posed by organized crime.

However, for the purposes of this dissertation, the more expansive definition provided by the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and The Protocols Thereto, also known as “The Palermo Convention”, offers a more comprehensive approach and will be adopted. According to this document:

“Organized criminal group” shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit (UNTOC, 2004).

To fully understand organized crime group, two additional concepts are essential: the classifications of 'structured group' and 'serious crime'. As the forementioned document states,

‘Structured group’ shall mean a group that is not randomly formed for the immediate commission of an offence and that does not need to have formally defined roles for its members, continuity of its membership or a developed structure, and ‘serious crimes shall mean conduct constituting an offence punishable by a maximum deprivation of liberty of at least four years or a more serious penalty (UNTOC, 2004).

When organized criminal groups operate across international borders, their transnational nature becomes clearer, more accurately reflecting the concept of transnational organized crime.

Contemporary academic discourse provides a clear delineation of the distinctive features of TOC, which are outlined as follows:

### **2.2.1 Economic impact of criminal activities**

Building on this point, we can observe that the economic ramifications of TOC are profound, generating enormous profits from illicit activities such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, smuggling, and cybercrime. These operations not only divert resources from legitimate businesses but also distort markets and foster pervasive corruption (Rose-Ackerman, 2001). The resultant economic instability undermines the structural integrity of nation-states and obstructs sustainable development, creating an environment where illegal economies can flourish at the expense of legitimate governance (Staiano, 2022; Global Initiative, 2024).

Moreover, the economic ramifications of TOC are profound and widespread, primarily due to the enormous profits generated from a range of illicit activities. These groups employ

sophisticated methods to launder their illicit proceeds, complicating efforts to trace the origins of this money. Money laundering not only obscures the criminal origins of the money but also allows criminals to integrate these funds into the legal economy, further enhancing their profitability and operational scope. Additionally, TOC frequently involves corrupting public officials and institutions, enabling these groups to operate with impunity and protect their illicit activities (Hauck and Peterke, 2021).

The impact of TOC extends into the economic system, distorting markets and hindering economic development. It undermines free competition, discourages foreign investment, and escalates the costs of crime prevention and enforcement for governments (Naím, 2005). Additionally, these criminal organizations often operate within the informal economy, evading taxes, and regulations, which leads to significant revenue losses for governments and creates unfair competition against legitimate businesses (Naím, 2005).

According to the 2023 World Drug Report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023c), focusing on drug trafficking in Latin America, we see that

“Organized criminal groups involved in drug trafficking in Brazil, Colombia, Peru and, to a lesser extent, the Plurinational State of Bolivia are leveraging illegal and legal supply chains to expand their operations. There is growing evidence, for example, of drug traffickers financing and providing logistical support for illegal gold mining operations across the region, including on protected territories, expanding into illegal logging and trafficking in wildlife (including plants, insects, and animals). Shipping vessels used to lawfully transport wood or minerals are also routinely loaded with cocaine concealed in consignments destined for foreign markets. These kinds of illicit activity are frequently accompanied by convergent crime, ranging from bribery, extortion, fraud and money-laundering to homicide, violent assault, sexual violence and forced labour. Those most directly affected by these crimes are the poorest and most vulnerable communities in the Amazon, including Indigenous Peoples and those of African descent” (UNODC, 2023c; Gootenberg, 2009; Bagley, 2013; Dean, 2013; Bergman, 2015).

The illicit profits from TOC are frequently transferred out of the host countries, draining resources that could otherwise contribute to legitimate economic development. Furthermore, the economic activities associated with TOC impose considerable social costs, including increased violence, social instability, and the exploitation of vulnerable populations. These social implications exacerbate the negative economic impacts and present additional challenges to stability and development (Albanese and Reichel, 2013; Kleemans, 2016; Hauck and Peterke, 2021)

### **2.2.2 Corruption and governance challenges**

Building on the foundational insights of Dijk (2007) and Miraglia et al (2012), this section explores the dynamics between corruption and governance. One of the most insidious effects of organized crime is its tendency to infiltrate and corrupt governmental institutions. By compromising law enforcement and political systems, these criminal networks erode the rule of law and diminish public trust in governmental efficacy. The collusion of corrupt officials with criminal entities facilitates the operations of these networks, further entrenching their ability to operate with impunity and weakening state capacity to provide basic security and governance. These alliances provide them with protection, influence, and access to resources in different countries, further enhancing their ability to operate globally.

Fijnaut (2013) highlights that this phenomenon tends to flourish in divided, conflict-ridden communities where government is weak and/or corrupt. When there is a lack of strong governance and social stability, criminal organizations can exploit the situation to establish their influence and engage in illegal activities. The presence of weak or corrupt government officials may provide opportunities for organized crime groups to operate with impunity or even collude with authorities (Fijnaut, 2013).

A globally recognized example of corruption and organized crime occurred in Italy. The criminal activities of La Cosa Nostra, also known as the Sicilian Mafia, were particularly prominent during the mid-20th century onwards. La Cosa Nostra have been able to gain power and influence through alliances with the local elite and by providing protection in exchange for support (Paoli, 2008; Dickie, 2004).

As Fijnaut (2013) puts it, the rise and survival of criminal groups in Italy, particularly the Sicilian Mafia, can be attributed to the political vacuum and lack of effective government control in the region. 'La Cosa Nostra' has been able to maintain its power and expand its criminal activities through violence, intimidation, and corruption. It has also been involved in various illegal activities, including extortion, robbery, drug trafficking, and prostitution (Fijnaut, 2013).

The Italian Mafia has had a significant impact on Italian society, controlling entire populations and creating deep rifts in local communities. The efforts to combat organized

crime in Italy, such as the campaigns led by Cesare Mori in the 1920s, have had some success in reducing the power of the Mafia, but the social and economic context that allowed it to flourish still remains. The Italian Mafia has also had an impact beyond Italy, with many members fleeing to other countries, including the United States, where they have continued their criminal activities (Fijnaut, 2013).

To sum up, corruption has played a significant role in the rise and survival of organized crime not only in Italy but in many other countries, with alliances between criminal groups and the local elite, as well as the infiltration of law enforcement and political institutions.

### **2.2.3 Linkages to broader security threats**

TOC is intricately linked to broader security threats, including terrorism and arms trafficking to name just a few. These criminal networks often support terrorist groups through funding, logistics, and the provision of illicit goods, exacerbating global instability. Moreover, the trafficking of illegal firearms fuels ongoing armed conflicts and contributes to heightened violence within nation-states, posing severe national security challenges (Pinson, 2022). For example, Russian arms trafficker Viktor Bout was charged with conspiring to sell weapons to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a U.S. State Department-designated foreign terrorist organization (US Department of Justice, 2008).

In his 2004 paper, Thomas Sanderson delves into the escalating threat from the convergence of TOC and terrorist groups, highlighting their increasing organizational and operational similarities and instances of collaboration. This analysis underscores the intricate relationship between such criminal and terrorist activities and broader security threats like terrorism and arms trafficking. The document also argues persuasively that this convergence of TOC with terrorism poses a significant challenge to global security. It calls for a coordinated and adaptable response from law enforcement and intelligence agencies to effectively manage and mitigate these risks, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies to address the complex dynamics of these global threats (Sanderson, 2004). Twenty years on, it's evident that his predictions were accurate.

Sanderson also discusses several factors that drive terrorist groups to engage in or ally with organized criminal activities. These include a decline in state sponsorship, the necessity



to compensate for reduced revenue from charities, and the accessibility of small arms for trafficking. The document also highlights how the presence of weak or failing states contributes to the merging of criminal and terrorist activities, providing ideal conditions for their convergence (Sanderson, 2004).

The analysis details how both organized crime and terrorist groups engage in extreme violence, kidnappings, assassinations, and extortion, operating clandestinely to subvert state authority and the rule of law. Their adaptability, innovation, and resilience demonstrate their asymmetrical threat to global security. Moreover, Sanderson cites specific instances of collaboration between such groups, including the cooperation between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in bomb-making, as well as Hezbollah's involvement in illicit activities like cigarette smuggling and drug production. These examples highlight the direct connections between organized crime and terrorism, further illustrating the intertwined challenges they pose to international security (Sanderson, 2004).

In the context of arms trafficking, Feinstein and Holden (2013) emphasize that it encompasses a spectrum of crimes involving both legal and illegal transactions, posing substantial challenges for global security and law enforcement (European Commission, 2020). Despite its complexity and the involvement of multiple actors often colluding in these activities, successful prosecution of arms traffickers remains a rarity (Feinstein and Holden, 2013). This issue is further compounded by the lucrative nature of the international arms trade, which is fraught with corruption and exploitation. The bleak prospects for reducing arms trafficking are largely due to weak legal mechanisms and a pronounced lack of political will (Karp, 2009; Feinstein and Holden, 2013). These factors together underscore the intricate and problematic nature of controlling and regulating the flow of arms on a global scale, highlighting the urgent need for robust legal reforms, and committed political action to address these persistent issues effectively (Karp, 2009; Feinstein and Holden, 2013).

#### **2.2.4 Social consequences on nation-states**

The social implications of TOC are devastating. Activities like drug trafficking not only fuel public health crises and violence but also drive addiction rates. Human trafficking represents a grave violation of human rights, subjecting individuals to forced labour and

sexual exploitation. These social impacts disrupt community cohesion and stability, leading to long-term detrimental effects on societal well-being and coherence (Shelley, 1995).

Ana Paula Oliveira (2023) examines how organized crime undermines a vast array of human rights. Violent activities like assassinations and kidnappings directly threaten the right to life and liberty. Torture, trafficking, and forced labour violate fundamental rights to security, work, and education. Furthermore, Oliveira highlights the negative impact on health due to toxic waste dumping and the disruption caused by illegal financial flows. The rights of specific groups, such as non-citizens and women, are also jeopardized by human smuggling and gender-based violence. Organized crime's influence extends to the right to truth through obstructing investigations, and the right to property and privacy through financial crimes and cybercrime. In essence, Oliveira argues that organized crime creates a widespread climate of fear and insecurity, impacting nearly every aspect of human rights and well-being (Oliveira, 2023).

These examples illustrate the broad and destructive impact of organized crime on human rights, underscoring the importance of addressing these violations through comprehensive legal and policy measures.

Furthermore, TOC represents a formidable challenge in modern society, characterized by its sprawling international networks, pervasive cross-border and cross-jurisdictional effects, and remarkable adaptability. As identified by scholars such as Shelley (2014), the global nature of TOC allows it to permeate national boundaries effortlessly, engaging in a diverse array of criminal activities that range from drug trafficking and human smuggling to cybercrime and environmental crime. This internationalization not only complicates legal jurisdiction but also necessitates a concerted global response, often hindered by varying international laws and enforcement capabilities (Shelley, 2014). The legal jurisdiction problem will be further addressed later in this dissertation.

To effectively grasp the challenges of countering TOC, a thorough analysis of theoretical insights is crucial. Factors such as context, history, and geography play pivotal roles. Ben Bowling (2009) rightly suggests that globalization marks a shift in how social relations and transactions are spatially organized, connecting distant localities. Local events are now influenced by occurrences far away and vice versa. As transnational networks become more

widespread, intense, and rapid, global influences increasingly affect local scenarios (Bowling, 2009).

The cross-border effects of TOC further exacerbate its impact, disrupting social and economic systems across nations. For instance, the illicit drug trade undermines public health and fuels corruption, while human trafficking violates fundamental human rights and destabilizes communities (Albanese, 2011). The adaptability of TOC networks is particularly troubling; these organizations rapidly evolve in response to law enforcement tactics and leverage technology to enhance their operations, making traditional policing methods increasingly ineffective (Naím, 2005). At this juncture, even the sovereignty of the state is at risk (Dandurand and Jahn, 2021).

The phenomenon of globalization has dramatically transformed economies, enabling a freer movement of people, money, and goods across borders. This, in turn, has opened expansive opportunities for TOC networks to extend their operations and thrive in new markets (Naím, 2005; Bagley, 2001). TOC can be seen as the darkest side of globalization.

Moreover, rapid advancements in technology have allowed criminal organizations to adapt swiftly. The exploitation of digital technologies and the regulatory gaps that exist online enable these groups to conduct illicit activities with greater reach and efficiency, often evading detection by law enforcement agencies (Senker, 2017; UNODC, 2019; EUROPOL, 2023).

Another significant condition is the presence of weak regulation and governance, particularly in regions characterized by offshore havens, fragile states, and free trade zones. These environments are particularly conducive to the operations of organized crime due to their lax oversight and enforcement capabilities (Karstedt, 2014).

Furthermore, corruption plays a crucial role in facilitating organized crime. The complicity of individuals in significant positions—such as public office holders, legal and financial professionals, and transportation firms—creates an 'upperworld' that allows these networks to operate with relative impunity, safeguarding their illegal operations and financial flows (Karstedt, 2014).

The global response to TOC is often hindered by inadequate international cooperation. This is due to several factors, including a lack of trust and coordination among countries, jurisdictional challenges in prosecuting criminals and seizing assets, resource constraints in many countries, political will issues, and differing priorities in combating organized crime (Dandurand and Jahn, 2021). To improve international cooperation, there needs to be a greater commitment from countries to work together and share information. Strengthening international organizations such as Interpol and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) can facilitate this cooperation. Additionally, providing more resources and support to countries in need, particularly those in the developing world, can help build their capacity to combat organized crime (Swanström and Wenngren, 2017).

These fundamental conditions collectively underscore the complexity of addressing TOC and highlight the multifaceted approach needed to effectively counteract these global networks.

