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Crime, Drugs, and Power in Honduras: Searching for Better Measures of State Fragility^u

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Key Points:

- This report argues that state ‘fragility’ metrics are inadequate. An increase in transparency and a call for new metrics are necessary to address entrenched elite corruption and organised crime in Honduras. In order to achieve these goals, donor countries must reconcile the political cost of promoting policies that address impunity and political protection against their own foreign policy agendas.
- Since the 2009 *coup d’etat*, the United States has spent millions of dollars in Honduras, and the new Honduran government has enacted fresh policies aimed at promoting economic and security reforms. Despite these measures, Honduran political elites appear to have increased criminal activities, further consolidated socio-political control, and re-militarised state institutions. Consequently, the past decade has witnessed increasing government-sponsored political violence against civil society groups, and political opponents of the regime.
- The November 26, 2017 re-election of President Juan Orlando Hernández signifies the continued inadequacy of international and national governance structures to curb corruption. The criminal-legal elite network in Honduras continues to impede security and justice reforms, despite the formation of the Mission Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH).¹ Deeply embedded criminal-elite interests and insensitive assistance by the United States and other international donors have contributed to reform inertia.
- State fragility ranking organisations, like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), utilise state fragility frameworks to address issues of state instability. Yet fragility ranking organisations do not provide adequate access and transparency to their national fragility reports and related data to broaden civil society engagement.

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- The OECD States of Fragility Framework would benefit from the inclusion of a multi-dimensional elite power fragility indicator potentially as a principle component measurement that incorporates the OECD violence lens, corruption, and elite capture across all five fragility dimensions. An elite power fragility indicator may also provide some insight into criminal-legal elite networks within donor countries, highlighting the complexity of addressing transnational elite corruption across borders.
- New metrics that align the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), drug policy, and local citizen security indicators alongside fragility metrics have the potential to provide a multi-level governance approach to guide security, economic assistance, and transparency. However, as long as international donors utilise ranking systems in silos and prioritise conflict-insensitive aid policies, aid will continue to be channelled through corrupt operating systems and efforts to support sustainable development and anti-corruption reforms will be undermined.
- The US and international donors like the OECD must prioritise development measures that consider local conflict and fragility-sensitive development ahead of hard-lined counternarcotic strategies. The success of collective engagement across socio-economic, political, and environmental fragility dimensions which affects sustainable development relies on further investigation of how transnational criminal-elite systems operate. These systems often utilise drugs, development programmes, security assistance, and power structures to undermine sustainable development, citizen security, and human rights.

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Introduction

This report argues that state ‘fragility’ metrics are inadequate and an increase in transparency and call for new metrics is necessary to address entrenched elite corruption and organised crime in Honduras.² Furthermore, the interconnectivity of elite corruption through illicit markets and drugs is not often adequately addressed in the metrics and analyses. Although there is no consensus on the concept of state fragility, it is widely accepted that a state which is experiencing fragility is unable to provide critical public goods, services, and safety to all of its inhabitants, while its authority can often be challenged by its citizens and non-state armed actors.³ The World Bank describes ‘fragility and fragile situations’ as timeframes when states ‘lack the capacity, accountability, or legitimacy to mediate relations between citizen groups and between citizens and the state, making them vulnerable to political violence’.⁴

State fragility has been identified primarily by countries in the Global North as one of the principal factors that can lead to intra and interstate conflict and instability, effectively undermining development and opening enclaves for criminal activity. As a result, efforts to measure and rank state fragility have proliferated in recent years in an attempt to better understand the driving factors of fragility and thus to predict and mitigate risk. As a significant risk factor in Honduras, criminal-elites (crimi-elite) and international donors like the US and OECD continue to fuel what has been deemed a fragile situation by applying conflict-insensitive fragility frameworks and security and economic assistance that does not effectively address crime, mitigate corruption, support citizen security, or address crimi-elite power in the country. This is due to the prioritisation of political objectives over citizen protection and security. Citizen security in this regard is the understanding, evaluation, and realisation of public safety measures that effectively protect citizens from criminal, political, and social violence.⁵

In the Americas, drug policy as a contributing factor to violence has expanded to programming outside of traditional drug control and development parameters, including the incorporation of illicit activity and violence reduction strategies, anti-corruption programming, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), gendered-based perspectives, health, and human rights.⁶ However, organised crime and gang violence in Honduras are both symptoms and causes of Honduras’ multi-dimensional violence and citizen insecurity. Policies aimed to address drugs and state fragility must account for the complexity of how crime functions within both Honduran and donor countries’ economies and socio-political orders.

At a detailed level, international fragility indicators set to measure criminal activity and corruption do not effectively address the pervasiveness of crimi-elite operating systems in order to promote conflict-sensitive economic and security assistance. Furthermore, transparency of international methodologies and national fragility reporting mechanisms is significantly limited. Thus, there is a need to re-evaluate current metrics and increase transparency with and for local actors.

In order to contextualise the critique of state fragility frameworks, Section 1 in this report introduces a conceptualisation of state fragility and crimi-legality in order to frame the multi-dimensional operating system in Honduras. Section 2 highlights the inadequacies of fragility rankings systems as an international governance metrics tool. While Section 3 provides an introduction to the 2016 OECD’s States of Fragility Framework to describe applications and limitations relating to this methodology. Based on the OECD framework, Section 4 provides a historical illustration of Honduras’ fragility before, during, and following the 2009 coup d’état as a case example of how fragility and international governance mechanisms do not adequately address crimi-elite capitalisation on drug trafficking, criminal activity, socio-political control, and political terror. Section 5 examines the reconsolidation of Honduras’ crimi-elite institutions and power structures following the 2009 coup d’état and the elite-capture of the 2017 presidential election, laying the framework for a call for new metrics in Section 6, and concluding reflections in Section 7.

Section 1: International Governance Metrics: Framing Fragility

The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development states that nine out of ten violent deaths occur outside of conventional conflicts while the OECD states that 60% of the world's poor are estimated to be living in fragile situations by 2030.⁷ Since 2001, there has been a proliferation of the concept of state fragility and policy responses particularly among Western governments and the OECD Development Assistance Committee.⁸ This is significant as the majority of international governance frameworks are developed outside of situations considered to be fragile. Much like the global drug problem, the focus of state fragility discourse and programming is aimed at the Global South with international governance or 'soft power' fragility metrics utilised as a guide for security and development priorities for donor countries.⁹

While international governance metrics - often tied to security assistance and development funding - have placed some pressure on governments the intended and unintended consequences on local communities remain an understudied area. However, recognising that fragility is multidimensional, several indices attempt to measure factors including the economic and human costs for states and regions and the potential security threat fragility presents.¹⁰ There has also been a growing focus on regional fragility and fragile urban environments and the concept of what has been termed 'urban security'.¹¹ Urban security investigates the inter-relationships between violence and urban spaces in what are designated as 'fragile cities'.¹² A fragile city in this regard can exhibit a complex nexus of rapid urbanisation, civil unrest, illicit activity, and violence which may be intensified by a state's ineffective coping strategies and corruption.¹³ Governments have also been known to employ a form of 'military urbanism' within cities using political violence for urban control.¹⁴

The most vulnerable civilian women, youth, and children are often - but not exclusively - affected disproportionately by such instances of state and urban fragility. These effects including violence and marginalisation are reinforced by hard-line counternarcotic tactics and corruption from political and economic elites protecting the inter-relationships between criminal networks, drug markets, political power, and social influence.¹⁵ The particular unintended consequences from the state's prioritisation on counternarcotics has led to a misuse of law enforcement resources, damages to infrastructure, increase in pollution and natural resource degradation, criminalisation and stigmatisation of drug users, negative impacts on health, and the undermining of development and human rights.¹⁶

This is due in part to a focus on the supply side of the drug trade as well as the adaptive protection markets of elites, criminal groups, and/or politicians who can finance security measures and alter policy to safeguard their 'crimi-legal' interests fostering a climate of 'crimi-legitimacy'.¹⁷ These regular patterns of social exchange, interaction, and transaction that take place in the grey areas that lie between legality and illegality create their own law and operations.¹⁸ Thus addressing issues like state fragility, the global drug trade, stark inequality, and corruption based on a framework of legal-societal criminality is a significant challenge. While the drug market is a key factor, it is the implementation of hard-lined counternarcotic strategies and conflict-insensitive evaluation of anti-corruption and assistance programmes that reinforces bad policy.

Section 2: Inadequacy of Fragility Rankings

International security and development actors have a particular interest in utilising fragility indices to influence and guide their decision-making processes for security programming and foreign aid distributions. In theory, fragility indices help monitor regional and global stability trends, determine which countries need differential approaches for security and development programmes, and evaluate the impact of development and foreign aid.¹⁹ However, as useful as fragility indices could be in guiding policy and assessing impact, in reality, these indices oversimplify complex, multidimensional, and multi-causal social, political, economic, and environmental factors and in doing so often ignore the necessary nuanced analysis of the conditions on the ground. Much like effectively capturing the systemic interconnectivity of the global drug problem, portraying and confronting state fragility is inherently complex. Despite some progress over the past two decades, efforts to address the root causes and measure state fragility continue to be fragmented across the international community.