Lastly, we should examine the objectives of TOC. In the realm of TOC, one of the primary objectives is to make profit, to secure financial or material gains through illicit activities. This pursuit encompasses a wide array of criminal operations, including drug trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering, fraud, only to name a few. These activities are driven by the allure of substantial profits, often with little regard for the societal costs. The financial incentives are so significant that they motivate the continual expansion and diversification of criminal enterprises globally (Caparini, 2022).

To illustrate this point, the economic disparities in the illicit drug market underscore the astronomical profits generated at various stages of distribution (UNODC, 2023a). For instance, estimates indicate that the cost of one kilogram of cocaine is approximately \$2,000 in Colombia, a major producing country. By the time this kilogram reaches Europe, its price escalates dramatically, ranging from \$16,000 to \$25,000. The cost continues to rise as it reaches further destinations; in Pakistan, the same kilogram of cocaine can command a price of around \$56,000, while in Qatar, it could soar to as much as \$68,000. These figures illustrate the significant markup and the lucrative nature of the global drug trade, reflecting both the risks involved and the high demand in consumer countries (Risco, Strauss, and Szymanowski, 2024).

Furthermore, TOC groups strategically exploit illicit markets to trade in various commodities such as arms, counterfeit goods, and wildlife. The illicit nature of these markets offers lucrative opportunities, often exceeding the profit potentials of legitimate markets. By dominating these underground markets, organized crime syndicates can amass immense wealth, further entrenching their influence and reach (Caparini, 2022).

Another core objective of TOC is to evade law enforcement detection and prosecution. By operating across international borders, these groups exploit jurisdictional gaps and the varying capacities of national law enforcement agencies. This transnational operation allows them to manoeuvre through regions with weaker policing, thus perpetuating their criminal activities while minimizing the risk of capture and legal repercussions (Staiano, 2022; Caparini, 2022).

Numerous TOC groups find operational havens in areas commonly referred to as 'black spots' (Brown and Hermann, 2020). These locales are typically characterized by a significant absence of effective state governance, often found at borders, within fragile or weak states, or proximate to conflict zones where corruption is rampant. According to Brown and Hermann, 'black spots' are identified by three key features: (1) they occur in regions where state governance is either ineffective or not recognized, (2) they are dominated by illicit organizations that establish and enforce their own set of rules, and (3) they serve as hubs for the production, transportation, and distribution of illegal activities across borders. These zones thus play a critical role in facilitating the global operations of criminal networks. (Brown and Hermann, 2020).

Moreover, TOC has a profound impact on governance and institutions. Through corruption, bribery, and illicit financial flows, these criminal networks undermine the rule of law and the integrity of governmental and financial institutions. Such activities compromise public sector effectiveness and hinder development efforts, leading to sustained cycles of corruption and institutional degradation (Di Cataldo and Mastrococco, 2021; Caparini, 2022).

Lastly, TOC plays a destabilizing role by sustaining violence and armed conflict. By facilitating the illicit flow of arms and supporting non-state armed groups, organized crime contributes directly to ongoing instability and insecurity. This not only affects the regions

directly involved but also has global repercussions, as the perpetuation of conflict undermines international peace and security efforts (Caparini, 2022; UNODC, 2023b).

### **2.3 The challenges of countering TOC**

The nature of TOC is constantly evolving, presenting substantial challenges to law enforcement agencies around the globe. It's unrealistic to expect a single entity, such as the police, to tackle this issue alone. Success in combating TOC requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach efforts in all levels: local, regional, and international. Without such comprehensive cooperation, effectively addressing TOC remains an unattainable goal (Berg and Shearing, 2011).

Dealing with TOC is a complex and transnational problem that cannot be tackled by diplomats or law enforcement officials alone. It requires a multilateral response that includes the state's agencies, civil society, and the private sector. This whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach ensures a coordinated and comprehensive response to transnational organized crime (Fleming and Wood, 2006; The White House, 2011).

Berg and Shearing's analysis of South Africa's National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS, 1996) and the White Paper on Safety and Security (1998) highlights a crucial shift in good security governance: prioritizing prevention over reaction. This approach emphasizes a holistic, whole-of-society approach, where resources are strategically aligned to address security solutions, rather than adapting solutions to fit available resources. This means involving all relevant actors in crafting solutions for each safety issue. The successful policing of the South African Soccer World Cup exemplifies this concept. By forging innovative partnerships between state and non-state actors, they were able to proactively address potential safety concerns, making it a model for successful crime prevention (Berg and Shearing, 2011). When it comes to countering TOC, the question is whether a similar approach could be applied.

Organized crime has diversified, gone global and reached macro-economic proportions: illicit goods are sourced from one continent, trafficked across another, and marketed in a third (UNODC, 2010). The challenges of countering TOC are highly diverse, ranging from defending national borders and curbing corruption to the growing hybrid nature

of criminal and terrorist groups and the alliances with regional and extra-regional state and nonstate actors (Farah, 2012).

The absence of unified strategies for tackling illicit markets further complicates the issue. Pereda (2022), analyzing organized crime in Mexico, highlights how existing definitions and research methods for organized crime predominantly stem from the Global North. These mainstream approaches, Pereda (2022) argues, are inadequate for effectively studying organized crime in the specific context of Mexico. Similarly, this issue applies to Brazil and other countries in the Global South. Research methodologies for organized crime need to be more context-specific to be truly effective.

Mirroring successful entrepreneurs, criminal networks amassed wealth through calculated risks, strategic investments, diversification of criminal activities, and adaptation to challenges and competitors. Their illicit operations swiftly expanded into other areas like prostitution, gambling, extortion, and the trafficking of small arms (Albanese, 2008; Kassab and Rosen, 2019). To effectively disrupt TOC, governance efforts should extend beyond supply-side measures and target the demand for illicit goods and services. This is a huge challenge, as it requires not only law enforcement action but also social and economic interventions that address the root causes of why people engage with these illegal markets.

The evolving nature of TOC presents significant challenges to global law enforcement efforts, making it evident that a single entity cannot address this issue in isolation. Success in combating TOC requires a comprehensive, whole-of-government, and whole-of-society approach at local, regional, and international levels. This multifaceted strategy involves state agencies, civil society, and the private sector working in unison. Berg and Shearing (2011) and Fleming and Wood (2006) emphasize the importance of such integrated efforts, as demonstrated by South Africa's National Crime Prevention Strategy. Furthermore, the diversification and globalization of organized crime demand context-specific methodologies, as illustrated by Pereda (2022) in the study of Mexican organized crime. Effective countermeasures must extend beyond law enforcement to include socio-economic interventions targeting the root causes of engagement in illicit markets. This comprehensive approach sets the stage for the next discussion on nodal governance and networked policing, exploring innovative frameworks to enhance the efficacy of anti-TOC initiatives.

## 2.4 Nodal governance and networked policing

Networked policing and nodal governance are similar concepts, but they are not identical. Both approaches emphasize collaboration and the integration of various actors and resources to address security and policing challenges, yet they have distinct nuances and emphases. Each framework offers valuable insights for combating TOC.

Since September 11, 2001, governments have recognized the urgent need to revamp institutions and practices of policing and security to counteract global violence and local terror. Significant innovation has occurred, particularly in the development of networked security delivery, involving both state and non-state actors, including private security companies and commercial military firms (Fleming and Wood, 2006).

The 9/11 Commission Report argues that the outdated methods of operation are inadequate, and Americans should not be content with minor, piecemeal changes to a system that was created for a past era (The 9/11 Commission, 2004; Fleming and Wood, 2006). The same principle should be applied in other countries and contexts.

Drawing from the analysis of Fleming and Wood (2006), the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks highlighted the inadequacy of current policing and security systems, which were designed for a bygone era. The collapse of the Twin Towers underscored the need for updated security strategies in response to new global risks from illicit networks that transcend national borders. As a result, security experts and policymakers must develop more effective security networks domestically and internationally. State institutions no longer solely control security governance<sup>1</sup> at the transnational level (Fleming and Wood, 2006).

In general terms, networks are characterised by interdependence between organisations, continuing interactions between network members (caused by the need to exchange resources and negotiate shared purposes) and game-like behaviour, rooted in trust and

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<sup>1</sup> According to Kirchner and Dominguez (2011), security governance refers to the framework through which security is managed and coordinated across multiple actors, including state and non-state entities. It involves the deliberate efforts to shape and influence the conduct of individuals, groups, and populations to achieve specific security objectives. This concept emphasizes the role of diverse stakeholders in ensuring comprehensive and effective security measures, moving beyond traditional state-centric approaches to include international organizations, civil society, and private sectors in the governance process.



regulated by rules of the game negotiated and agreed to by network participants (Rhodes, 1997, cited in Fleming and Wood, 2006; Castells, 2000, cited in Fleming and Wood, 2006). While such attributes are key features of networks, and are useful for diagnostic purposes, they should not serve to obscure the fact that networks take many forms and mean different things to different people (Fleming and Wood, 2006).

As documented by Quéro and Dupont (2019) in their analysis of the national police and gendarmerie brigade in France, the state police are seeking to establish a "renewed legitimacy" through partnerships and governance. Historically, they provided a wide range of security services, but now they are focusing on redefining their role within local security networks, highlighting their unique contributions. Despite being the key player due to their monopoly on judicial procedures and access to specialized units for timely interventions and crowd control, their strength does not necessarily equate to the most influence within the network (Quéro and Dupont, 2019). There is "a widespread acknowledgment that police can no longer 'do it alone'." (Fleming and Wood, 2006).

In conclusion, Fleming and Wood (2006) states that the practitioner community widely acknowledges that the demand for policing and security services surpasses the capacity of governments to meet it. Networks not only enable the integration of diverse forms of knowledge and expertise to achieve shared goals but also offer the opportunity to leverage material and human resources. Networks help in identifying potential problems and allow for flexible responses. They offer frameworks for negotiating goals and strategies and provide opportunities for joint decision-making, which can potentially reduce the scope for disagreement during implementation (Fleming and Wood, 2006).

As asserted by Gerspacher and Dupont (2007), facing sophisticated, resistant, and highly motivated terrorist and transnational crime threats and numerous difficulties inherent in countermeasures, law enforcement and security providers have shifted from a bureaucratic and hierarchical approach toward a networking morphology. This trend more adequately equalizes the capacities of law enforcement authorities to combat fluid and flexible criminal networks (Gerspacher and Dupont, 2007).

Ayling, Grabosky, and Shearing (2006), in their analysis of harnessing resources for networked policing, highlight that where states have emphasised the importance of mobilising and integrating the resources available through state agencies, the term 'whole of

government' has been used to recognise these initiatives. Where governments have sought to mobilise resources available both within and outside state agencies, the term 'whole of society' is appropriate (Ayling, Grabosky and Shearing, 2006). Both approaches are consistent with and align well with the principles of nodal governance.

Governance can be defined as the management of the course of events in a social system (Burris et al, 2005). Governance directs attention to the mechanisms (institutions, social norms, social practices) through which undoubted social goods (e.g., democracy, honest and efficient government, political stability and the rule of law) may be instantiated in social systems, from the smallest community to the global trade regime (Burris et al, 2005). Its aim is to bring order to complex systems by coordinating dispersed knowledge and capacities.

In the article "Governance as theory: five propositions", Gerry Stoker (1998) states that governance is ultimately concerned with creating the conditions for ordered rule and collective action. The outputs of governance are not therefore different from those of government. It is rather a matter of a difference in processes. Stoker' (1998) five propositions are:

1. "Governance refers to a set of institutions and actors that are drawn from but also beyond government.
2. Governance identifies the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues.
3. Governance identifies the power dependence involved in the relationships between institutions involved in collective action.
4. Governance is about autonomous self-governing networks of actors.
5. Governance recognizes the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. It sees government as able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide" (Stoker, 1998).

On the way from partnership to governance, Stoker (1998) states that it is possible to identify three degrees of collaboration: 'principal-agent relations', 'inter-organizational negotiation', and 'systemic co-ordination'.

The first, 'principal-agent relations' is the mode of partnership that consists of the strongest actor imposing him/herself to the other actor within the framework of a particular objective.

The second, ‘inter-organizational negotiation’ is a partnership based on the negotiation between engaged parties relating to a common objective and who pool their capacities in light of this objective.

The latter is the one adopted in this dissertation, ‘systemic co-ordination’. It represents a superior state of ‘mutual comprehension’ and ‘integrity’, tending towards the creation of an autonomous network. This mode of governance moves beyond the usual rules of hierarchical management imposed by the most influential organisation and allows the network to define its own operating rule (Stoker, 1998). According to Stoker, it is not a question of applying rules but rather inventing them, leaving more space for the unexpected and for the natural equilibrium of actors. Stocker (1998) argues that such self-governance is not only a third type of partnership but also leads organisations to work more closely to achieve greater goals.

Adding to Stocker, Shearing and Wood (2003) state that this space enables a diversity of actors and resources to contribute based on their respective capacities, maximising the chances of the network achieving its objectives. As a result, governance is then much more than a partnership: it is a different way for organisations, facing increasing challenges, to manage public goods (Ostrom 1990).

The work of Quéro and Dupont (2019) focuses on relationships in local security governance. It is based on the non-monopolistic production of security by a network of interrelated entities called nodes that interact in formal or informal organisations, which can be public or private, and constituting a web (Quéro and Dupont, 2019).

Security can then be understood as produced not only, or even mainly, through the traditional top-to-bottom system of government but instead through a much more horizontal governance mechanism that regulates nodes within a network (Quéro and Dupont, 2019).