Critiques of these rankings, particularly based on indices, are centred on three issues: the operationalisation of the concept of fragility, the methodology utilised to arrive at these rankings, and the interpretation of the results of these rankings.²⁰ First, the proliferation of these types of rankings in the hands of different international organisations, development agencies and non-governmental organisations has resulted in different understandings of fragility. They all relate to state weaknesses vis-à-vis expectations of what the role of the state should be; some of these indices focus on the risk of state failure while others reflect on the shortcomings of state institutions.²¹ Furthermore, normative applications of state fragility which prioritise institutional statebuilding are challenged to evaluate and improve fragile socio-political systems where elites, armed non-state actors, and drug trafficking networks reinforce fragile situations.²²

Second, different understandings of fragility are also reflected in the various methodologies for calculating fragility and ranking states, as some of these methods focus on particular aspects, for instance emphasising the security dimension of fragility, while others attempt to present a more comprehensive understanding. The third major criticism surrounds how the methodologies in these indices collect, utilise, and interpret data. Many of the fragility indices are based on socio-economic data collected by state institutions - data that is often incomplete or inaccurate. At the same time, projections used to fill-in missing data also make assumptions about the continuity of trends, without overtly explaining the implications of such assumptions. Most of these indices use very basic aggregation methods, giving equal weight to the different components measured within the framework, and in doing so assume that all these factors contribute to fragility equally. At the same time, some of the factors these indices attempt to measure lack appropriate indicators to accurately assess them, and therefore these calculations are often based on proxy indicators. This has resulted in the simplification of complex phenomena to produce quantifiable and measurable results.²³

Few studies have incorporated local empirical data analysis into their data, which limits the interpretation and understanding of the effects of multi-dimensional violence across different groups of individuals and communities.²⁴ Critics also stress the lack of conflict sensitivity that is incorporated into these rankings and indices by failing to account for the operational context, interactions, and role that foreign state interventions have both physically and financially on the fragility of states.²⁵ This ignores the intertwined role that third parties like the US play in regards to illicit financial flows, arms flows, and transnational elite market capture - omitting a significant contributor to national and regional instability around the world. There have been some attempts to quantify elite power and research is moving to incorporate corrupt elite networks as a destabilising mechanism.²⁶ However, there remains a significant gap in investigations on how to address crimi-elite corruption in both countries considered fragile and within donor countries like the US.²⁷

Furthermore, should repressive and undemocratic states that have control over their territories, have the monopoly of violence, and can provide basic services to the population be considered fragile? This is one of the issues in ranking states through international norms that are based on risks of state failure. Another significant issue is the inconsistency

across fragility ranking institutions. Different indices classify countries differently, particularly undemocratic or authoritarian states. For example see the World Bank’s Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA), African Development Bank’s (CPIA), Asian Development Bank (CPIA), The Fund for Peace’s Fragile States Index (FSI), the g7+ Fragility Spectrum.²⁸ At the same time, fragility indices and how states are ranked obscure other problematic shortcomings of these rankings, particularly context-specific issues that differentiate whether the state is unable or unwilling to fulfil its functions based on the Western, liberal understanding of statehood and the state’s responsibility.²⁹ Therefore, these indices fail to describe more specifically the type of fragility and how much of a threat these pose to stability at the national, regional, and global level.³⁰

Section 3: 2016 OECD States of Fragility Framework

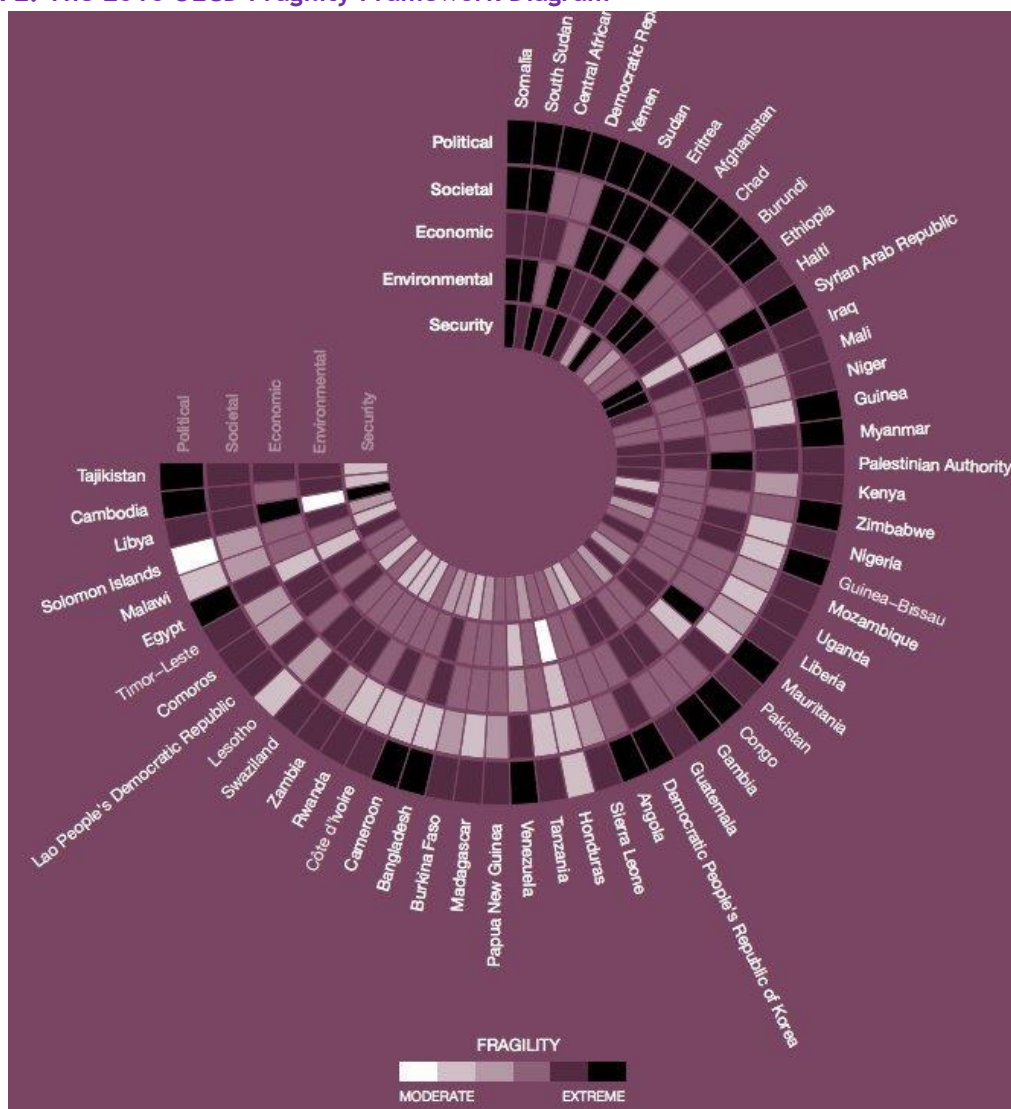
Despite significant issues, international governance and assistance still requires that a basis to evaluate policy and progress is established in metrics. Thus, state fragility frameworks continue to be utilised to provide security and development policy guidance in order to address state internal and external vulnerabilities. As an example, the 2016 OECD States of Fragility Framework portrays vulnerability as multidimensional fragility or ‘the accumulation and combination of risks combined with an insufficient capacity by the state, system, and/or communities to manage it, absorb it, or mitigate its consequences’.³¹ A state’s ability to absorb or withstand shocks can be referred to as its coping capacity.³² While the concept of risk varies, risk is described as: ‘the potential damage caused by a hazard or harmful event, including potential exposure and vulnerability for populations leading to negative outcomes’.³³ In order to demonstrate both fragility risks and coping capacities, the OECD States of Fragility Framework offers a conceptual application of environmental, economic, political, security, and social vulnerabilities along a spectrum of intensity (**Box 1**). In 2016, 56 countries were listed as experiencing fragile situations along this spectrum ranging from moderate to extreme (**Box 2**).³⁴ However, the framework is intended to demonstrate a country’s current state of fragility and should not be construed as a future indication.³⁵

Box 1: OECD Five Dimensions of Fragility¹

Environmental	Vulnerability to environmental, climatic and health risks that affect citizens’ lives and livelihoods. These include exposure to natural disasters, pollution and disease epidemics
Economic	Vulnerability to risks stemming from weaknesses in economic foundations and human capital including macroeconomic shocks, unequal growth and high youth unemployment
Political	Vulnerability to risks inherent in political processes, events or decisions; lack of political inclusiveness (including of elites); transparency, corruption, and society’s ability to accommodate change and avoid oppression
Security	Vulnerability of overall security to violence and crime, including both political and social violence
Societal	Vulnerability to risks affecting societal cohesion that stem from both vertical and horizontal inequalities, including inequality among culturally defined or constructed groups and social cleavages

¹ Box 1 Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2016). *States of fragility 2016. Highlights. Ibid.*

Box 2: The 2016 OECD Fragility Framework Diagram²



Critique of the OECD Framework

The OECD framework highlights specific drivers and impacts of social, interpersonal, criminal and political violence, or extremism, where these factors overlap, and fragility is understood as a combination of risk exposures and emerging threats.³⁶ Indicators linked to direct and social violence are represented in the security dimension of the framework, while measures of indirect violence or structural violence are represented in the social, economic, and political dimensions. The 2016 OECD States of Fragility report also highlights an expansion of the OECD violence lens to better inform policy approaches and context analysis. The 2016 OECD violence lens frames the multi-level interaction between power, marginalisation, capacity, and violence. However, the lens is a separate analysis tool from the OECD framework and guidance on implementation is not accessible.³⁷

Like other fragility assessment frameworks, the 2016 OECD framework largely provides an overview of indicators and results while lacking access to data. A particular criticism of the OECD methodology is that there are limitations in the principle component analysis due to a loss of information and a lack of quality data at the subnational level as well as lack of micro-level indicators.³⁸ This is significant as measuring progress relies on relevant and consistent data collection at all levels. Furthermore, without direct access to each country's national fragility report and datasets, assessing how the fragility intensity spectrum was evaluated across the OECD fragility dimensions is challenging. As

² Box 2 Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2016). *States of fragility 2016. Highlights. Ibid. P.36*

donor governments continue to incorporate the OECD framework into their security and development policies, building inclusive processes for local actors and broader civil society engagement are challenged by this very lack of access to information. In addition, the OECD framework is comprised of multiple indices, metrics, and datasets that go beyond the scope of many stakeholders' capacity to engage with the framework. Utilising the OECD States of Fragility Framework, the next section will characterise the limitations of fragility frameworks through a discussion on how elite corruption in Honduras and conflict-insensitive international interventions have permitted the crimi-elite capture of state institutions and capitalisation of drug trafficking, criminal activity, socio-political control, and political terror within the country.

Section 4: Undermining Statebuilding and Sustaining Fragility in Honduras

In 2016, Honduras was listed as one of the 56 countries experiencing a situation of fragility. At the 2016 OECD States of Fragility launch, Honduras' Vice Minister of International Cooperation and Promotion under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Ms. Maria del Carmen Nasser Selman, announced that Honduras would be undertaking a multi-dimensional approach to addressing the country's fragile situation in all five OECD dimensions. Giving examples of the country's previous progress in the areas of combatting drug trafficking and homicide rate reduction, Ms. Nasser Selman highlighted that the rise in crime and public insecurity was a recent, urban issue, and that high levels of violence were not endemic to the country. She also highlighted that the migration crisis in 2014 was a consequence of organised crime which has promoted the increase of transnational youth gangs and drug trafficking, and that combatting trafficking networks while providing reintegration and human rights protection for migrants remains a significant challenge.

Recognising the importance of addressing 'root causes' and factors leading to the country's multi-dimensional fragility, Ms. Nasser Selman highlighted Honduras' progress through the establishment of the 'Better Living Plan', 'Programme Honduras 20/20', 'the Mission Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH)', and the incorporation of the SDGs to national and municipal level planning. She reinforced the call for international donors to provide adequate and sustained development funding in order for Honduras to address its fragile situation, while Latin American and Caribbean countries continue to increase their south-south and regional cooperation.³⁹ Despite claims of progress, historical evidence shows that corruption and high rates of violence continue to reinforce fragility and citizen insecurity in Honduras. In turn, homicide rates and other forms of direct and structural violence in the country have remained very high.

Overview - Fragility in a Crimi-Elite Context

Crimi-elite networks have long been a part of Honduran history due to the state's development through authoritarian regimes, failed democratic reforms, neoliberal development, high inequality and poverty, elitist culture, failed agrarian reforms, illicit trafficking, and conflict-insensitive counternarcotic, business, and development interventions by the Honduran government, US, and other international donors. Particularly, far-reaching US neoliberal economic agendas prioritised foreign investment and exportation, contributing to the exploitation by - and the establishment of - a strong Honduran transnational crimi-elite network. It is comprised of multidimensional classes and controls which have capitalised on wealth generation from licit and illicit markets at the expense of increased violence to the population.⁴⁰

Honduras began its transition into a democracy with the ratification of its constitution on January 11th, 1982 and has held several democratic elections since then. However, corruption, bribery, embezzlement, and 'chamba' or patronage jobs continue to be the norm.⁴¹ The democratic transition that Honduras underwent in the early 1980s is cited as militarised 'controlled democratisation', thus contributing to the military's continued significant influence within the

Honduran government.⁴² Statebuilding efforts were also challenged in part due to continued elite, military, and police influence over the population, severe human rights abuses, and violence.⁴³

Since the early 1990s, the structure of the Honduran elite network has altered. Honduran transnational elites were able to take advantage of market liberalisation policies of this decade and expand their operations largely from the service and communications sectors.⁴⁴ These elites, many from immigrant heritage, have become the most powerful elite sector.⁴⁵ While the traditional land-based elites in Honduras still hold power, it is exercised more through governmental positioning instead of financial incentives.⁴⁶ A third group of bureaucratic elites have also gained power due to their political influence and are able to maintain this power due to the reliance of both traditional and transnational elite control of state resources and governmental influence to protect their interests.⁴⁷ In order to protect their interests and maintain control, the crimi-elite network in Honduras has obscured formal governance structures to develop a 'parallel or shadow state' that exercises real power within the country.⁴⁸ This underlying crimi-elite state system operates to support illicit activities where the co-optation and inaction of state and local leaders permits a consolidation of power for profit at the expense of post-conflict statebuilding and development efforts.⁴⁹ In effect, this crimi-elite system creates a state of 'development in reverse' or 'non-development' where illicit activities are integrated into socio-political institutions and normal operations.⁵⁰

Conflict-insensitive actions of the US during and following the Cold War also contributed to the reinforcement of Honduras as Central America's drug trafficking corridor and aided in the increase of illicit trafficking markets for drug cartels, transporters or transportistas, small arms proliferation, and gang activity.⁵¹ In relation to drug trafficking, transportistas are cited as inflicting the most damage to communities.⁵² While Honduras had historically contained small territorial gangs who were less likely to resort to extreme violence, the conflict-insensitive deportation of ex-convicts and gang members to Honduras following the 1996 US Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act contributed to the emergence of 'hyper-violent' territorial, gang-based violence.⁵³ Gangs were able to establish 'safe haven' bases of operation, socialisation networks, and 'school houses' for recruitment through Honduras' corrupt security, judicial, and political systems.⁵⁴

Although the Honduran state participated in UN-sponsored demobilisation efforts in the 1990s, attempts to separate military and police functions and professionalise the police force were challenged by dominant military approaches and culture and the continued infiltration of illicit groups.⁵⁵ It was not until 1999 that a constitutional reform established civilian control over the Honduran military.⁵⁶ However, the relationships and illicit networks established between security forces and organised criminal networks during the Cold War continued through the co-optation of the Honduran police force.⁵⁷ Furthermore, corruption within the judicial system promoted a climate of impunity, in turn upholding crime and drug trafficking as alternatives for social and economic mobility.⁵⁸

The Impact of Crimi-Elite Capitalisation on State Fragility and Drugs

Honduras' crimi-legal society has been long sustained and entrenched through the historically embedded corrupt and illicit nature of the elite network's capitalisation on the country's environmental, economic, political, social, and security fragility.⁵⁹

Environmental Dimension

As an example, the 1998 hurricane 'Mitch' exacerbated structural weaknesses in the Honduran state proving to be one of the worst natural disasters to hit the country. Hurricane Mitch left at least 6,000 Hondurans dead, 10,000 missing, 12,000 injured, and 1.5 million homeless out of an approximate population of six million at the time.⁶⁰ The country and president Carlos Roberto Flores Facusse were not able to handle the devastation. Evidence also suggests that Facusse colluded in secret with elites to develop the country's reconstruction plan following the disaster.⁶¹

The hurricane not only intensified the country's pre-existing socio-economic conditions and political instability, but also presented an ideal opening for criminal networks to increase operations.⁶² With the US' counternarcotic focus on Mexico and Colombia, Honduran and foreign organised criminal organisations and drug traffickers were able to concentrate the majority of their drug product movements from South America through Honduras to Mexico.⁶³ The early to mid-2000s spill-over effect caused a stark increase in the number of Honduran drug transporters within the country.⁶⁴ Furthermore, in order to minimise their risk, drug trafficking organisations paid Honduran transporters like 'Chepe Luna, Jose Miguel Handal Perez in San Pedro Sula, the Valle Valle family in Copan, the Zelaya clan in Atlantida, and the Cachiros organisation in Colon' in drugs instead of money and the transporters in turn contracted local gangs or maras to move the illicit goods.⁶⁵ Transporters well connected to Honduran crimi-elites were able to funnel the increase of illicit resources and capital into the control of the elite network, reinforcing drug trafficking organisations into Honduran political, social, economic, and security spheres.⁶⁶