The great virtue of nodal governance is that it can operate with so many diverse actors (Wood and Shearing, 2007b). In collaborating closely, pursuing common goals, and sharing common visions and strategic resources, private and public, formal and informal organisations find that the traditional borders between them become progressively more imperceptible (Quéro and Dupont, 2019).

The central concept of nodal governance revolves around nodes. Nodes, as defined by Burris et al. (2005), take a variety of forms, from legislature and government agencies through neighbourhood associations and other non-government organizations to firms and gangs. A node must have some institutional form, even if temporary. It needs not be a formally constituted or legally recognized entity, but it must have sufficient stability and structure to enable the mobilization of resources, mentalities, and technologies over time (Burris et al., 2005).

Nodal governance is an elaboration of contemporary network theory that explains how a variety of actors operating within social systems interact along networks to govern the systems they inhabit (Burris et al., 2005).

As theorized by Burris et al. (2005), a node is a site of governance (i.e., the management of a course of events) exhibiting four essential characteristics: A way of thinking (mentalities) about the matters that the node has emerged to govern; a set of methods (technologies) for exerting influence over the course of events at issue; resources to support the operation of the node and the exertion of influence; and a structure that enables the directed mobilization of resources, mentalities and technologies over time (institutions).

According to Johnston and Shearing (2003), the most significant dimension of governance is mentality. Mentality is a mental framework that shapes the way we think about the world and, as a result, the way we react to the situations and circumstances we encounter in our lives. Mentality sets the terms within which our perceptions and thoughts are constructed and translated into action. Mentalities are more often implicit than explicit and must often be inferred from the actions that flow from them (Johnston and Shearing, 2003).

As outlined in Burris et al (2005), node is a real, not a virtual entity, and to be a governing node, must have some institutional form, even if temporary. It must have sufficient stability and structure to enable the mobilization of resources, mentalities and technologies over time. The value of mobilizing and focusing local knowledge and capacity as an instrument of effective governance is emphasized (Burris et al., 2005).

This evolution in security practices highlights the importance of understanding how various nodes within the network cooperate, share resources, and develop trusting relationships. The degree to which nodes co-operate, share resources, develop trusting

relationships or more generally align interests is an empirical matter to be verified rather than an untested theoretical assumption (Johnston and Shearing, 2003; Johnston, Wood and Dupont, 2006; Fleming and Wood, 2006). This underscores the importance of learning by doing, with trust remaining an essential component.

This dissertation will focus its analysis on the Latin America region, a major hub for TOC gangs, specifically targeting Brazil, its largest and most influential country. A case study will focus on Rio de Janeiro, the birthplace of modern TOC gang. Rio de Janeiro offers a strong case study for understanding the challenges of countering TOC in the Latin America region and the findings might be applicable to other LAC countries.

## **3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I outline the methodological approach adopted for this dissertation, which examines the challenges of countering TOC in Brazil, with a specific focus on the state of Rio de Janeiro. I have chosen the qualitative case study analysis as my primary academic method. This choice is underpinned by the need to capture the complexities and nuanced evolution of organized crime in Brazil, an endeavor that requires a deep, context-sensitive examination. My extensive professional experience in policing, spanning 27 years, enriches this research by providing practical insights and an insider's perspective, which is indispensable for understanding the intricate dynamics of organized crime.

### **3.2 Overview of methodological approaches**

Various methodologies could be considered for researching transnational organized crime, each with its strengths and limitations. Below, I discuss some of the common approaches and why the qualitative case study analysis is most suitable for this study.

#### **3.2.1 Quantitative methods**

Quantitative research typically involves the collection and analysis of numerical data, often through surveys, statistical analysis, and the use of secondary data sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While this method is powerful in identifying patterns, correlations, and generalizable findings, it often lacks the depth needed to understand the contextual and subjective aspects of organized crime (Bridgmon and Martin, 2012; Bryman, 2012).

Quantitative approaches might be limited in capturing the intricate social, economic, and political factors (Nardi, 2018) that influence transnational organized crime in Rio de Janeiro. This is because they often focus on measurable variables, potentially overlooking the nuanced interactions and contextual factors that qualitative methods might better explore (Nardi, 2018).

### **3.2.2 Qualitative methods**

Qualitative research emphasizes understanding phenomena through detailed, context-rich data, often collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). This approach is well-suited for exploring complex social issues where contextual understanding and subjective experiences are paramount (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Within qualitative methods, the case study approach is particularly effective for an in-depth examination of a specific instance of a broader phenomenon (Bryman 2012; Yin, 2018).

Qualitative research is particularly suited for exploratory studies aimed at developing a comprehensive understanding of relatively under-researched areas. Given my focus on TOC, which involves novel or less understood phenomena, qualitative methods provide rich, detailed insights essential for building foundational knowledge (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Qualitative research also offers the necessary flexibility to adapt research questions and methods as new insights emerge, which is beneficial when studying complex and dynamic phenomena like transnational organized crime (Bryman, 2012).

Moreover, my research focuses are on the challenges on countering transnational organized crime, addressing the complexities and impacts of international criminal gangs. This is a distinct perspective, as the vast majority of academic research in Brazil predominantly concentrates on internal issues such as urban crime and local public security challenges. By examining the global dimensions of organized crime from an insider perspective, my work contributes to a broader understanding of how these international networks influence and intersect with local criminal activities, thereby offering valuable insights that extend beyond the national context (Antonopoulos and Hobbs, 2013).

### **3.3 Qualitative case study analysis**

I am using a qualitative case study approach in this dissertation, drawing on my professional experience to connect academic research with real-world scenarios.

According to Yin (2018), a case study "is an empirical inquiry that investigates a

contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident".

Case studies offer significant benefits for research on organized crime, particularly due to the often-limited availability of public data on such clandestine activities. This method allows for an in-depth exploration of complex phenomena within their real-life context, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and structures of organized crime groups (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). By focusing on specific instances, case studies enable researchers to uncover detailed insights into the operational strategies, socio-political influences, and economic impacts of these groups (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018; Simeonova and Fitzgerald, 2023).

Furthermore, the case study method is particularly suited to the study of organized crime due to the scarcity of public data. Organized crime operates in the shadows, making it difficult to obtain reliable and comprehensive data through traditional quantitative methods.

Given my focus on the challenges of countering TOC in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, my case study can be classified primarily as a descriptive case study with elements of both exploratory and explanatory case studies. This classification is suitable because my research aims to provide a detailed and contextualized account of TOC in Rio de Janeiro, including the specific challenges faced by law enforcement and other stakeholders. By documenting the nature and impact of TOC, describing the various actors involved, and detailing the responses by local and international authorities, my study offers a comprehensive description of the situation. Additionally, my case study has exploratory elements as it seeks to identify new patterns, issues, or strategies in combating TOC, helping to understand the dynamics of organized crime in Rio. Furthermore, it incorporates explanatory aspects by analyzing how socio-economic factors, political dynamics, and international crime networks contribute to the complexity of addressing TOC. This multifaceted approach not only describes the challenges but also explores new insights and explains the underlying factors contributing to these challenges, providing a robust framework for my dissertation (Yin, 2018; Stake, 1995).

### **3.3.1 Depth of understanding**

The qualitative case study approach allows for a comprehensive and in-depth exploration



of the evolution and nuances of TOC in Rio de Janeiro (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018; Yin, 2018). This method facilitates the examination of historical, socio-political, and economic contexts, providing a rich, detailed understanding that quantitative data alone cannot offer.

### **3.3.2 Contextual sensitivity**

TOC in Rio de Janeiro is deeply embedded within specific local contexts. A qualitative case study approach is sensitive to these contextual factors, allowing for a nuanced analysis (Stake, 1995; Bryman 2012; Antonopoulos and Hobbs, 2013). This method enables the exploration of how local cultures, political dynamics, and economic conditions shape and are shaped by organized crime.

### **3.3.3 Similar studies**

Similar studies with equal methods have been made by practitioners such as John P. Sullivan (Sullivan, 2009; Sullivan, 2014; Sullivan, 2019; Sullivan and Cruz, 2023; Sullivan and Sánchez, 2024), Robert J. Bunker (Bunker and Sullivan, 2021; Sullivan and Bunker, 2021; Bunker and Sullivan 2022a; Bunker and Sullivan 2022b) and Christian Viana de Azevedo (Azevedo, 2015; Azevedo, 2018; Azevedo 2020; Azevedo, 2021).

The inclusion of real-world experience from senior police officers in academic case studies provides invaluable insights that enrich the theoretical framework with practical applications. Practitioners bring a unique perspective that bridges the gap between theory and practice, offering empirical evidence and firsthand observations that enhance the credibility and relevance of academic research. Their contributions ensure that the studies are grounded in actual experiences and current practices, making the findings more applicable and impactful for both academic and professional audiences. This integration of practical expertise with academic rigor is essential for developing comprehensive and effective strategies in the field of study.

### **3.3.4 Integration of personal experience**

My 27 years of experience in policing offer a unique and valuable perspective, which can be seamlessly integrated into a qualitative case study, provided that necessary

precautions are taken (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This professional background enriches the research by offering practical insights and a deep understanding of the operational realities of countering organized crime.

### **3.4 Implementation of the qualitative case study**

#### **3.4.1 Desk research**

The primary method of investigation for this dissertation is desk research, involving the analysis of a wide range of secondary sources (Williams, 2007). Sources include academic literature, government reports, policy documents, media articles, and NGO publications. This extensive review of existing literature and data provides a solid foundation for understanding the historical and contemporary landscape of TOC in Rio de Janeiro.

#### **3.4.2 Data collection**

As a native Portuguese speaker with a strong command of Spanish, I can base my research on English, Portuguese, and Spanish academic texts. The Spanish language is particularly important for studying issues in Latin America. This trilingual advantage enables me to access and integrate a wider range of sources, ensuring a thorough understanding of the subject matter from both local and international perspectives. By incorporating insights from Brazilian/Portuguese and Spanish academic publications, I can provide a more nuanced and culturally relevant analysis, enriching the overall depth and quality of my research.

I incorporate several Portuguese-language databases, including FGV Analytics (Getulio Vargas Foundation Analytics), IESP (Institute of Social and Political Studies at the Rio de Janeiro State University), CESEC (Center for Security and Citizenship Studies at Candido Mendes University), ISP (Public Security Institute), and MJSP (Ministry of Justice and Public Security), as well as additional relevant sources. I also investigate the topic in many Spanish sources in Latin America.

Key themes and patterns were identified through thematic analysis, a common qualitative technique that involves coding and categorizing data to uncover underlying

themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **3.4.3 Documentary analysis**

As stated by Prior (2008), in social research documents should be viewed as active agents that play various roles in social interactions. Their study should extend beyond content to include their use and function within social interactions and organizational contexts. Actor-network theory posits that documents can be considered actors within social networks, influencing the network's development. Visualizing these networks helps to identify relationships between documents, institutions, people, and concepts. Therefore, understanding how documents drive and shape activities in various fields requires focusing on their functioning and roles, not just their content (Prior, 2008). I employed this approach to consult archives for the historical section, emphasizing the active role of documents in shaping social networks and activities.

### **3.4.4 Reflexivity and the value of personal experience**

The importance of reflexivity in case study research cannot be overstated. Reflexivity involves the researcher's awareness of their own influence on the research process and outcomes. In studying organized crime, reflexivity ensures that researchers remain critically aware of their biases and the potential impact of their positionality on the interpretation of data. This is crucial for maintaining the integrity and credibility of the research findings (Probst, 2015; Hurst, 2023).

Incorporating personal professional experience into research design offers significant benefits but also comes with notable pitfalls. Utilizing personal professional experience can make research more pertinent and grounded in practical contexts. This can result in formulating more meaningful research questions and generating interpretations that are directly applicable to real-world situations. Such integration allows for a richer understanding of the study's subject matter, particularly in complex fields like security studies where nuanced insights can be critical. Experienced researchers can identify subtleties and context-specific factors that might be missed by those without similar backgrounds (Wilkinson, 2018).

Moreover, personal professional experience can enhance the credibility of the research. Stakeholders and participants are more likely to trust findings from a researcher who has demonstrated expertise and firsthand knowledge of the subject matter. This trust can be particularly valuable in fields that rely on the researcher's practical understanding of complex issues (Wilkinson, 2018; Holmes, 2020).

However, incorporating personal experience also poses risks, primarily related to bias. Personal experiences can shape perceptions and interpretations, potentially leading to subjective conclusions. It is crucial for researchers to practice reflexivity, continually reflecting on how their background influences their research and taking steps to mitigate bias. Reflexivity helps maintain the integrity and objectivity of the research findings (Wilkinson, 2018; Abbas, 2024).

There is also a danger of overgeneralizing from one's own experiences to broader contexts. What holds true in one specific instance might not be universally applicable. Researchers must ensure their findings are supported by comprehensive and robust data, rather than relying solely on personal anecdotes. This approach helps in maintaining the validity and generalizability of the research (McCombes, 2023).

Incorporating personal experience can raise ethical issues, especially if it involves confidential or sensitive information from previous professional roles. Researchers must navigate these ethical considerations carefully to maintain integrity and trust in their work. Proper ethical guidelines and practices must be followed to ensure that the research remains ethically sound and trustworthy (Wilkinson, 2018).

By balancing these benefits and pitfalls, researchers can effectively integrate personal professional experience into their research design. This integration enhances the validity and applicability of their studies while upholding rigorous standards of objectivity and ethics.

My 27 years of experience in policing significantly contribute to the methodological robustness and practical relevance of this research. This professional background provides several advantages.