The expanded consolidation of economic resources and embedded corruption further marginalised economic opportunity and mobility for many Hondurans, increased citizen insecurity and violence, and forced many Hondurans to seek income through illicit resources.⁶⁷ The increase in drugs readily available in Honduran communities also increased drug usage, affecting individual health and socio-economic vulnerability. Socio-economic vulnerability is listed as an OECD environmental and economic fragility risk and can be defined as the ability of individuals and households to afford safe and resilient livelihood conditions and well-being.⁶⁸ Furthermore, US donor approaches toward alternative development have produced little success in promoting sustainable livelihoods. Experts argue that the development community should be given more remit within existing organisational mandates to use applied development approaches when addressing activities such as drug supply and cultivation control.⁶⁹

Economic Dimension

In order to meet livelihood requirements, many Hondurans have sought migration and remittances. By 2009, it was estimated that 12% of the Honduran population lived outside of the country.⁷⁰ 'Remittances inflows are the earnings and material resources transferred by international migrants or refugees to recipients in their country of origin or countries in which the migrant formerly resided'.⁷¹ In Honduras, remittances represent one of the largest sources of domestic income over both the agricultural and manufacturing sectors.⁷² Remittances are identified as the largest type of financial stream received by countries experiencing fragility, followed by official development assistance (ODA), and foreign direct investment (FDI).⁷³ Drug trafficking is also considered to be an alternate type of remittance channelling illicit activity flows through a country's financial sector while providing capital to grow the economy.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the money used from trafficking also serves as economic, political, and social capital which can reinforce corruption and undermine human rights in weak state institutions. According to the World Bank, in 2006 Honduras was ranked fifth out of the top 29 remittances recipients worldwide.⁷⁵ Despite remittances decreasing from 2006-2012 (**Box 3**), rates have been on the rise again since 2013 to equal 19.5% of Honduras' GDP in 2017 (**Box 4**).

Box 3: Remittances, Inflows % of GDP FY 2000-2013³

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
18.7	21.4	21.0	20.3	17.0	16.5	15.9	15.7	16.9

³ Box 3 Source: J. Johnston and S. Lefebvre. (2013). 'Honduras since the coup: economic and social outcomes.' *ibid.* P.6; United Nations Development Programme. (2016). *Human development reports*. Remittances, inflows (% of GDP) *ibid.*

Box 4: Remittances to Honduras, 2017 growth (US\$,000,000)⁴

Remittance Inflows			Percentage Growth		Remittances as Percentage of GDP
2015	2016	2017est.	2016	2017	
3,651	3,847	4,331	5%	13%	19.5%

In addition to remittances, the Honduran government continues to rely on outside investment, aid, and debt relief assistance for statebuilding and citizen security efforts due in part to Honduras' weak institutions and inability to collect tax revenue.⁷⁶ As an example, general government debt is cited as an economic fragility risk indicator and Honduras' general government debt has been historically high despite significant assistance in international debt relief (Box 5).⁷⁷

Box 5: IMF General Government Debt as a Percentage of GDP⁵

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
62.679	57.225	40.343	24.721	22.973	27.510	30.663	32.134	35.181	45.711	46.463	46.805

However, it is important to note that in 2005 Honduras received \$1billion in multilateral debt assistance from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) programme which temporarily reduced general government debt from 2005-2007.⁷⁸ The HIPC programme was developed by the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility.⁷⁹ Despite rates reaching a low in 2008, due largely to the 2007 economic crisis and the 2009 coup d'état, rates have risen since 2009 regardless of continued HIPC assistance.⁸⁰

Honduras' Human Development Index (HDI) as an economic fragility coping indicator improved coinciding with the steady period of neoliberal economic growth and debt reduction during Ricardo Maduro's presidency from 2002-2006 (Box 6). The HDI is used to measure human development averages along key dimensions in health, standard of living, and income but does not account for inequality across the population.⁸¹ Although Honduras' HDI has demonstrated slight improvement, it remains amongst the lowest for Latin American and the Caribbean.

Box 6: Human Development Index (HDI) Honduras FY 2000-2014⁶

Human Development Index (HDI)								
2015 HDI Rank	Country	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
131	Honduras	0.557	0.584	0.61	0.612	0.607	0.604	0.606

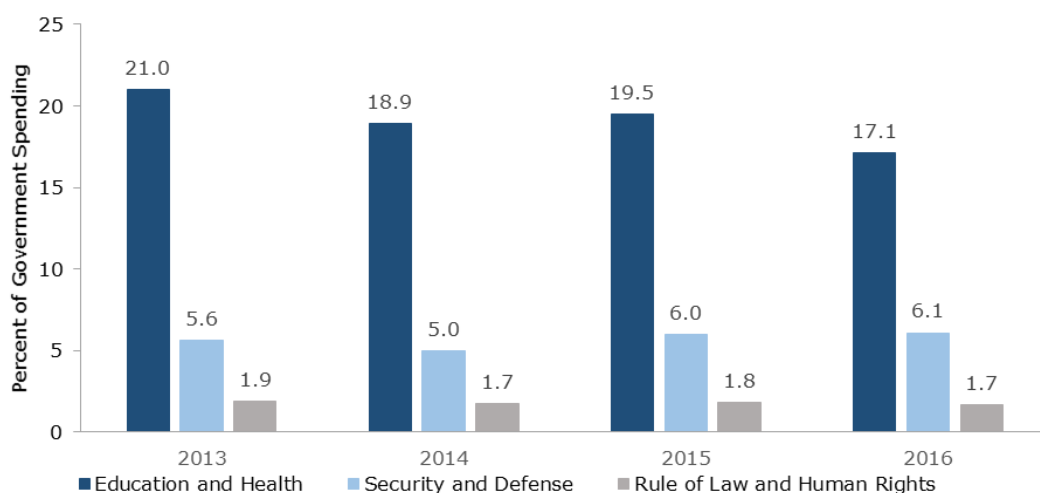
⁴ Box 4 Source: M. Orozco. (2017). *Remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean in 2017*. Central Banks Data. INEC for Panama. <https://www.thedialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Remittances-2017-1.pdf>

⁵ Box 5 Source: International Monetary Fund. (2016) *General government debt as a percentage of GDP. Honduras*. IMF. http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2016/02/weodata/weorept.aspx?sy=2000&ey=2008&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&pr1.x=58&pr1.y=12&c=268&s=GGXWDG_NGDP&grp=0&a=

⁶ Box 6 Source: United Nations Development Programme. (2015) *Honduras. Human development indicators*. Human Development Index. UNDP <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/HND#>

Furthermore, the small allocation of social spending for rule of law and human rights programmes highlights Honduras' inadequate investment in anti-corruption and fragility coping mechanisms (**Box7**).⁸²

Box 7: Honduras Social Spending Vs Security Spending⁷



As an economic fragility risk, GDP growth rate improved slightly by an average of 5.7% during Manuel Zelaya’s 2006-2008 presidency and maintained an average growth of 3.6% from 2010-2013 (**Box8**).⁸³ According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Honduras’ GDP growth was 3.4% in 2017. This differs from the World Bank’s calculation of 3.7% for 2015-2017.⁸⁴ However, despite stated economic growth 65% of Hondurans continue to live below the poverty line and 53% in extreme poverty - a statistic that has not changed since 2005.⁸⁵

Box 8: Central America: Average Annual GDP Growth⁸

Central America: Average Annual GDP Growth				
	2003-2005	2006-2008	2009	2010-2013
Costa Rica	5.5%	6.4%	-1.0%	4.5%
El Salvador	2.6%	3.0%	-3.1%	1.8%
Guatemala	3.0%	5.0%	0.5%	3.3%
Honduras	5.6%	5.7%	-2.4%	3.6%
Nicaragua	4.0%	4.4%	-2.2%	4.6%

Those benefiting from Honduras high economic fragility, like Honduras’ transnational elites, have reaped the majority of financial benefits from foreign business investment and remittances fuelling consumption in the elite-controlled service sector.⁸⁶ Neoliberal trade policies like the US Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) have had adverse effects for the local population where farmers unable to compete within the market were forced to sell land and migrate to urban areas. In addition, US-Honduran conflict-insensitive investment policies post-Hurricane Mitch - like the ‘Law to Incentivize Tourism’ which exempted international fast food chains from paying taxes during the first 10 years of operation within Honduras - are cited as having increased unemployment by putting local restaurants out of business and contributing to increased obesity in the country, especially amongst youth.⁸⁷

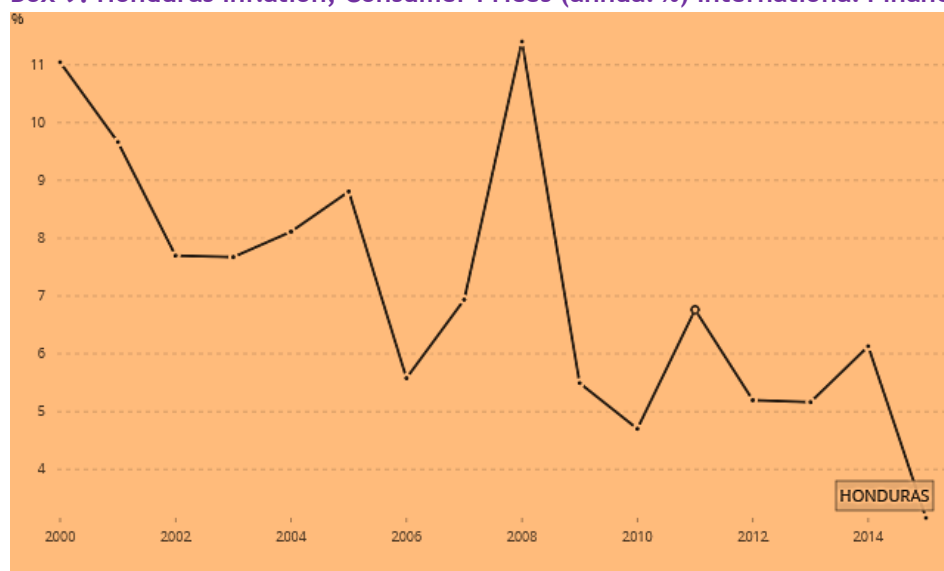
⁷ Box 7 Source: J. Wilson and J. Johnston. (2017). *Honduras: Social and Economic Indicators Since the 2009 Coup*. Secretaria de Finanzas. 22 November. <http://cepr.net/blogs/the-americas-blog/honduras-social-and-economic-indicators-since-the-2009-coup>

⁸ Box 8 Source: IMF as cited J. Wilson and J. Johnston. (2017). *ibid*.

Elites also direct the utilisation of resource rents within the country i.e. rents from oil, natural gas, coal (hard and soft), mineral, and forest resources. High dependency on external resources and resource rents is stated to be a major risk factor for economic fragility. Honduras' natural resource rent is not particularly high; however, significant challenges to human rights arise when rents from natural resources and extractive industries are redistributed by corrupt political and business elites at the detriment of local communities. This redistribution promotes cycles of corruption and rent-seeking, as well as land grabbing and opening the state's economy to shocks in the global economic system.⁸⁸ Natural resource rents refer to oil, gas, minerals, and forests; yet, water and energy are also central to clashes with indigenous groups and increases in human rights abuses. While the environmental health fragility indicator includes water, air, and sanitation from a health perspective, the extent of elite capture, abuse, economic control, and the impact from a privatisation of utilities like energy and water requires further investigation and representation within the fragility framework.

Despite significant debt and aid assistance, Honduras' overall economy has struggled to recover from the 2007 global economic recession which was largely due to unethical business and lending practices of elites within the US financial sector. The country has experienced periods of inflation volatility including periods of hyperinflation, which is cited as producing a negative effect on state's economic growth and political stability (**Box 9**).⁸⁹

Box 9: Honduras Inflation, Consumer Prices (annual %) International Financial Statistics and Data Files⁹



The combination of Honduras' high reliance on remittances, foreign economic aid, security assistance, inflation volatility, and corruption have complicated efforts to stabilise the country's economic growth, particularly for individual economic sustainability.⁹⁰ Under this economic fragility and weak governance structure, organised criminal groups and gangs were able to continue to expand their illicit operations. Vulnerable populations, like young men, remain disproportionately affected by the lack of economic opportunities and cycles of crime and violence. According to the World Bank, a country's percentage of youth and young adults between the ages of 15-29 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) is strongly correlated with violent criminal activity. Cited as an economic fragility risk, young men are seen as more likely to be recruited for illicit means if not engaged in a productive activity.⁹¹ Thus, many violence prevention and development strategies often target support for youth livelihood alternatives and engagement.

⁹ Box 9 Source: International Monetary Fund. (2016) *Inflation, consumer prices (annual%)*. *International Financial Statistics and Data Files. Overview per country. Honduras*. The World Bank Group.
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL.ZG?end=2015&locations=HN&start=2000&view=chart>

Statistics available from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) cite that the number of Honduran NEET almost doubled from 25.98% in 2007 to 42.28% in 2009 and remained almost constant at 41.43% in 2010.⁹² However, NEET data is sparse and is not disaggregated by gender or age. Alternatively, youth who choose not to engage in illicit activities migrate for safety and livelihood prospects.⁹³ While this population remains in need of protection and economic opportunities, the Honduran Government continues to respond with economic, political, societal, and security responses that marginalise Honduras' most vulnerable, protect the elite, and permit illicit activity. Thus, official policies do not often incorporate significant aspects of the drug, weapons, or human trafficking trade, despite estimations that the income derived from illicit activities supersedes the licit economy.⁹⁴ It has been documented that members of the economic elite sector not only provide legal services and protection for criminal organisations that operate the drug trade; members of drug-trafficking families continue to hold military positions and political offices.⁹⁵

Political Dimension

The lack of transparency in the economy is partly due to Honduran crimi-elite protection rackets that undermine rule of law and citizen security efforts by political, financial, and security means to protect their interests.⁹⁶ As an example, in 2005 upon his exit from office and under pressure from the US, President Ricardo Maduro implemented measures to address the high levels of corruption and drug trafficking in Honduras.⁹⁷ He established a new internal affairs office within the national police and removed impunity from some high-ranking officials.⁹⁸ However, these actions had little success in addressing rampant corruption. Elites not only continued to control Honduras' socio-economic and political arenas but also colluded with drug traffickers. Local transporters like the Cachiros, who began as Honduran cattle rustlers, had been fuelling corruption within the Honduran political system by bribing mayors, congressmen, and undermining police investigations.⁹⁹ Furthermore, the Cachiros backed land invasions against their business competition and killed illicit trafficking competitors.¹⁰⁰ By 2006, transnational Honduran elites like the Rosenthals, owners of the Continental Bank, had loaned the Cachiros money for businesses in cattle and milk. Although both Patricia and Jaime Rosenthal deny knowledge of the Cachiros connection to drug trafficking at that time, they have since been indicted on corruption and drug crimes.¹⁰¹

Reforms under Crimi-Legality

The 2006 election of President Manuel Zelaya signalled an interruption in the Honduran crimi-elite oligarchy and status quo. President Zelaya defeated his National Party rival Porfirio Lobo Sosa, candidate for the National Party (PNH Partido Nacional de Honduras) with 49.9% of the vote, a portion larger than in some western democracies like the US.¹⁰² When Zelaya entered office as a member of the workers and merchant Partido Liberal de Honduras (PLH) or Liberal Party he began pursuing populist policies that targeted societal fragility risks like vertical inequality by raising the minimum wage, abolishing school fees, implementing agrarian reforms, and lowering prices on energy for low income Hondurans.¹⁰³ These policies consequently alienated him from the established norms and practices of some Honduran elites.¹⁰⁴ However, Zelaya - himself a member of the traditional land-based elite - was also aligned with the Rosenthal family as well as elites from the timber, tourist, biodiesel manufacturing, and thermal energy industries.¹⁰⁵ Despite Zelaya specifically pledging to end illegal logging and help support indigenous rights and land protection, 'timber gangs' continued to clash with indigenous environmental activists and human rights defenders, leaving 109 dead from 2002-2013.¹⁰⁶ As a part of this elite-controlled system, Zelaya was significantly challenged to address persisting corruption, crime, horizontal inequalities, and citizen insecurity. Horizontal inequalities, as a societal fragility risk, are cited as linked to political violence when social groups do not enjoy the same level of civil freedoms.¹⁰⁷

Zelaya attempted to address Honduras' endemic corruption, a main contributing factor to the country's political fragility, by ratifying the UN Convention Against Corruption on May 23, 2005 which went into effect on December 14, 2005.¹⁰⁸ He also passed the 'Transparency Law' to allow for public access to government affairs.¹⁰⁹ Conversely, critics claim the Transparency Law circumvents transparency by permitting public officials to easily reserve or restrict documentation like the amounts of humanitarian assistance and their specific allocations as well as only declassifying information after 10 years while permitting the open purging of documentation after 5 years.¹¹⁰

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) score, corruption in Honduras decreased slightly during Zelaya's administration from 2005-2008. The CPI is listed as a political fragility risk indicator which measures public and expert perceptions of corruption within the public sector. However, measuring actual corruption remains a significant challenge due to transparency and reporting issues reinforced by high rates of impunity. Surveys used to derive the index include questions of bribery of public officials, kickbacks in public expenditures, and embezzlement.¹¹¹ These corruption factors can highlight the perception of a government's ability or inability to effectively use legislative restraint and executive power which are coping mechanisms for addressing political fragility and protecting citizen security and human rights.¹¹² However, Honduras' demonstrated inability to address transparency issues, elite corruption, and provide citizen protection is partly due to the complexity of impunity within the country. More specifically, the state has been both ineffective and unwilling to prosecute offenders especially in cases when offenders reside at high levels of the government and society.