As a researcher with practitioner knowledge in this field, reflexivity is particularly

relevant to me. My background and experiences provide valuable insights and a deeper understanding of the subject matter, but they also necessitate a heightened awareness of potential biases. By engaging in reflexivity, I can critically assess how my practitioner knowledge shapes my perspectives and interpretations, ensuring that my analysis remains balanced and objective. This reflective practice not only enhances the validity of my research but also enriches the analysis by integrating practical insights with academic rigor.

#### **3.4.5 Data analysis**

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data, allowing for the identification and exploration of key themes related to the evolution and dynamics of organized crime in Rio de Janeiro. This method involved a meticulous process of coding and categorizing data to uncover patterns and themes that provide insights into the multifaceted nature of organized crime (Williams, 2007). The thematizing was conducted manually, which involved a thorough and detailed examination of the data to ensure that the themes accurately reflected the complexities of the subject matter. This hands-on approach allowed for a deeper engagement with the data, ensuring a nuanced understanding of the emergent themes.

By using thematic analysis, I was able to examine how various factors such as socio-economic conditions, political dynamics, and law enforcement strategies interact and influence the development and persistence of organized crime. This approach also facilitated the understanding of how these factors create an environment that enables organized crime to thrive, how they shape the behaviours and strategies of criminal organizations, and how they impact the effectiveness of efforts to combat these activities. Through thematic analysis, I can systematically dissect complex data and construct a comprehensive narrative that highlights the interconnectedness of these different elements, offering a deeper and more nuanced understanding of organized crime in Rio de Janeiro.

#### **3.4.6 Triangulation**

Triangulation enhances the validity and reliability of the findings (Flick, 2014). This involved cross-referencing data from multiple sources, including academic literature, government reports, policy documents, and media articles, to ensure consistency and

robustness (Patton, 1999). By integrating information from diverse sources, triangulation mitigates potential biases that may arise from relying on a single type of data or perspective.

This methodological approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem, as it allows for the verification of facts and the identification of converging patterns. Triangulation also strengthens the credibility of the research findings by demonstrating that the results are not artifacts of a single data source but are supported by evidence from various angles. (Bryan, Lewis-Beck, and Liao, 2015). This comprehensive strategy ensures that the analysis is thorough and well-rounded, ultimately leading to more reliable and valid conclusions about the dynamics of organized crime in Rio de Janeiro.

#### **3.4.6.1 Insider knowledge**

My extensive professional experience, spanning nearly three decades in the field of public safety in Brazil, provides invaluable insider knowledge of law enforcement practices, challenges, and strategies, which is crucial for understanding the operational realities of countering organized crime. Throughout my career, I have worked not only within the state borders of Rio de Janeiro but also in other states such as São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso, Recife, Amazonas, Rondônia, Santa Catarina, Paraná, and the Federal District. This extensive coverage across all regions of Brazil has given me a unique perspective on the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies nationwide. This insider perspective allows for a more nuanced analysis of the effectiveness of different law enforcement approaches and the practical challenges encountered (Greene, 2014).

#### **3.4.6.2 Credibility and access**

My professional background enhances the credibility of the research and provides access to valuable sources of information, including law enforcement reports, internal documents, and professional networks. This access allows for a more comprehensive and informed analysis of the issues at hand (Krause, 2024). Additionally, I encountered no ethical issues during the research process, ensuring that all data collection and analysis adhered to ethical guidelines and standards. The ethical compliance further supports the integrity and reliability of the research findings.

### **3.4.6.3 Practical insights**

My experience allows me to incorporate practical insights and examples into the analysis, bridging the gap between theory and practice. By integrating real-world scenarios and firsthand knowledge, I can enhance the theoretical frameworks with practical relevance (Krause, 2024). These insights help to contextualize the findings, making them more applicable to actual law enforcement challenges (Greene, 2014). Additionally, this blend of theory and practice enables me to provide concrete recommendations for policy and practice that are grounded in reality, ensuring they are both effective and feasible. This holistic approach not only enriches the analysis but also fosters the development of strategies that are both innovative and implementable in the field.

## **3.5 Conclusion**

The qualitative case study analysis is the most appropriate methodological approach for this dissertation, as it allows for a comprehensive and nuanced examination of the evolution and dynamics of transnational organized crime in Rio de Janeiro. This approach is well-suited to capturing the complex, context-specific nature of organized crime and integrates my extensive professional experience in policing with the recent knowledge I've gained from attending courses, seminars, and forums at the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies. The qualitative case study analysis provides practical insights and enhances the validity and relevance of the research.

## **4 Findings and Discussion**

In this chapter, I delve into the findings of my research, focusing on the complex landscape of TOC within the Brazilian context. Through a detailed analysis, I explore how these criminal networks operate and adapt in Brazil, with particular emphasis on Rio de Janeiro. The discussion highlights the complexities and challenges faced by law enforcement in combating TOC. Additionally, I present nodal governance and networked policing as innovative approaches to addressing these challenges. These frameworks propose more collaborative and interconnected strategies, involving multiple stakeholders in the fight against organized crime, aiming to enhance the effectiveness and resilience of crime prevention efforts.

### **4.1 Brazil, Latin America's giant**

Brazil is frequently regarded as a giant among Latin American nations due to a combination of factors. Geographically, covering an extensive area of 8,510,417.771 square kilometres (IBGE, 2022), Brazil holds the distinction of being the largest country in its region and ranks fifth globally in terms of total landmass, encompassing nearly half of South America's landmass (CIA, 2021; WorldAtlas, 2023; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024).

Demographically, it stands as the most populous nation in Latin America, with 203 million inhabitants (IBGE, 2022), ranking seventh worldwide (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022). Economically, Brazil is the 10th largest economy in the world and the largest in Latin America (Delivorias, 2022), and as a member of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), it plays a significant role among emerging markets. In terms of natural resources, Brazil is a major exporter of soybeans, meats, sugar-alcohol complex (primarily sugar and ethanol), as well as forestry products and minerals, such as iron ore (OEC, 2022; Secretaria de Comércio Exterior, 2024). These aspects collectively solidify Brazil's status as a pivotal and influential nation in Latin America.

A notable aspect that merits special attention is Brazil's extensive and porous borders. Brazil shares inland borders with every South American country, except Chile and Ecuador (IBGE, 2022; WorldAtlas, 2023; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024).



Overall, Brazil's inland borders extend a remarkable 16,145 kilometres, shared with nine neighbouring countries and one French ultramarine territory (French Guiana, 649 km; Guyana, 1,308 km; Venezuela, 2,137 km; Paraguay, 1,371 km; Bolivia 3,403 km; Peru, 2,659 km; Colombia 1,790 km; Argentina, 1,263 km; Suriname 515 km; Uruguay, 1,050 km). For perspective, 16,145 kilometres is roughly the distance between São Paulo, Brazil, and Bangkok, Thailand. Adding 7,400 kilometres of Atlantic coastline to its inland borders brings Brazil's total border length to 23,760 kilometres, which is more than half the Earth's circumference (CIA, 2021; IBGE, 2022; WorldAtlas, 2023; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024).

For comparison, the inland border between the United States and Mexico, which is considered critical, measures 3,155 kilometres—shorter than the frontier between Brazil and Bolivia, with 3,403 kilometres (CIA, 2021; IBGE, 2022; WorldAtlas, 2023; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024). It's widely recognized that the world's largest economy and military power struggles to maintain control over its southern border (Schadlow, 2022; Felbab-Brown and Dews, 2023). This comparison highlights the scale of the challenges faced by Brazil.

It's important to note that among the countries neighboring Brazil, some are the world's leading cultivators of the coca bush, namely: Colombia (61%), Peru (26%) and Bolivia (13%) (UNODC, 2022). The inland borders with these countries are situated in the Amazon region, encompassing the Amazon Basin. This area features significant stretches of borderland characterized by dense rainforests and intricate river networks. (Hidalgo and Centeno, 2023).

Due to its geographic location, Brazil has emerged as the world's second-largest consumer of cocaine, falling behind only the United States, and a well-known route for trafficking illicit drugs to Europe, Africa, and Asia (UNODC, 2022; INBC 2024).

Based on data from “Mapa da Segurança Pública 2024” (Public Security Map) (SINESP, 2024), between 2020 and 2023, cocaine seizures in Brazil saw a significant increase. The data indicate a rising trend since 2020, although that year, the states of Maranhão, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, Rondônia, Santa Catarina, and Tocantins had not yet provided their data by the extraction date. Nonetheless, the country recorded a total of 60,570 kilograms of

cocaine seized. This number rose to 91,789 kilograms in 2021, continuing the upward trend in the following years with 128,660 kilograms seized in 2022, and peaking at 143,316 kilograms in 2023. This last year represented the period of the highest cocaine seizures in the past four years. In percentage terms, cocaine seizures in 2023 increased by 11.39% compared to the previous year, with a total of 143,316 kg seized in 2023 versus 128,660 kg in 2022, resulting in an average of 392.65 kg per day throughout 2023 (SINESP, 2024).

The proliferation and activities of TOC groups in Brazil are evident, and these groups have demonstrated a high level of operational effectiveness in their endeavors.

Drug trafficking is just one international criminal activity affecting Brazil. Additionally, the country faces challenges like arms trafficking, illegal mining, smuggling, human trafficking, deforestation, money laundering and environmental crimes (Taylor and Dudley, 2020).

As highlighted by Mackenzie (2020), drug trafficking stands as the most lucrative source of revenue among transnational criminal markets and has evolved into a global crisis, evidenced by the consistent rise in drug users. This illicit trade encompasses multiple stages, from production, refining, exporting, and importing in producer nations to regional wholesale and retail distribution in consumer nations. The structural intricacies vary based on the type of drug: while heroin and cocaine are primarily cultivated in a few specific countries, cannabis and synthetic drugs are both produced and consumed globally. Despite supply-side interventions attempting to eradicate the market, these strategies have not successfully dismantled the networks, as demand remains a significant driver (Mackenzie, 2020).

Based on the findings of Mackenzie (2020), enforcement efforts often entrench criminal organizations further or compel them to adapt their methods and those involved in trafficking treat it as a business, using entrepreneurial language and strategies while facing constraints inherent in illegality. Nevertheless, traffickers leverage similar methods and technologies as legitimate businesses, exemplifying a complex, adaptive system resistant to disruption (Mackenzie, 2020).

This dissertation will examine illicit drug trafficking over the past 50 years, emphasizing its role in the rise of TOC in Brazil, particularly affecting the State of Rio de Janeiro.

The decision to limit the analysis of TOC in Brazil to the past 50 years is grounded in several significant developments that have transformed the landscape of criminal activity. Firstly, there has been a marked increase in drug consumption in Brazil since the mid-1970s, which has fueled the growth and sophistication of organized crime networks. This period also coincides with the rise of globalization, which has expanded merchant exchanges and facilitated the operation of illegal markets across borders. The ease of global trade has provided criminal organizations with new opportunities to traffic drugs, arms, and other illicit goods, exacerbating the TOC problem. Additionally, advancements in technology over the past five decades have revolutionized communication and logistics, enabling criminals to connect, coordinate, and execute their operations with unprecedented efficiency. These technological advancements have also made it more challenging for law enforcement to track and combat these activities. Furthermore, Brazil's democratic transition, marked by the end of the military dictatorship in 1985 and the adoption of a new federal constitution in 1988, has had profound effects on the country's social and political landscape. The transition to democracy brought significant changes in governance, law enforcement, and civil liberties, which have also influenced the dynamics of TOC. By focusing on this period, the analysis can capture the interplay of these critical factors and provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution and current dynamics of TOC in Brazil.

## **4.2 An Overview of the Historical Development of TOC in Brazil**

Focusing on the last five decades, we can trace the roots of modern organized crime in Brazil back to the dictatorship period, which lasted from 1964 to 1985 (Rosenbaum, 1970; Power, 2016; Napolitano, 2018).

### **4.2.1 1970s to 1990s: the origins of modern TOC**

#### **4.2.1.1 “Comando Vermelho – CV” (Red Command)**

William da Silva Lima, also known as “professor”, was a bank robber that was imprisoned for twenty-three years in the 1970's. In his book “Quatrocentos contra um: Uma História do Comando Vermelho” (Four hundred against one: A History of the Red

Command), Lima (1991) revealed that during the military regime in Brazil, political prisoners involved in guerrilla activities were incarcerated alongside ordinary criminals, all convicted under the “LSN - Lei de Segurança Nacional”, Brazil’s national security law (Câmara dos Deputados, 1967; Senado Federal, 1969).

In this context, the maximum-security prison "Instituto Penal Cândido Mendes" (Candido Mendes Penal Institute), located in Ilha Grande, southern part of the State of Rio de Janeiro, stands out as being the birthplace of the “Comando Vermelho” (Lima, 1991).

As highlighted by Lima, facing prison violence and guard-inflicted brutality, prisoners created self-protection groups. One of those groups was named “Falange Vermelha” (Red Phalanx) and emerged to establish rules for coexistence, a code of conduct, and to demand respect for prisoners (Lima, 1991; Insight crime, 2022).

Drawing from the analysis of Lima (1991), ordinary criminals were educated by political prisoners on discipline, hierarchy, organization, guerrilla warfare against the state, military and terrorist tactics, among other topics. Most importantly, common offenders were indoctrinated with the ideology of viewing the state as the oppressor. What began as a self-protection group of prisoners evolved into an organized gang wielding influence both within and beyond the prison (Lima, 1991). The “Red Phalanx,” later renamed the “Red Command,” is regarded as the first organized criminal gang in Rio de Janeiro's modern history<sup>2</sup>.

Carlos Amorim (1993) states that in the 1980s, organized crime established itself under the slogan “Paz, Justiça e Liberdade” (Peace, Justice, and Freedom). The “Comando Vermelho” (Red Command) continues to uphold this ideology today, which has also influenced the formation of other organized crime gangs, as will be discussed later. The state's neglect and ignorance have turned it into an undeniable force for the criminal organizations (Amorim, 1993).

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<sup>2</sup> This study will not address the clandestine lottery organization known as “Jogo do Bicho” (Animal Game), the oldest, most traditional, and well-known illegal gambling activity in Brazil. This topic warrants dedicated research. The book ‘Laws of Chance: Brazil’s clandestine lottery and the making of urban public life’ (Chazkel, 2011) offers a comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon.

Outside the prisons, criminals used to hide in Rio de Janeiro's "favelas"<sup>3</sup> (squatter communities; slums; shantytowns) and recruit young people for their illegal activities. Based on the findings of the Brazilian anthropologist Alba Maria Zaluar (2000) it became clear that youths noted that the criminal gangs provide security for their members, and that they ensure legal assistance to those well-situated in the organized crime hierarchy. They value such security highly when considering joining a gang. Because money can buy defence, and guns guarantee some protection, it is a rational choice for them to practice more crime in order to gain money, guns and respect within the gang. Idealized, absolute independence may just be a death trap for the young and for those around them. On the other hand, few young, poor men establish themselves in the drug organization over the long run, as most die very young or go to prison. However, they all contribute to the enormous profits enjoyed by those who are well-placed in the networks, or who run the legal businesses connected with money laundering (Zaluar, 2000). It happened in the past and it's still visible today.

Rio de Janeiro's municipal law number 111 (February 1, 2011), defines favela as an area predominantly residential, characterized by unauthorized and low-income occupation, lack of urban infrastructure and public services, narrow and irregular streets, absence of formal subdivisions and property ownership, and unlicensed construction that does not comply with current legal standards (LegisWeb, 2011; Lemgruber et al, 2023). Drawing on the official concepts of favela, it's clear that the absence of the state allows criminals to find refuge in these areas. It was in Rio de Janeiro prisons and favelas that the Red Command expanded (Lessing, 2008).

As indicated in Amorim (1993), a favela<sup>4</sup> is a community without citizenship as we know it. Poverty pushes people to the margins of life, but no human group can exist without rules,

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<sup>3</sup> The favela is an integral part of Rio de Janeiro's urban landscape that warrants special attention to better understand the public security situation. A favela is considered a 'subnormal agglomerate' and, depending on the region of Brazil, has different names such as "invasão" (invasion), "grota", "baixada", "comunidade" (community), "mocambo", "palafita", "loteamento", "ressaca", "vila" (village), among others. A general expression used by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) is "favelas and poor urban communities" (IBGE, 2020). According to IBGE's classification, 'subnormal agglomerates' are forms of irregular land occupation on property belonging to others (public or private) for housing purposes in urban areas and are generally characterized by an irregular urban pattern, a lack of essential public services, and a location in areas that present restrictions for occupations (IBGE, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Official data from IBGE (2010) reveals that the city of Rio de Janeiro has 763 favelas, housing approximately 1,393,314 people. This represents about 22.03% of the city's population at that time (IBGE, 2010). The most recent 2022 demographic census (IBGE) has not yet provided updated figures, but it is clear that these numbers have increased significantly.

laws, and a system of rewards and punishments. Organized crime fills this void, establishing regulations for social coexistence. Drawing from Perlman (1976), favelas are primarily inhabited by workers and their families seeking proximity to workplaces. Despite their integration into the city's economy, favelas have developed in isolation from the mainstream city, leading to unfair stigmatization (Perlman, 1976). Favelas should be viewed as a social issue rather than a public security problem, with the real law enforcement challenge being organized crime. The “Morro da Providência” favela, established between 1864 and 1869 in downtown Rio de Janeiro, exemplifies this dynamic. Initially a settlement for Brazilian Army troops returning from the war against Paraguay (1864-1870), it later became a hub for smugglers and, by the 1960s, for drug trafficking (Amorim, 1993).

A comprehensive study by Perlman (2006) from 1968 to 2003 highlights the marginalization of Brazil's urban poor, driven by factors such as stigma, limited employment opportunities, and educational barriers. Living in favelas restricts access to jobs and perpetuates income disparities, while high levels of underemployment and unemployment reinforce poverty. The Brazilian school system's focus on expensive, competitive education further limits access to higher education for the urban poor. Additionally, a lack of formal savings, financial investments, and access to essential services like healthcare exacerbates this marginalization. These conditions created a fertile environment for the rise of TOC, notably the Red Command (Comando Vermelho) in the 1970s. Originating in Rio de Janeiro's prisons, the Red Command capitalized on the disenfranchisement and lack of opportunities in favelas, offering economic gain and community protection. This enabled them to build a powerful criminal network that integrated local activities with international drug trafficking, significantly expanding their influence and reach.

In the 1980s the Red Command was present in many Rio de Janeiro's favelas and expanded its operations into the cocaine trade through strategic alliances with Colombian drug cartels (Amorim, 1993; Lima, 1991). This partnership enabled them to significantly influence drug trafficking within the region, establishing a complex network that operated both nationally and transnationally. These connections provided the organizational structure necessary to handle large quantities of cocaine, marking a significant evolution in their criminal activities from local operations to engaging in substantial international drug trafficking (Amorim, 1993; Lima, 1991; InSight Crime, 2022).

Based on data from Penglase (2008), the expansion of drug trafficking and the emergence of the Red Command are directly linked to the wave of violence that has marked post-dictatorship Brazil. This violence is the result of a complex interplay between the rise of powerful organized crime groups like the Red Command, socio-economic exclusion, abusive state practices, and the broader impacts of neoliberal economic policies and globalization. Together, these factors have contributed to the entrenched violence and instability that have defined Brazil's urban landscape in the decades following the end of military rule (Penglase, 2008). Looking at nation-wide homicide rates, in 1979, during the military's rule, the homicide rate was 11.5 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. By 1997, more than ten years after the return to democracy, the homicide rate in Brazil more than doubled, increasing to 25.4 per 100,000 (Penglase, 2008).

According to Lessing (2008), the Red Command (Comando Vermelho) originated as a prison gang, and during the cocaine boom, it had already established an unprecedented level of control over prison life, not only at Cândido Mendes on Ilha Grande, where it began, but also across multiple prisons in Rio de Janeiro. This control allowed the imprisoned leaders to effectively threaten free members with reprisals if they betrayed 'the movement'. Such credible threats were essential in facilitating cooperation among the 'free members' (those not imprisoned), enabling them to overcome the collective action problem. This was achieved through a mutual aid scheme, where members supported each other by sharing resources and information, ensuring loyalty and cohesion during their rapid expansion and consolidation of Rio's drug trade (Lessing, 2008). Based on Lessing (2008), "the movement" refers to the organized collective of the Red Command which operates both inside and outside of prisons.

An important point to emphasize is the relationship between the Red Command and the residents of the favelas. In the words of Amorim (1993), the control exerted by criminal gangs over the favela is not solely based on the power of firearms and corruption of public agents. Organized crime has set up a series of social assistance mechanisms. The drug traffickers provide gifts for religious celebrations, fund samba schools, build schools and churches, lend money without interest, cover medical expenses and medicine in emergencies, and even offer pensions to women abandoned by their husbands (Amorim, 1993). This practice continues today as a strategy to win the hearts and minds of the favela populace.

The dynamics of coexistence between criminals and favela dwellers is rooted in violence and welfarism, with the criminal gang stepping in to fill the power vacuum left by the state. Criminals have their own rules and "justice system," establishing a "drug trafficking tribunal" where torture and killings are considered acceptable tools (Amorim, 1993).

The Red Command's networked structure has facilitated its expansion beyond the borders of Rio de Janeiro state. In a recent episode, a statute pertaining to the Red Command was established within a prison in the State of Mato Grosso (Diogo, 2022). According to confidential sources from reputable intelligence agencies, the Red Command expansion is a reality in almost all Brazilian states (Confidential Sources; DIPEN/SENAPPEN, 2024).

#### **4.2.1.2 Crime-terror nexus and irregular warfare: linking past and present**

Terror is another tool in the Red Command's toolbox. The Red Command employs terror as a guerrilla tactic, using it as a politically motivated response to police operations targeting organized crime. Its origins can be traced back to the military regime in Brazil when the group was formed. Guerrilla warfare often involves asymmetric strategies where smaller groups use unconventional methods, like acts of terror, to instil fear, demoralize the opponent, and gain control or influence over a population (Galula, 2006).

Since the 1970s, the spread of guerrilla tactics from the "Minimanual do Guerrilheiro Urbano" (Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla) can be observed. The book, written by Carlos Marighella, was published in June 1969 during the height of Brazil's military regime.

As documented by Mário Magalhães (2012) in his book "Marighella, o guerrilheiro que incendiou o mundo" (Marighella, the guerrilla fighter who set the world ablaze), Carlos Marighella was a prominent Brazilian Marxist revolutionary and guerrilla leader who became politically active in his youth, joining the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) in the 1930s. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Marighella was repeatedly imprisoned for his political activities. His experiences shaped his views on violent versus nonviolent resistance, and by the 1960s, he had become disillusioned with the PCB's approach and began advocating for armed struggle as a means to overthrow the government. In 1969, Marighella founded the "Ação Libertadora Nacional - ALN" (National Liberation Action), a leftist guerrilla organization that aimed to fight against the military regime through bank robberies,



kidnappings, and other acts of sabotage. Marighella's strategy was largely influenced by his interpretation of guerrilla warfare, and he authored the "Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla," a practical guide for urban guerrilla warfare, which became influential among various revolutionary groups worldwide. Considered a terrorist by the military regime, Marighella was assassinated by the Brazilian police in 1969 (Magalhães, 2012).

In his minimanual, Marighella (1969) defines the urban guerrilla as "a person who fights the military dictatorship with weapons, using unconventional methods". Most of all, Marighella stated that the person who engages in the urban guerrilla is "a revolutionary and an ardent patriot, a fighter for his country's liberation" (Marighella, 1969). Although the definition of terrorist varies depending on who defines it, it is clear that Marighella's lessons were incorporated by criminal gangs in Rio during their development.

Time has passed and the military regime ended in 1985, but Marighella's teachings remain clear. The enemy is still the state, though it is no longer a military dictatorship. Since the return to democracy, Brazil has seen a rise in urban violence, with Rio de Janeiro as a prime example (Cerqueira, 2014; Cerqueira and Bueno, 2023).

The use of psychological warfare in Rio de Janeiro became evident. In Marighella's manual (1969), "war of nerves" (or psychological warfare) is defined as being the aggressive technique based on the direct or indirect use of mass media and rumours in order to demoralise the government. Marighella's teachings say that the objective of the war of nerves is to mislead, spreading lies among the authorities and creating an atmosphere of nervousness, discredit, insecurity, uncertainty, and concern. He also highlighted some methods such as the announcement of false clues (including information on the planting of bombs), letting false plans fall into police dominance to divert their attention, presenting denunciations to foreign embassies, the United Nations, the apostolic nunciature, and the international commissions of human rights among others (Marighella, 1969).

Criminal organizations in Rio continue to employ urban guerrilla tactics until today. The "street tactics," described by Marighella (1969), are often evident during police operations in areas dominated by criminals. The placement of barricades at strategic points of the favelas is a common guerrilla tactic largely in use in Rio (Coelho, 2023). Made of concrete and train tracks, they serve to block or at least delay the advance of police forces. As a side

effect, they also prevent the free movement of emergency vehicles (firefighters, ambulances) and public and private service providers. Even residents are prevented from moving freely with their vehicles due to the barricades set up by drug traffickers. To counter it, the Special Police Operations Battalion (BOPE) of the Rio de Janeiro State Military Police (PMERJ) have armoured tractors specially designed to remove barricades (Araújo, 2022). An armoured tractor is quite uncommon for a police force. It is becoming clear that police forces alone are not sufficient to handle the many variables involved in organized crime.

According to Marighella's doctrine (Marighella, 1969), urban guerrilla strategies aim to mobilize the population to fight the enemy, which today is primarily represented by the police forces. One common guerrilla tactic used by drug traffickers in Rio nowadays is arson attacks against public transportation (G1 Rio, 2019). It involves setting buses on fire to create chaos and panic in the city, disrupt essential public services, and significantly hinder urban mobility, thereby delaying police action against them (Menezes, 2023).

As evidenced in the analysis above, the absence of the state inside Rio's criminal-dominated areas creates a power vacuum that allows organized crime to flourish. As reported by Azevedo and Dudley (2020), a power vacuum develops once the state's governing bodies allow the rule of law to become subverted by corruption. In the words of Manso (2020), "the corrupting power of the immense fortunes funded by drug trafficking is also very real" (Manso, 2020). As a result, organized crime establishes themselves, recruit, train, expand and consolidate their illegal activities (Azevedo and Dudley, 2020).

As documented by Magaloni, Franco-Vivanco, and Melo (2020), the criminal underworld is not necessarily one of anarchy and state interventions against organized criminal groups sometimes work to improve security, but often exacerbate violence.

Inadequate government policies and support, including insufficient investment in social programs, infrastructure, and job creation, exacerbate the difficulties faced by the urban poor. Economic shifts, such as the loss of manufacturing jobs, reduction in construction jobs, and decreased demand for domestic services, have significantly reduced economic opportunities. Technological advancements and higher educational standards for job entry further marginalize the urban poor by creating barriers to employment. The increase in drug-related violence within favelas contributes to a climate of fear and diminishes social capital,

while pervasive prejudice and discrimination against favela residents in job markets exacerbate their marginalization (Perlman, 2006). Together, these factors create formidable barriers to economic well-being and social mobility, deepening the marginalization of the urban poor and hindering their ability to improve their living conditions. Organized crime benefits from it.