Citizen perceptions of corruption and insecurity are further reinforced by the crimi-legality of organised crime and elite protection, while individuals and institutions that represent voice and accountability as a political fragility coping mechanism are attacked within the country. The Honduran National Commissioner for Human Rights (CONADEH) stated that 50 journalists and media professionals were killed during 2003-2014, with 10 journalists killed in 2014 alone.¹¹³ For instance, German Antonio Rivas (reporter and television station owner), Carlos Alberto Salgado (journalist and radio comedian), and Fernando Gonzalez (announcer and radio station owner) were killed with unsolved cases from 2003-2007.¹¹⁴

Judicial restraint on executive power as a coping mechanism is also a significant challenge. Although justices have been suspended due to corruption and incompetence, those that investigate human rights abuses have received death threats and in some cases have been attacked.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, high levels of corruption and impunity have perpetuated human rights abuses by state actors through state-sanctioned or state-perpetrated violence on Honduran citizens. This state-sanctioned violence is characterised as political terror and is listed as a main contributing factor to political fragility as it deteriorates human rights protection, citizen security, and political safeguards due in part to the penetration and embeddedness of corruption in key governmental institutions.¹¹⁶ The Political Terror Scale (PTS) (**Box 10**) which was developed to characterise levels of state-sponsored violations on civilians and measure levels of violations of human rights, rates Honduras as a 3 out of 5 for the majority of years during 2005-2016.¹¹⁷ In particular, the Political Terror Scale refers to terror as state-sponsored 'killings, torture, disappearances, and political imprisonment'.¹¹⁸ In 2006 alone, CONADEH logged 9,390 complaints of human rights abuses 'including illegal detentions, abuses of authority and due process violations' against the Honduran police or military; however, allegations were also brought against justice officials.¹¹⁹

Box 10: Political Terror Scale Levels¹⁰

Level	Interpretation
1	Countries under a secure rule of law, people are not imprisoned for their views, and torture is rare or exceptional. Political murders are extremely rare.
2	There is a limited amount of imprisonment for nonviolent political activity. However, few persons are affected, torture and beatings are exceptional. Political murder is rare.
3	There is extensive political imprisonment, or a recent history of such imprisonment. Execution or other political murders and brutality may be common. Unlimited detention, with or without a trial, for political views is accepted.
4	Civil and political rights violations have expanded to large numbers of the population. Murders, disappearances, and torture are a common part of life. In spite of its generality, on this level terror affects those who interest themselves in politics or ideas.
5	Terror has expanded to the whole population. The leaders of these societies place no limits on the means or thoroughness with which they pursue personal or ideological goals.

Security Dimension

Despite evidence of state-perpetrated and multi-dimensional violence within the country, measurements of violent deaths are primarily evaluated utilising intentional homicide as a primary indicator. An intentional homicide occurs when a ‘perpetrator aims to cause the death of a victim whether through: interpersonal violence, domestic disputes, violent conflict over natural resources, inter-gang territorial clashes, predatory violence, or killings by armed groups’.¹²⁰ As a principal component of security fragility, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime’s (UNODC) intentional homicide rate, the number of homicides per 100,000 of population, is listed as a primary risk. While homicide is an important indicator to understand the levels of direct violence affecting a population, it is essential for indices to recognise variations when homicide rates have decreased yet other forms of direct violence e.g. armed robbery, sexual assault, kidnappings remain extremely high, like in Honduras.¹²¹

The levels of violent criminal activity is also listed as a security fragility risk indicator including the intensity of violent activities of underground political organisations i.e. drug trafficking, arms trafficking, and prostitution.¹²² Issues with transparency, high rates of impunity, and lack of access to information make assessing the levels of violent criminal activity in Honduras a significant yet essential challenge. Alternatively, reductions in crime rates may not lead to perceptions of personal security for individuals when evidence of insecurity and structural violence remain unchanged, such as flagrant human rights abuses and stark social inequality. This is substantial as high inequality and poverty can lead vulnerable populations to become dependent on illicit alternatives like drug trafficking for livelihood sustainment.

Countering Drugs and Gangs

Insensitive to failed counternarcotic approaches, the US continued to lead and finance Honduran drug policy responses throughout 2004-2014.¹²³ Aligned with the US counternarcotic strategy, both Maduro and Zelaya led a ‘mano dura’ or ‘iron fist’ approach to addressing gang violence, drug trafficking, and organised crime.¹²⁴ This iron fist approach combined with the strict anti-gang or ‘anti-mara’ law in 2001 created a climate of social discord, especially because gangs had already become institutionalised in Honduran neighbourhoods, in some cases protected by local communities.¹²⁵ Disconcertingly the anti-gang law does not specify what constitutes gang membership and gang

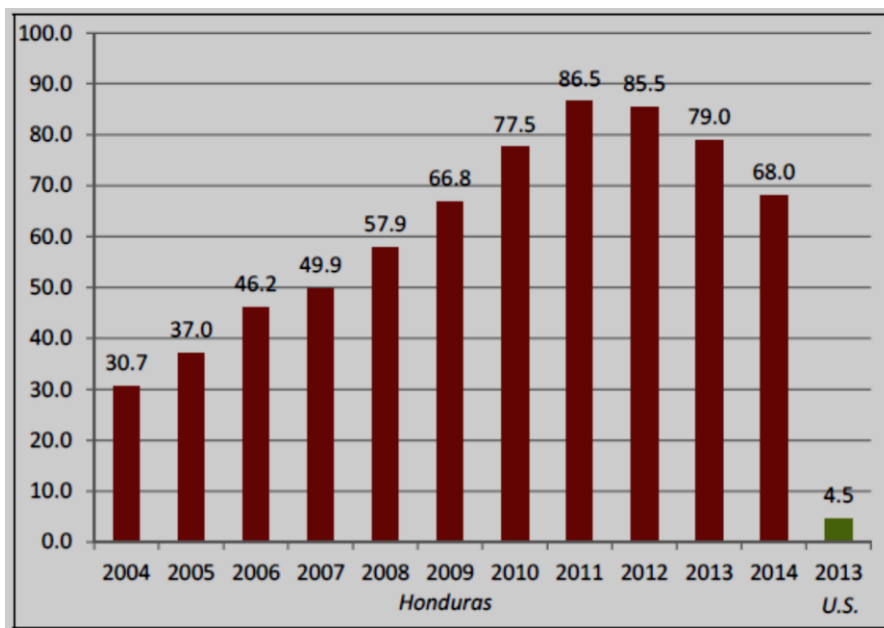
¹⁰ Box 10 Source: M. Gibney, L. Cornett, R. Wood, P. Haschke and D. Arnon. (2016) *The Political Terror Scale. Documentation: coding rules. Measuring the levels of state perpetrated human rights violations. ibid.*

identification methods have evolved. As a consequence, police and security forces have issued false positives where individuals have been wrongfully accused of gang affiliation.¹²⁶

In addition to the anti-gang law, the Honduran Government also renewed its drug policy and anti-corruption efforts by ratifying the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime on December 2nd 2003 and the UN Convention Against Corruption on May 23rd 2005, building on the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances ratified in 1991.¹²⁷ However, hard-lined approaches and international polices did little in practice to thwart the scope of illicit activities and crimi-elite corruption. With the implementation of iron fist strategies, gang recruitment and operations increased in part due to Honduras’ overcrowded and weak penal system.¹²⁸ Social cleansing also took place as vigilante groups attempted to address the gang problem.¹²⁹ Powerful gangs like the MS-13 and Barrio 18 gangs engaged in a deadly territorial war incorporating extortion rackets, torture, and drug trafficking into their operations.¹³⁰ However, it is difficult to quantify the exact level of gang-related violence and deaths in Honduras due to issues in reporting.¹³¹

Although many smaller drug trafficking organisations operated in Honduras throughout the 2000s, in 2006 the Mexican ‘War on Drugs’ produced a balloon effect: Mexican drug trafficking organisations, like the Sinaloa Cartel and the Zetas, prioritised drug trafficking routes through and increased their operations in Honduras’ socio-economic and political spheres.¹³² While exact homicide rates vary, it is clear that the effect promoted an increase in intentional homicides.¹³³ According to the UNAH Observatory of Violence, from 2004-2008 the intentional homicide rate in Honduras almost doubled (**Box 11**).

Box 11: Homicide Rate in Honduras: 2004-2014 per 100,000 Residents¹¹

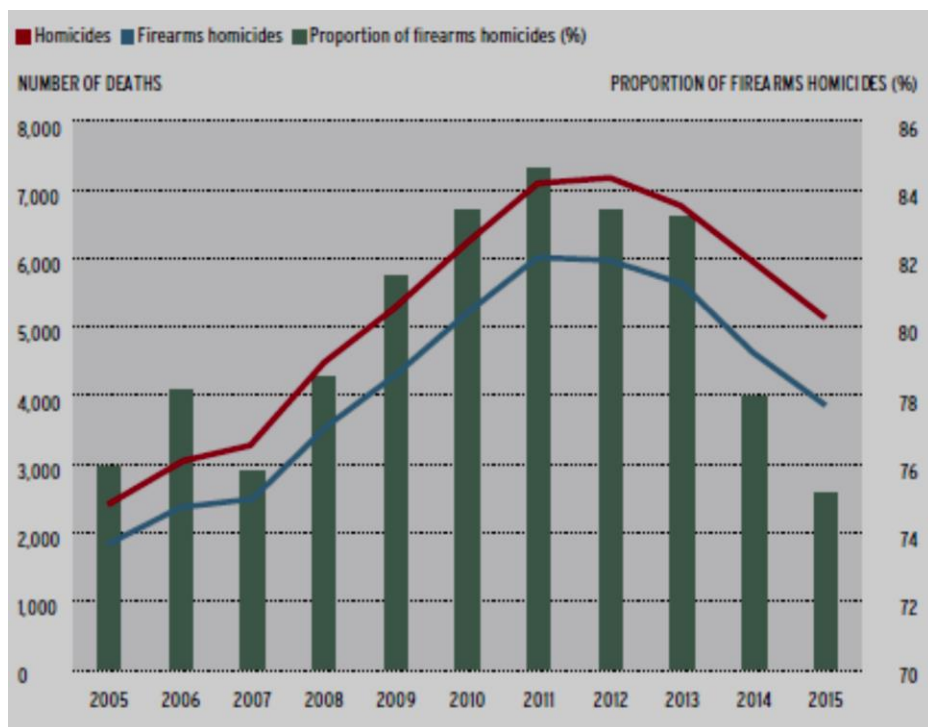


Weak monitoring institutions, corrupt Honduran officials, relaxed gun laws, US arms sales, black market arms trade, and an inability to protect Honduran citizens were some contributing factors to arms proliferation and an increase in violence in Honduras.¹³⁴ It is difficult to calculate the availability of arms within the country, yet a large portion of arms stockpiles were legacies from the US-sponsored conflicts of the 1980s and the failed Honduran disarmament and decommissioning efforts of the 1990s. Honduran arms have not only been used to enact violence on citizens, but have also supplied Mexican drug trafficking organisations and gangs contributing to violence in the region.¹³⁵ From 2005-