In the State of Rio de Janeiro, not only has the Red Command benefited from the power vacuum left by the state, but so have dissident criminal gangs like “Terceiro Comando” (Third Command), “Amigo dos Amigos” (Friends of Friends), and the “Terceiro Comando Puro” (Pure Third Command) (Manso and Dias, 2018).

As demonstrated in the preceding discussion, drug trafficking gangs in Rio de Janeiro thrive by capitalizing on the erosion of state authority, where they recruit local residents due to the lack of state control and influence. This recruitment results from trust or fear-based compliance, as these groups fill critical governance roles that the government fails to address. Consequently, organized crime groups emerge as parallel power structures, offering security, welfare, and ‘employment’ while undermining state legitimacy and creating alternative power networks. The complicated relationships between residents and organized crime groups hinder effective law enforcement and reveal the fragmented relationship between the state and citizens (Perlman, 2006; Lessing, 2008).

This dynamic fosters mistrust of police, as residents view them with suspicion due to allegations of corruption or violence, pushing them further toward alignment with organized crime. The lack of police legitimacy in these contexts is a familiar story. This cycle perpetuates violence, creating a feedback loop where state attempts to reclaim control led to increased violence and social fragmentation. These factors collectively exacerbate social disruption, demonstrating the deep challenges facing governance and law enforcement in Rio de Janeiro. Regrettably, in the complex landscape of Rio's public security, drug trafficking gangs are not the sole actors. There are more players terrorizing the population (Perlman, 2006; Lessing, 2008).

## **4.2.2 1990s to 2000s: the consolidation period**

### **4.2.2.1 Recent arrivals: the rise of paramilitary militias**

Another significant player in Rio de Janeiro's organized crime landscape is the “Milícia” (paramilitary militias, hereafter referred to simply as 'militias'). Citing the research of Manso (2020), especially after the 1960s, when thieves and criminals began to be perceived as a significant threat to urban residents, similar ideas about retaliatory justice were enticing many people in Brazilian cities. According to this viewpoint, the only way to counter the violence of crime was to be stronger and more violent than the criminal. Such beliefs became popular among police officers, leading to the formation of various groups. Police officers and security guards organized across Brazil. In Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo, the death squad called ‘Scuderie Le Cocq’ was established in honour of Detective Milton Le Cocq, who was killed in action in 1964. In São Paulo, during the 1980s, vigilante groups began to operate (Manso, 2020). Manso (2020) highlights that militias (vigilant groups) began to engage in conflicts with each other, trying to fulfil in their areas of operation the role that the Brazilian state seemed incapable of: to ensure, through the legitimate monopoly of force, the establishment of an authority that would enforce local rules. Furthermore, militias in Rio de Janeiro have consistently been supported by deviant police officers and politicians (Manso, 2020).

In the 1990's, Rio's militias presented themselves as a solution to the rampant drug trafficking plaguing communities. Initially, these militia-controlled areas operated under a unique system. Residents informally paid a fee, essentially a form of "security tax," to the militiamen in exchange for a ban on illegal drugs and crimes. Those who refuse to pay suffer reprisals, such as: assaults, threats, attacks, beatings, torture, expulsion from the community and even death. Those who are killed have their bodies deposited in clandestine cemeteries, in order to make police work more difficult (Freixo et al, 2008). Rio's militias also generate revenue through the illegal sale of gas canisters, pirated TV and internet signals, alternative transport, and other criminal activities (Freixo et al, 2008; Manso, 2020; Tchao, 2022).

The expression “milícias” became part of the vocabulary of public security in the State of Rio de Janeiro and began to be used frequently by press organizations when they had a dizzying increase, starting in 2004. It became even more consolidated after the attacks that

occurred at the end of December 2006, considered an action of reprisal by drug trafficking factions for the spread of “militias” in the city (Freixo et al, 2008).

In a study conducted by Cano cited in Freixo et al. (2008), militias are characterized by their irregular and coercive control of a territory and its inhabitants, often driven by the desire for individual profit. This coercive control stands in stark contrast to legitimate governance and is frequently achieved through intimidation and violence. Despite their illicit activities, militias may attempt to legitimize their presence through a discourse of protecting residents and establishing order. However, a defining feature of militias is the active and recognized participation of State agents, blurring the lines between criminality and authority. This collaboration between irregular armed groups and state actors undermines the rule of law and creates an environment of fear and violence (Freixo et al, 2008). Instead of gaining legitimacy the ‘Western’ way (Spencer, 1970; Salevao, 2005; Krygier, 2015), militias gain it through ‘coercive legitimation’ (Marenin cited in Hills, 2000). It refers to developing contexts in particular where legitimacy may be gained, not through adherence to democratic ideals, but through repression (Hills, 2000).

Technically militia constitutes just another type of organized crime gang. Like elsewhere, these gangs have a ‘corporate activity’, like a formal profit-driven business. It’s worth noting that there is no organized crime without an arm in the State – an arm in the police, an arm in political power, an arm, including, in the spheres of the Judiciary, the Public Prosecutor’s Office (Freixo et al, 2008).

Based on the findings of Filho (2019), militias have adopted an initiation ritual for new members that includes torture sessions, murder, dismemberment, and burial in clandestine cemeteries in rural areas (Filho, 2019). Akin to drug trafficking organizations, militias often develop their own extra-legal codes of conduct. These internal mechanisms may include makeshift tribunals empowered to adjudicate offenses and mete out punishments, up to and including capital punishment. (Manso, 2020).

Referring to data from Manso (2020), historically two hubs have emerged in Rio de Janeiro from which the militia business model has spread. One, in Jacarepaguá, was consolidated under the control of police officers in the neighbourhood association of the Rio das Pedras community. The other, in the Campo Grande and Santa Cruz region, grew with

the presence of police officers in the clandestine van transportation sector, giving rise to the group known as “Liga da Justiça” (the Justice League). The great novelty of these business models on Rio's criminal scene is that by organizing themselves into militias, police officers began to dispute territories and markets with drug trafficking factions, which previously had relationships with police officers by paying bribes and buying weapons and ammunition (Manso, 2020). The sad reality in Rio de Janeiro is that organized crime is compounded by the involvement of some police officers. Unfortunately, a faction within the police force has allied with criminal militias, while others are corrupted by drug dealers, thereby exacerbating the problem. These officers, instead of upholding the law, have become enmeshed in illicit activities alongside criminal organizations (author's personal experience).

In February 2007, state congressman Marcelo Freixo petitioned the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro to install a parliamentary inquiry commission (CPI) due to the extreme gravity of the militia situation in communities in the State of Rio de Janeiro, with strong evidence of the involvement of police, civilian and military, military firefighters, and prison officers. This extremely serious situation required an immediate response from the public authorities in 2008, starting with the kidnapping and torture of reporters from the newspaper “O DIA” in a favela in Rio de Janeiro (Freixo et al, 2008).

In the findings of Freixo et al (2008), sharing many commonalities with organized crime groups, such as territorial control, coercion, and profit-driven activities, militias are distinguished by two key characteristics: their use of a legitimization discourse and the presence of state actors within their ranks (Freixo et al, 2008).

The legitimization discourse regarding the protection of the inhabitants is a central point of the militia. It presents itself as protection against the threat of crime, against disorder and, ultimately, against evil, symbolized in the figure of the drug trafficker. Unlike trafficking, which legitimize themselves through simple violence, the militia cannot present itself as another group of organized crime. It has to present itself as an alternative to drug trafficking. In this way, it tries to legitimize itself through its opposite, as a “lesser evil” (Freixo et al, 2008).

In December 2008, culminating the work of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro's Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (CPI), indictments were issued against 226 individuals for involvement with militias, including two city councillors (G1, 2008).

A report from Leitão and Lannoy (2020) reveal that Rio de Janeiro has 1,400 favelas dominated by criminals. Traffickers control 81% of these territories, while militias hold sway in 19% of the favelas. RJ has 56,600 criminals at large, outnumbering the state military police force (PMERJ), which has 44,000 officers (Leitão and Lannoy, 2020).

An updated report by Mello (2022) reveals that over a period of 16 years, militias have nearly quintupled their territories and are now the largest criminal group in Rio de Janeiro. The areas under paramilitary control increased by 387.3% between 2006 and 2021. Militiamen currently control 256 square kilometres, half of the 510 square kilometres dominated by organized crime in the Rio metropolitan area (Mello, 2022).<sup>5</sup>

To conclude, in alignment with the findings of Wolff (2015), what we see in Rio de Janeiro are areas of limited statehood dominated by violent non-state actors (VNSA): drug trafficking gangs and militias. These areas function as 'parallel states,' zones of authority (or impunity) where social bandits and sectarian groups create overlapping zones of sovereignty within the nominal state, establishing territorial control and providing services such as resolving conflicts, enforcing contracts, ensuring order, organizing community events and aiding for healthcare and basic needs. VNSA ostensibly carry weapons and have the power to arbitrate disputes and punish norm violations. This situation creates a parallel authority structure in which criminals act as a substitute for the state.

Drawing from the analysis of Dupont, Grabosky, and Shearing (2003), in contexts of limited statehood, enhancing social control and conflict resolution requires innovative strategies such as nodal governance. The authors examine how public security is managed in stronger states, focusing on the interactions between state and non-state institutions through mechanisms such as coercion, sale, and gift. They propose that certain institutional

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<sup>5</sup> The findings are from a broader study called “Histórico dos Grupos Armados do Rio de Janeiro” (Historical Map of Armed Groups in Rio de Janeiro) made by “Grupo de Estudos de Novos Ilegalismos - GENI” (Group for the Study of New Illegalisms) at the “Universidade Federal Fluminense – UFF” (Federal Fluminense University) in partnership with “Instituto Fogo Cruzado” (Cross Fire Institute) (Hirata and Couto, 2022).

arrangements from these contexts can be adapted for weaker states where traditional security institutions are in decline or non-existent. By developing a typology of security provision that includes public, private, collective, and criminal actors, they suggest that innovative mechanisms can help arrest the deterioration of state capacity and provide a baseline level of internal security. The article also discusses the Zwelethemba model of peacemaking and peacebuilding in South Africa, which leverages local knowledge and community involvement to enhance security governance. By identifying these frameworks, Dupont, Grabosky, and Shearing aim to offer practical solutions for improving security in weak and failing states, emphasizing the importance of multilateral policing and the engagement of various societal actors in the co-production of public security.

### **4.3 Brazil legislation and policy environment: problem or solution?**

When public security issues started to alarm Brazilian society and threaten state stability, the government responded with new laws and public policies. Over the past decades, Brazil has faced significant challenges related to organized crime, including drug trafficking, gang violence, and corruption. These issues have not only endangered the safety and well-being of its citizens but have also undermined the country's economic and social stability. In response, the Brazilian government has implemented a series of legislative measures and public policies aimed at combating organized crime and enhancing public security. These initiatives range from stricter penal codes and enhanced law enforcement capabilities to comprehensive social programs designed to address the root causes of crime. Although some success was obtained, there remains a notable absence of comprehensive whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to effectively counter TOC. This dissertation examines the legislation and policy environment related to these public security initiatives.

In response to the rising criminality at both local and international levels, Brazilian authorities must devise innovative strategies to address public security challenges. The continuous expansion of organized crime gangs is leading to a gradual loss of state control over parts of its territory to Violent Non-State Actors (VNSAs), which poses a significant threat to national sovereignty. Current security policies in Brazil are heavily focused on law enforcement rather than incorporating comprehensive whole-of-society approaches. This law enforcement-centric strategy has proven to be insufficient, highlighting the urgent need



for more inclusive and multi-faceted solutions that engage various sectors of society in the fight against organized crime.

To start our analysis on the Brazilian legislation and policy environment, we must go back to 1988. On October 5, the representatives of the Brazilian people, convened in the National Constituent Assembly, promulgated the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil. For the first time in history, 'public security' was given a dedicated chapter in Brazil's Constitution.

As stated in Title 5, Chapter 3, Article 144 of the Federal Constitution:

“Public security, the duty of the State and the right and responsibility of all, is exercised to preserve public order and the safety of people and property, by means of the following agencies:

- I – Federal Police,
  - II – Federal Highway Police,
  - III – Federal Railway Police,
  - IV – civil polices,
  - V – military polices and military fire brigades,
  - VI – federal, state and district correctional police”
- (National Constituent Assembly, 1988).

The subsequent ten paragraphs of Article 144 emphasize the specifics of each law enforcement agency and outline additional directives.

Starting the examination of this crucial legislation, it's important to note that Brazilian National Constituent Assembly rightly defined public security as everyone's responsibility, even though few Brazilians felt really accountable for it. Another key point to consider is that the word 'State' (with capital “s”) refers to all the federative entities of Brazil: The Union (federal government), the 26 federative states, the Federal District, and the municipalities<sup>6</sup>. Drawing from my professional experience, it is evident that municipalities often avoid involvement in public security issues, leaving the responsibility to the federated states and the federal government.

At the state level, law enforcement agencies are divided into two entirely independent police forces: the Civil Police (PC) and the Military Police (PM). On the one

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<sup>6</sup> In 2022, there was 5,568 municipalities in Brazil, besides the Federal District and the District of Fernando de Noronha, an administrative division of the state of Pernambuco (IBGE, 2022)

hand, excluding the jurisdiction of the Union, the Civil Police, directed by career police chiefs, have the competence to act as judicial police and to investigate criminal offenses, except for the military ones (Federal Constitution, Article 144, Paragraph 4). On the other hand, the Military Police are responsible for overtly policing and preserving the public order (Federal Constitution, Article 144, Paragraph 5).

It's important to highlight that the Military Police in Brazil is a gendarmerie-style law enforcement agency. This means it operates similarly to a gendarmerie, a military unit tasked with policing civilian populations. The Brazilian Military Police is a military-style organization responsible for maintaining public order and safety within the federative states and the Federal District. It blends civilian policing with military structures and discipline (author's note). This model reflects a broader trend in Latin American security policy, where military forces often engage in public security roles due to historical and institutional reasons (Ortiz, 2020).

Based on the findings of Giulian (2016), the duality in police activity in Brazil has its roots in the Empire. Since that time, ostensive policing has had a military bias, while the Civil Police, also since the Empire, had judicial duties as well.

Referring to data from Giulian (2016), with Decree-Law No. 200 of February 25, 1967, Article 183 of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of September 18, 1946, was regulated. This article stipulated that the primary function of the Military Police was the preservation and maintenance of public order through preventive activities (ostensive policing) and repressive activities (arrests in flagrante delicto and control of civil disturbances), in addition to serving as an auxiliary force and reserve for the Brazilian Army in case of external war (Giulian, 2016).

The current legal framework stated in of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988 restricts the activities of state police forces, hinders interagency cooperation, and hampers their progress because it divides the administrative and judicial policing functions between two separate, independent agencies (Duton, 2006).

In theory, the Military Police handle one aspect of policing (calls-for-service, on-the-beat patrol, public order maintenance, preventive measures, crime deterrence, community

engagement, emergency response, among others) while the Civil Police are responsible for the complementary post-incident investigations. At the state level, there is no police force covering the entire cycle of policing functions. In other words, full-service policing is not a reality in Brazil's federative states and the Federal District, with the singular exception of military crimes committed by state military personnel. In contrast, the Brazilian Federal Police perform full-service policing within their constitutional roles, and their positive results are well-documented (Duton, 2006).

In addition to having distinct constitutional mandates, state-level police forces differ in their histories, cultures, recruitment processes, training, community relations, budget and funding, pay checks, work environment, promotional pathways, among other aspects (Duton, 2006).

Empirical evidence suggests that cooperation among them is rarely achieved; instead, competition is more common. To achieve better outcomes, it is essential to consider the implementation of integrated policing, which synergizes preventive and investigative functions within state-level police forces (PM and PC), as an imperative reform measure (Duton, 2006). However, further detailed investigation and public debate are necessary on this topic.

Brazil's infra-constitutional law attempts to promote integration among state-level police forces, but with limited success (Duton, 2006). Federal Law No. 13,675 (Poder Legislativo, 2018) establishes the “Sistema Único de Segurança Pública – SUSP” (Unified Public Security System) and creates the “Política Nacional de Segurança Pública e Defesa Social – PNSPDS 2021-2030” (National Public Security and Social Defense Policy 2021-2030), with the objective of preserving public order and the safety of people and property through joint, coordinated, systemic, and integrated action by public security and social defence agencies of the Union, States, Federal District, and Municipalities, in collaboration with society (Poder Legislativo, 2018).

Key principles of the PNSPDS 2021-2030 include efficiency in preventing and controlling criminal offenses, effectiveness in the suppression and investigation of these crimes, and promptness in service delivery to society (Poder Legislativo, 2018). The

question remains: how can these goals be met without strong cooperation among state-level police forces?

Guidelines of the PNSPDS include the coordination, cooperation, and collaboration among public security agencies and institutions in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation phases of actions, respecting their respective legal responsibilities and promoting the efficient use of resources based on best practices (Poder Legislativo, 2018). How can this be achieved at the state level within the framework of constitutional divisions?

The first objective stated in the PNSPDS is to promote integration in strategic and operational actions, public security intelligence activities, and crisis and incident management (Poder Legislativo, 2018). Once again, at the state level, practical application falls short of theoretical expectations. Structural changes are necessary and can only be implemented through an amendment to Article 144 of the Federal Constitution.

Policy and legislative initiatives aimed at improving outcomes in the public security sphere have, at some point, failed due to their attempts to conform the traditional public security policies of Brazilian state governments. Based on data from Ruediger (2013), Brazil's National Program for Public Security with Citizenship (PRONASCI), launched in 2007, proposed ninety-six specific projects which together formed a systematic effort to increase the operational capacity of state police forces, and – at the local level – to combine an increase in community-oriented policing with an expansion of activities focused on the historic low levels of civic participation and social development in poor areas. In particular, it was aimed at insulating socially vulnerable young people from the drug trade. In short, it was intended to move policing closer to the community, build citizenship and participation at that level, and attack and undermine crime networks. As a whole, these approaches would reduce levels of crime by undermining its foundations and co-opting its potential participants. Despite its ambitious goals, PRONASCI suffered from serious design flaws. The Ministry of Justice's techno-bureaucracy struggled to manage the program's complexity effectively. Furthermore, PRONASCI was not initially designed to accommodate the traditional policy concepts of Brazilian state governments regarding public security (Ruediger, 2013).

#### **4.3.1 2020s onwards: what to expect?**

The most well-known attempt to amend Article 144 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution, aimed at implementing full-service policing in Brazil's federative states and the Federal District, was the Proposed Constitutional Amendment No. 181 (PEC 181/2003) suggested in 2003 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2003). Other Proposed Constitutional Amendments, such as PEC 430/2009 and PEC 432/2009 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2024), also sought to modify Article 144 to create a unified state police force. However, none of these attempts were successful.

#### **4.4 Network policing and nodal governance: Putting the ‘Responsibility of All’ into practice**

Considering that a systemic police reform through the amendment of article 144 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution remains a distant prospect, tangible governance actions can be more readily implemented, yielding results in a short period of time. In Brazil's complex public security landscape, networked policing, and nodal governance emerge as effective adaptive solutions, emphasizing the responsibility of all (Johnston, 1999; Johnston, 2003; Bayley and Shearing, 1996; Kempa et al, 1999; Loader, 2000; Shearing, 2001; Shearing and Wood, 2003; Fleming and Wood, 2006; Sheptycki, 2007; Wood, Shearing, and Froestad, 2011; Wood and Shearing, 2007a; Johnston and Shearing, 2003; Quéro and Dupont, 2019; Burris, Drahos and Shearing, 2005; Dupont, 2006; Wood and Dupont, 2006; Gerspacher and Dupont, 2007; Dupont, Whelan and Manning, 2019; Diphorn and Berg, 2014; Cooper-Knock, Berg and Diphorn, 2023; Johnston and Shearing, 2009; Patriarca, 2023; Campana and Meneghini, 2024).

Nodal governance and networked policing build on the concept of plural policing by emphasizing decentralized and interconnected structures. Nodal governance refers to the coordination among different nodes, each with its own resources and authority, while networked policing focuses on the formation of networks to enhance cooperation and information sharing. Together, these concepts highlight the shift towards collaborative and multi-agency efforts in modern security management.

As we know from experience, public security issues occur at the local level, and law enforcement agencies typically manage the consequences. It's time to tackle the root causes, prioritize prevention, and implement bottom-up approaches. The chapter highlights the importance of integrating networked policing and nodal governance into Brazil's public security framework. These approaches emphasize problem-solving and a whole-of-society effort. By involving diverse stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, municipal authorities, academia, and others, these approaches ensure comprehensive collaboration and shared responsibility. Private security companies, technology firms, and specific service providers play crucial roles, while international cooperation expands the network's effectiveness. Like many other initiatives already undertaken in Brazil, these are a matter of governance and political will. This integrated model leverages the unique strengths and insights of each participant, fostering a proactive and cohesive strategy to address complex public security challenges and create a safer community for all.

Considering that at the state level Brazil has two independent police forces that barely collaborate with each other, it should be encouraged that each police force fosters partnerships and alliances to obtain better results. Drawing on the concept of nodal governance, initiatives could be implemented within each state law enforcement agency to promote collaboration and shared responsibilities. This approach involves integrating various stakeholders, including public, private, and community actors, to create a more interconnected and effective security network. Importantly, Brazil does not need to start from scratch. By adapting good practices from other countries, such as those highlighted in the studies of Berg and Shearing (2018), who discuss the integration of non-state actors in public security, Brazil can develop tailored solutions that fit its unique context. Implementing these strategies could enhance the overall effectiveness of law enforcement and address the complex challenges posed by TOC.

If the police forces do not share information and work in isolation, it leads to inefficiencies and gaps in the overall security framework. This fragmentation hinders the ability to effectively combat organized crime, as crucial intelligence and coordinated efforts are lacking. Nodal governance promotes a more interconnected approach where different nodes, including various police units, collaborate and share information. This networked model enhances the collective ability to address security challenges comprehensively.

Over the past few decades, civil society, the private sector, and the police have collaborated to explore various policing models, some of which have achieved relative success. In Brazil, community policing is perhaps the most well-known example of a police-led initiative. However, it is largely confined to the involvement of resident associations, local merchants, and a few other stakeholders. Although community policing is a valuable approach, its scope is limited by its reliance on a small number of participants. A significant drawback of this model is that the police retain decision-making supremacy, while other participants play merely supportive roles. This creates a clear hierarchical separation between the police and community members. In contrast, nodal governance and networked policing approaches promote a more egalitarian structure. While the police remain central, all stakeholders share equal power and responsibility in decision-making.

Based on the findings of Yar (2011), over the past three decades, there has been an ongoing debate about how and to what extent the hierarchical, state-led provision of security and policing has been replaced by a polycentric, network-oriented mode of governance. Yar identifies three inherent failure tendencies within nodal networks: inter-systemic conflicts, intra-systemic competition, and multiple spatial-temporal scales (Yar, 2011). Understanding these tendencies and limitations, Brazilian authorities should consider adopting and adapting the promising approaches of nodal governance and networked policing. By doing so, there is hope of realizing the constitutional principle that public security is the responsibility of all, fostering more collaborative and effective security measures.

A significant player in nodal governance and networked policing approaches is the private sector, particularly private security companies. Despite their potential, they are often excluded from discussions. Consequently, law enforcement in Brazil misses the opportunity to leverage a substantial security workforce. The Brazilian Forum of Public Security (ForumSeg, 2024) reports that the combined total of all 27 state Military Police forces is 404,871 officers. Recent studies (Nazário, 2024) indicate that Brazil has 4,804 private security companies that employ 485,073 personnel across the country. It is perplexing that the police do not enlist their support to address real-world issues. In networked policing and nodal governance models, private security must be involved in solution-finding processes. Their participation would include providing insights, sharing best practices, suggesting solutions, and, most importantly, contributing to the implementation of these solutions.

In nodal governance and networked policing approaches, not only the most obvious stakeholders should participate, but also less obvious ones. Organizations such as taxi drivers' unions, public transportation companies, waste collection services, among others have personnel on the streets 24/7. These professionals can more easily observe wrongdoings and crimes than uniformed police officers, as they are not recognized as law enforcement agents. Thus, in a nodal governance or networked policing model, their unique insights and experiences can significantly contribute to finding innovative solutions. By leveraging the mentalities, resources, and technologies of these non-state actors, a more holistic and effective approach to public security can be developed. This collaboration can facilitate the sharing of real-time information and strategies to enhance community safety, without merely reducing these actors to tools for law enforcement.

Specific service provider companies, such as cable TV, internet, gas distributors, food delivery, courier services, and public utilities ones like street resurfacing, electric grid maintenance, and water and sewage services, possess significant capillarity, allowing them to operate in numerous locations simultaneously. Their personnel are on the streets daily, witnessing wrongdoings and crimes, yet they are never involved in discussions for solutions. Currently, their only recourse when encountering criminal activity is to call the police, which is a reactive measure. These companies should be engaged in preventive strategies, offering valuable insights based on their extensive street-level presence. Many of these companies would likely welcome the opportunity to collaborate with law enforcement to prevent crime, especially since some of them are frequent targets of criminal activity. However, there is currently no nodal structure to facilitate such collaboration. By involving these service providers in a nodal governance and networked policing framework, we can harness their unique perspectives and experiences to develop more effective, proactive public safety measures. This inclusive approach would enhance crime prevention efforts and contribute to a safer community for all.

Academia is a crucial player in addressing public security challenges and must be included at every negotiation table in nodal governance and networked policing initiatives. Academics need to understand the realities of the streets from the police and other stakeholders. Through their invaluable academic insights, research, and data analysis, they can significantly contribute to finding solutions. The 'dialogue of the deaf' between the police and academia, as cited by Johnston and Shearing (2009), arises because these groups



do not communicate effectively or collaborate closely. By fostering open communication and regular collaboration, academia can provide evidence-based strategies, evaluate the effectiveness of policing methods, and suggest innovative approaches. This synergy ensures that public security policies are grounded in both practical experience and scientific research, ultimately leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes, creating a desired ‘dialog of listening’ (Johnston and Shearing, 2009).

Technology companies should always participate in the public security debate within a nodal governance and networked policing framework. These firms can offer valuable insights on equipment such as drones, facial recognition cameras, police car cameras, body cams, mobile apps, among many others emerging technologies. Being at the forefront of technological development, they are uniquely positioned to understand and address the evolving needs of law enforcement. By actively engaging with police forces, technology companies can tailor their innovations to better serve public security objectives. Furthermore, their participation ensures that new devices and solutions are designed with practical, real-world applications in mind, enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of policing efforts. For instance, real-time data analytics provided by advanced software can aid in crime prediction and prevention, while enhanced communication tools can improve coordination among various stakeholders. By collaborating closely with law enforcement agencies, technology companies can not only contribute to immediate security needs but also drive long-term advancements that anticipate future challenges. This symbiotic relationship fosters a dynamic environment where technological progress directly supports public safety initiatives, ultimately leading to safer communities and more responsive policing.