¹¹ Box 11 Source: Observatory of Violence National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) as cited in P. Meyer. (2015). *Honduras: background and U.S. relations. ibid.*

2012, an average of 80% of homicides in Honduras involved firearms (**Box 12**), approximately killing 32,000 people.¹³⁶ Robbery rates also increased from 33.2% in 2007 to 276.3% in 2011 per 100,000.¹³⁷

Box 12: Homicides, Firearms Homicides, and Proportion of Homicides Committed with a Firearm FY 2005-2015¹²



In order to address violence and citizen insecurity, increasing the number of police officers is often a primary goal of security sector reform. As a security fragility coping mechanism, the specific capacity of the police forces is measured by the number of police officers per 100,000 of the population. While the number of police officers is important, the OECD framework does not effectively incorporate the quality of police reforms including training, recruitment, promotion, and police-community relations which are essential factors to understanding and promoting local citizen security. As an example of inadequate policy, although Zelaya’s police reforms increased the numbers of the national police from 7,000 in 2005 to 13,500 in 2008, his policies were inadequate at addressing loopholes in the system. He passed an ‘Organic Police Law’ to strengthen internal affairs and policing units. However, the law required drug testing of police, but was only applied to police considering a promotion.¹³⁸

¹² Box 12 Source: M. Nowak. (2016). *Measuring illicit arms flows: Honduras*. Small Arms Survey. [Research Notes Number 62]. Small Arms Survey. http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/H-Research_Notes/SAS-Research-Note-62.pdf

The state's inability to address police reform, crimi-elite corruption, organised crime, and gang violence particularly affected vulnerable youth, women, LGBT, human rights defenders, and humanitarian responders.¹³⁹ Particularly, the pervasiveness of gang culture and initiation practices combined with iron fist counternarcotic policies aimed to suppress crime and violence, has affected young people in Honduras' urban centres.¹⁴⁰ Between 1998 and June 2006, 3,674 children and youth were killed with 34% under the age of 18 years.¹⁴¹ This number increased to 3,943 by 2007 with victims demonstrating increasing signs of torture.¹⁴² Historically registered cases of deaths or executions of youth have increased since 1988, indicating that youth have long lacked effective citizen security and protection in Honduras (**Box 13**).

Box 13: Monthly Averages of Violent Deaths and Arbitrary Executions of Youth FY 1998-2017¹³

Administration	Period	No. of months	Registered Cases	Monthly Average
Carlos Flores	(February 1998 - January 2002)	48	1,019	21.23
Ricardo Maduro	(February 2002 - January 2006)	48	1,976	41.17
Manuel Zelaya	(February 2006 – June 2009)	41	1,781	43.44
Roberto Micheletti Bain	(July 2009 – January 2010)	7	447	63.86
Porfirio Lobo Sosa	(February 2010 – January 2014)	48	3,891	81.06
Juan Orlando Hernández	(January 2014 - November 2017)	47	3,171	67.46
TOTAL		239	12,285	51.40

While the majority of violent deaths in Honduras are male, in 2006 the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women discussed the prevalence of gender based violence (GBV) against women, including the sexual abuse of women and girls, incest, rape, domestic violence, and femicide.¹⁴³ Femicide is defined as the gender-motivated killing of women.¹⁴⁴ Honduran women have highlighted that the normalisation of GBV is due to the macho culture that negatively affects their freedoms.¹⁴⁵ According to multiple women's rights organisations, the number of women violently killed increased 263.4% from 2005-2013.¹⁴⁶ Police reports also cited an increase from 42.35 to 52.65 cases of sexual violence out of 100,000 people from 2006-2010.¹⁴⁷ These figures are likely to be underreported due to fears of retaliation and high rates of impunity within the country. Additionally, there were 725 femicides recorded between 2003-2007 occurring largely in urban gang-controlled territory with no police or security forces protection.¹⁴⁸ Young women have also been killed in gang disputes as retaliation.¹⁴⁹ As a result of a lack of protection, threatened or abused women have been forcefully displaced; yet, when they flee they are also at risk of being subjected to illicit human trafficking, transnational sexual abuse, and captivity.¹⁵⁰ However, evidence confirms that women and young females join and contribute to illicit activities and gangs by hiding weapons, participating in sex initiation rituals, and running drugs and money.¹⁵¹

While the wealthier enclaves of Honduran society contract private security and build walls, young men and women in the poorer urban neighbourhoods become the most vulnerable targets for gang recruitment and/or abuse.¹⁵² Hondurans not wanting to be exploited or threatened decide to flee as gang members and organised criminals are

¹³ Box 13 Source: Observatory on the rights of children, girls and young people in Honduras. (2017). 'Monthly report on the situation of the rights of children and youth in Honduras.' December. <http://www.casa-alianza.org.hn/images/documentos/CAH.2017/1.Inf.Mensuales/12.%20informe%20mensual%20diciembre%202017.pdf>

well known to stalk, beat, rape, dismember, and murder Honduran citizens with impunity and threaten their families.¹⁵³

Societal Dimension

The victimisation and violence in Honduras transcends gender and social boundaries. Violence conducted by state and non-state actors is cited as being partially fuelled by high gender and horizontal inequality as societal fragility risks that exist within the country, continuing to privilege masculine regimes and social norms, while normalising violence against those marginalised by society.¹⁵⁴ The UNDP Gender Inequality Index (GII) captures societal fragility risk in gender inequality by measuring features of human development on a scale of 0 to 1. Measured factors include reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status to expose differences in achievements of men and women. The GII measures ‘reproductive health, measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates; empowerment, measured by proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females and proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education; and economic status, expressed as labour market participation and measured by the labour force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older’.¹⁵⁵ Honduras’ GII indicator has been consistently high, citing a loss in human development and the disparity between females and males within the country (**Box 14**).

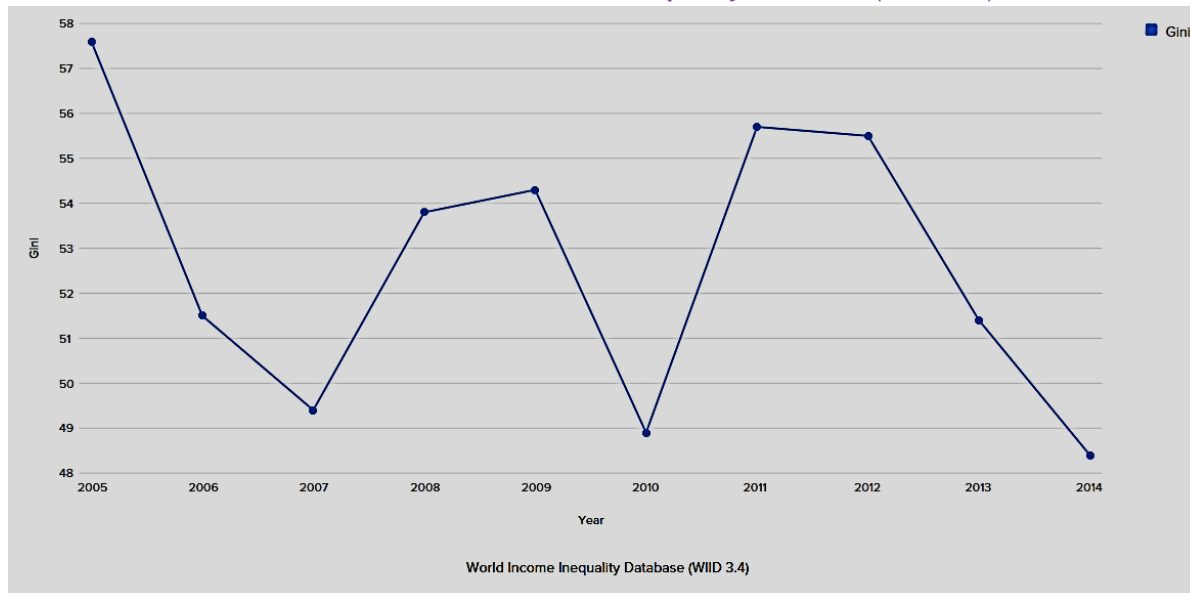
Box 14: Honduras Gender Inequality Index FY 2000-2014¹⁴

2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
0.547	0.515	0.513	0.504	0.495	NA	0.466	0.461

In addition, high income inequality is a main component of societal fragility where inequality can be measured through market-based gross income or disposable income available after taxes or transfers.¹⁵⁶ The United Nations University’s UNU-WIDER World Income Inequality Database (WIID) is utilised to capture the societal fragility risk of vertical inequality through its Gini coefficient. The WIID highlights that smaller Gini coefficients are associated with a more equitable distribution of income in a society.¹⁵⁷ While there is a demonstrated overall decline in Honduras’ Gini coefficient from 2002-2010, it remains high (**Box 15, over leaf**). Furthermore, inequitable power sharing, corruption, lack of inclusion, and lack of trust remain significant contributing factors to horizontal inequality which is linked to communal violence and breakdowns of social cohesion, leading many to seek alternatives for livelihood sustainment and protection.