In contexts where the state is limited, the capacity of governmental institutions to provide essential services, including public security, is significantly compromised. In such cases, the responsibility for social control and conflict resolution often shifts to a variety of non-state actors. These can include private security firms, community organizations, and even international entities. The state's weakened condition necessitates the creation of new institutional arrangements and the adaptation of existing ones to fill the void left by dysfunctional or absent state structures. This situation highlights the importance of nodal governance, which advocates for the integration of diverse actors and resources to maintain social order and public security.

Nodal governance advocates for the decentralization of security provision, emphasizing the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the governance process. It encourages the creation of networks that include state and non-state actors, such as private security firms, community organizations, and international bodies. These networks are designed to leverage the unique capacities and resources of each actor, fostering a collaborative approach to security governance. This model moves away from a state-centric view and embraces a more holistic and integrated method of maintaining public security.

A whole-of-society approach is indeed possible, but it requires significant coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders. In weak and failing states, this approach can be challenging but not impossible. It involves mobilizing resources and capacities from civil society, the private sector, and international organizations to support public security efforts. The key is to establish frameworks that facilitate cooperation and ensure that all actors are working towards common security goals. This approach aims to harness the strengths of each sector, creating a comprehensive and resilient security network.

When TOC is deeply integrated into the system, it poses a profound challenge to governance. In such cases, criminal organizations may exert significant influence over political and economic institutions, further undermining the state's ability to function effectively. Nodal governance can still offer solutions by creating alternative networks that bypass corrupt or compromised institutions. By engaging non-state actors and international bodies, it is possible to develop parallel systems of governance that can provide some level of public security and undermine the influence of TOC. This approach requires innovative thinking and a willingness to adopt non-traditional methods of governance.

Municipalities are major players in the public security sphere, yet they rarely appear to devise solutions, often seeming as if they are not responsible for public security at all. Many public companies mentioned earlier are managed by municipal authorities, yet they do not collaborate closely with law enforcement agencies. In the city of Rio de Janeiro, the “Rio Operations Center” (COR) exemplifies effective collaboration between municipal agencies and law enforcement through PMERJ’s liaison officer<sup>7</sup> stationed there. The positive results

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<sup>7</sup> The “Rio Operations Center” (COR) was inaugurated on December 31, 2010, with the mission to monitor and integrate public actions to reduce the impact of incidents. COR is a 24/7 multi-agency command and control center that hosts over thirty municipal agencies and partners. With the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games

are evident. Unfortunately, this successful model is more the exception than the rule in Brazilian municipalities.

While it is true that the police cannot station an officer on every corner, and this would not be desirable in any case, the combined presence of law enforcement, public and private companies, and civil society ensures coverage in every corner of the community. These actors should work together through a nodal governance and networked policing framework. By involving municipal authorities in these discussions, we can leverage their extensive resources and local knowledge to enhance public safety.

This collaborative approach ensures that all stakeholders, from utility workers to local government officials, are actively engaged in crime prevention and community well-being. It recognizes that public security is a shared responsibility and that coordinated efforts can lead to more effective and sustainable solutions. By fostering a sense of collective responsibility and utilizing the unique strengths of each participant, we can create a more secure and resilient community. Furthermore, municipalities are uniquely positioned to facilitate these partnerships, given their proximity to and understanding of local issues. They can serve as central hubs for information sharing, resource allocation, and strategic planning, bridging gaps between various sectors and ensuring a unified approach to public security. Expanding municipal roles to include more proactive and integrative security measures can significantly enhance the overall effectiveness of public safety initiatives, creating an environment where every entity, public or private, plays an active role in maintaining community security.

International cooperation is a crucial node to be developed in Brazil. Currently, it is primarily limited to the Federal Police, who have the constitutional role of policing borders and addressing transnational crimes. However, Brazil is a vast country with 54 state-level police forces, none of which are institutionally involved in international cooperation. While some police officers have, in their personal capacities, built their own networks with international counterparts, this is a commendable initiative that can only last as long as these

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approaching, on July 5, 2016, the Rio de Janeiro State Military Police (PMERJ) began its liaison officer service at COR. The author was responsible for initiating the collaborative operations with municipal agencies and devising the first initiatives conducted by PMERJ at COR, holding this position until 2022.

officers remain active. To ensure sustained and effective international cooperation, it is essential to establish robust, institutional frameworks that extend beyond individual efforts.

A well-structured network should outlive its participants, with mechanisms in place for member replacement and continuity. This can be achieved by creating formal agreements and informal partnerships with international law enforcement agencies and academia, facilitating regular exchanges of information, training, and best practices. Additionally, Brazil's state-level police forces should be integrated into these international networks to broaden the scope of cooperation and ensure a unified approach to combating transnational crime.

Incorporating international cooperation into a nodal governance and networked policing framework would provide numerous benefits. It would enhance Brazil's capacity to tackle complex, cross-border criminal activities, such as drug trafficking, arms trafficking, human trafficking, cybercrime, among others. Moreover, it would allow for the sharing of advanced technological tools and investigative techniques, thereby improving the overall effectiveness of Brazil's law enforcement agencies.

Furthermore, by expanding the scope of international cooperation to include state-level police forces and establishing durable, institutional frameworks, Brazil can significantly enhance its ability to address transnational crimes and strengthen its overall public security landscape.

In a nodal governance and networked policing framework, it is essential not only to share and discuss insights and suggestions but also to divide the responsibilities for decisions and the necessary resources. This collaborative approach ensures that all stakeholders, from law enforcement and private companies to municipal authorities, service providers, and academia, are fully engaged in addressing public security challenges. By distributing responsibilities and resources, each participant becomes an active and accountable member of the network, contributing their unique strengths and perspectives.

The collective involvement creates a robust and dynamic node dedicated to devising and implementing effective solutions for public security. For instance, technology companies can provide cutting-edge tools and innovations, while municipal authorities can offer local

knowledge and resources. Private security firms and public service providers, with their extensive street-level presence, can deliver real-time information and preventive measures. Meanwhile, academia can supply data-driven insights and research to guide strategic decisions. International cooperation also plays a crucial role, expanding the network beyond national borders and integrating global best practices and resources. By fostering an environment of shared responsibility and mutual support, the nodal governance and networked policing framework not only enhances the effectiveness of public security measures but also builds a more resilient and cohesive community.

The concept of nodal governance emphasizes the importance of integrating diverse actors and resources to maintain public security and address societal harms. In the context of a harm-based whole-of-society approach, this framework becomes even more pertinent. Berg and Shearing (2018) argue that traditional state-centric policing, which primarily governs through crime, is often not the most effective way of producing public safety and security. Instead, they advocate for a governing-through-harm approach that utilizes a variety of non-crime strategies and engages both public and private security agents in public safety initiatives.

A harm-based whole-of-society approach within nodal governance involves mobilizing the entire community, including municipal authorities, private companies, civil society organizations, and individuals, to collaboratively address and mitigate harms. This approach recognizes that public security is a shared responsibility and that sustainable solutions require the active participation of all societal sectors. For instance, involving local businesses, community groups, and residents in identifying and addressing safety issues can lead to more comprehensive and effective strategies that go beyond the capabilities of the police alone (Berg and Shearing, 2018).

Moreover, this framework leverages the unique insights, resources, and technologies of non-state actors to enhance public security. By fostering partnerships and alliances, these diverse nodes can provide real-time information, innovative solutions, and additional support to traditional law enforcement efforts. This collaborative network not only improves the overall effectiveness of public security measures but also ensures that the responses are tailored to the specific needs and contexts of different communities (Berg and Shearing, 2018).

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In situations where TOC is deeply integrated into the system, a harm-based whole-of-society approach within nodal governance can provide alternative pathways to traditional state responses. By creating networks that include non-state actors and international bodies, it is possible to develop parallel systems of governance that offer some level of public security and undermine the influence of TOC. This approach requires innovative thinking and a willingness to adopt non-traditional methods of governance, emphasizing the collective responsibility of all societal actors in maintaining community well-being (Berg and Shearing, 2018).

Ultimately, the integration of a harm-based whole-of-society approach within nodal governance frameworks aligns with the goal of creating a more resilient and secure community. It moves away from a sole reliance on punitive measures and instead focuses on proactive and preventive strategies that address the root causes of harm. This comprehensive approach ensures that all stakeholders are engaged in the co-production of public security, leading to more sustainable and inclusive outcomes (Berg and Shearing, 2018).

In conclusion, by embracing comprehensive and inclusive approaches, Brazil can adopt networked policing and nodal governance strategies, ensuring that all stakeholders are empowered to contribute meaningfully to public safety. This will create a safer environment for everyone. These integrated models serve as aspirational benchmarks, promising a sustainable path forward by leveraging the collective expertise and resources of diverse participants to address the complex and evolving challenges of public security. By doing so, the ‘responsibility of all’ will become more than just an abstract concept in the Brazilian Federal Constitution.

## **5 Conclusion**

To conclude, this dissertation has explored the multifaceted challenges of countering TOC in Rio de Janeiro by analyzing historical, geographical, and social aspects. It also highlighted the linkages to broader security threats and the social consequences on nation-states. The dissertation emphasizes the critical need for innovative governance strategies. Through an in-depth analysis of nodal governance and networked policing frameworks, it has been demonstrated that effective public security requires a harm-based, whole-of-society approach. By integrating diverse actors and leveraging both state and non-state resources, a more resilient and comprehensive security network can be established. These findings underscore the importance of moving beyond traditional law enforcement paradigms to embrace collaborative, inclusive, and adaptive strategies for combating organized crime and enhancing community safety.

### **5.1 Organized Crime; Disorganized State and Society**

When outlaws organize themselves and encounter a disorganized state and society, the result is what we currently see in Brazil, particularly in the state of Rio de Janeiro. If we need a model that does not foster cooperation among law enforcement agencies, the Brazilian one fits for purpose. Moreover, civil society must be an agent of change rather than spectators.

The Brazilian State, meaning the Union, the Federated States, the Federal District, and all 5,570 municipalities, have the duty to ensure public safety. However, the responsibility does not rest solely on public institutions. The Brazilian State acting alone has proven ineffective in addressing the challenges posed by organized crime, especially when we consider the international ramifications of these organizations.

#### **5.1.1 The Next Half-Century: What Lies Ahead?**

Restricting our analysis to the last fifty years, we can clearly see that public security has considerably worsened with each decade.

Governments come and go, but public security, which has never been treated with the due priority by the Brazilian State, is increasingly critical. Who will be able to live in Rio de

Janeiro in fifty years if public security in the state continues to deteriorate at this pace? What will be the next criminal organization to emerge? What will be its business? How violent will its practices be? What new technologies will be incorporated by organized crime? How will we prepare for this inevitable future?

## **5.2 Public Security Policies**

Public security policies in Brazil are mainly established at both the federal and state levels. However, the main police forces in the country, the Military Police and the Civil Police, are managed by the federated states and the Federal District. The roles of the state police are strictly defined by the Federal Constitution, leaving the governors of the states and the Federal District with very little leeway in their local public security policies.

What practice has shown is state governors trying to get the most out of their police forces, inventing and reinventing public security policies at the state level, while organized crime is not limited by political or geographical boundaries. The battle is unequal, producing harmful effects for everyone.

Solutions for public security need to be dynamic but above all participatory, with effective integration of society and non-state actors into these issues. It is also necessary to think globally to act locally. Answers to local problems can come literally from the other side of the planet. If transnational criminal networks exist, then there should also be international public security networks, even if informal.

Formality is not essential for the existence and success of networks. Informal networks can achieve significant results, as demonstrated by the effectiveness of TOC groups and the success of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States. These examples show that criminal and terrorist networks can thrive through informality. The Brazilian state and society should consider leveraging this approach to counter TOC. To effectively combat dark networks, we need to establish bright networks.



### 5.3 ‘Responsibility of All’

Solutions to the challenges posed by TOC will not be achieved in the blink of an eye, nor by public institutions alone. The concept of ‘Whole-of-Society’ needs to cease being merely an abstraction and become a constant management practice. Public security is the responsibility of all, state, non-state actors and society together. Society needs to be called to the negotiation table and participate in decision-making. The solution to the challenges posed by crime, which is already organized even at the international level, involves the integration of actions between the Brazilian State and Brazilian society. Easy in theory, difficult in practice.

The solutions proposed in this work, networked policing and nodal governance, translate the concept of ‘Whole-of-Society’ into the field of public security and can indeed bring agility to many challenges faced by police forces today. Will all challenges be resolved? Certainly not, but just having the State, non-state actors and society together seeking solutions would already be a great victory.

As we know, there is no silver bullet, but effective cooperation between public institutions (not limited to the police), non-state actors and society can bring the necessary synergy for local challenges to be thought out, implemented, reviewed, and reimplemented, forming a virtuous cycle of constant learning and development. And when old challenges are overcome, new ones will arise, requiring the stakeholders to be prepared and united to address them swiftly and effectively.

Until a restructuring is carried out in Article 144 of the Federal Constitution and the roles of state level police are reviewed, innovative governance practices need to be implemented to bring agility, cooperation, and share responsibility for solutions between the State and society. The Brazilian State and Brazilian society cannot continue to act in isolation in the face of complex challenges posed by TOC. Lives are at stake, and ultimately, the rule of law, the development, and the stability of society as a whole. Brazilian stakeholders must remember that public security is, and will always be, everyone's responsibility. If crime thrives through networks, so should we.

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