¹⁴ Box 14 Source: United Nations Development Programme. (2017). *Honduras. Human Development Reports. Gender Inequality Index (GII)*. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/68606>

Box 15: Honduras Gini Coefficient World Income Inequality Database (WIID 3.3) FY 2005-2014¹⁵



Urbanisation growth also is considered a societal fragility risk and by 2010 50% of the Honduran population was living in urban areas. In particular, the number of uprooted people is cited as a main contributing risk for societal fragility and is defined as the combination of refugees, returned refugees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs).¹⁵⁸ IDPs are commonly referred to as persons or groups who have been forced to flee their places of residence and have not crossed national borders due to effects of armed conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations, or natural or human-made disasters.¹⁵⁹ According to a Honduran governmental study from 2004-2014, it is estimated that 174,000 Hondurans were IDPs out of 20 municipalities.¹⁶⁰ Despite the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement which cite that ‘every human being has the right to life...protected by law against: genocide, murder, arbitrary executions, enforced disappearances, including abduction, detention or threats...as well as human rights and protection’, a study by the Inter-Agency Commission for the Protection of Persons Displaced by Violence found that 90% of the sample households surveyed in Honduras had been displaced by violence.¹⁶¹ Highlighted reasons for continued Honduran migration are cited as threats from criminal violence, lack of protection, and lack of economic mobility and advancement.¹⁶² Many Hondurans are also cited as migrating due to safety from intra-familial violence, including child abuse and incest.¹⁶³

State institutions have been unable to appropriately respond to victims’ basic needs for health care, protection, education, justice, and livelihood assistance.¹⁶⁴ The normalisation of crime and corruption has also negatively affected humanitarian safeguards and the protection of organisations that are the primary providers of humanitarian aid. Humanitarian responders providing assistance to both perpetrators and victims are increasingly put in insecure and difficult positions. As an example, after allegedly refusing to pay extortion, the president of a leading humanitarian organisation was shot in 2007.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, cooperation with policing and military units considered heavily corrupt and connected to illicit activities poses a significant issue for humanitarian and development agencies, especially during times of increased political instability. While fragility indicators aim to incorporate the structural issues impeding development, the nuances of the effect of corruption on local operations remains insufficiently represented. Section 5 discusses in more detail how Honduras’ fragile situation was exacerbated during and following the 2009 coup d’état affecting human rights and citizen security.

¹⁵ Box 15 Source: United Nations University. (2017). *World income inequality database (WIID3.4). Data query and visualization.* <https://www4.wider.unu.edu/#?indicators=Gini&chartType=Line&countries=hn&years=2014,2013,2012,2011,2010,2009,2008,2007,2006,2005&estimations=0>

Section 5: Reconsolidation of Crimi-Elite Power During and Post-Coup d'état

Overview: the 'Coup d'état'

The June 28, 2009 coup d'état would lead Honduras toward one of the largest political crises the country has ever experienced. Prior to the coup, Honduras' political system was fragmented with polarisation, political intolerance, and a tendency to resort to third party mediators to resolve conflicts.¹⁶⁶ The primary trigger cited as leading to the coup was Zelaya's decision to push for a civic consultation permitting a fourth ballot box in the general elections.¹⁶⁷ Conservative members of the military and Honduran elite were cited as having objected to Zelaya's populist policies.¹⁶⁸

At the time, re-election was against the Honduran Constitution and the Honduran 'Attorney General, Supreme Court of Justice, and Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE)' opposed Zelaya's decision.¹⁶⁹ However, additional causes highlight the firing of General Romeo Vasquez Velasquez (Head of Joint Chiefs of Staff) for rejecting an executive order, and claims that Zelaya wanted to instil communism due to his close affiliation with the Latin American Nations with Bolivarian Alternative (ALBA), Fidel Castro, and Hugo Chavez.¹⁷⁰ Also, under the 1982 Honduran constitution, the Honduran president must convey presidential orders to the armed forces, and may not remove or select the head of the armed forces.¹⁷¹

Zelaya contends that the coup was orchestrated by a combination of Honduran elites and right-wing US officials including ex-Under Secretary of State Roger Noriega, Robert Carmona, and a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) founded group called the Arcadia Foundation, in part due to his refusal to provide political asylum to Luis Posada Carriles, a claimed former US CIA agent.¹⁷² Carriles was implicated in the plot to kill Fidel Castro and the suitcase bombing of a Cuban airline jet in 1976. In 2005, the US refused extradition requests by Cuba and Venezuela.¹⁷³

During the coup, the Micheletti administration launched a media campaign claiming that Zelaya was involved in drug trafficking and requested an arrest warrant from the International Police Organisation (INTERPOL).¹⁷⁴ However, the INTERPOL General Secretariat responded that they would not issue a Red Notice or international wanted persons notice for Zelaya as the charges of 'misuse of authority, usurpation of public functions, offences against the system of government, and treason' were determined to be political rather than criminal.¹⁷⁵ Yet, while under a court order from the Honduran National Congress, the Armed Forces removed Zelaya from his home in Honduras to Costa Rica and placed Roberto Micheletti - the presiding officer of the Congress - into the presidency through a constitutional succession.¹⁷⁶ According to Honduran legal observers, the actions of the Honduran National Congress were unconstitutional.¹⁷⁷ The coup was internationally condemned by governments in Latin America, the Organisation of American States (OAS), the US, and Canada as well as criticised by the European Union (EU).¹⁷⁸

While the newly appointed US President Barack Obama immediately condemned the coup, the US only cancelled visas of Honduran leaders two months later and suspended a significant portion of non-humanitarian assistance. The US did not use trade sanctions which would have applied more pressure.¹⁷⁹ In 2015, leaked emails demonstrated that the US State Department under Secretary Clinton circumvented the involvement of the OAS to mediate the political crisis. If the coup d'état had been recognised as such, the US would have been required to terminate aid to Honduras. However, a loophole in the Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L 111-117) stated 'military coups' not 'coup d'état' at the time in which the US Department of State conferred that a termination of assistance was not required.¹⁸⁰ This provision has since been changed to reflect coup d'états, although officials were concerned about the unintended limitation in the title.¹⁸¹ After attempts to garner a solution by the Costa Rican President Oscar Arias had been unsuccessful, a 'high-level US delegation persuaded Zelaya and Micheletti to sign the Tegucigalpa-San Jose accord to establish a unity and reconciliation government and reinstate Zelaya if the Honduran Congress produced a favourable vote'.¹⁸² The Tegucigalpa-San Jose accord's main features include the establishment of a national unity government,

National Congress vote on Zelaya's return to the presidency, support for the November elections, and the creation of a Verification Commission.¹⁸³ Although the agreement was signed, it was not fulfilled.¹⁸⁴

Increase in Citizen Insecurity

During the coup and immediate aftermath, counternarcotic functions continued to a lesser degree, but Micheletti's express priorities were to maintain control of the population and prepare for the election transition. On June 30, 2009 Micheletti declared a state of siege (Executive Decree 011-2009) that enforced curfews and restricted civic freedom of movement, expression, and assembly.¹⁸⁵ Shortly after, he enacted a second decree (Executive Decree PCM-M-016-2009) which further infringed on citizen security, civil liberties, and human rights by permitting arbitrary detentions, suspension of the press, and the closure of two opposition media outlets.¹⁸⁶ Despite criticism from some political elites and the reversal of the siege declaration, Micheletti's oppressive population control strategy continued, raising Honduras' political terror in 2009.¹⁸⁷

In particular, two investigations by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) - conducted August-November 2009 confirmed shootings, beatings, torture, and killings of public demonstrators by police and military.¹⁸⁸ According to the International Criminal Court (ICC), alleged killings were from 'excessive and disproportionate use of force by security forces during demonstrations, curfews, and from alleged targeted killings of selected members of the opposition to the de facto regime'.¹⁸⁹ Military and police were also cited as raiding the offices of the National Agrarian Institute and also firing tear gas into the office of the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH).¹⁹⁰ These increases to citizen insecurity are partially reflected in the intentional homicide rate increase from 50.0% in 2007 to 81.8 % in 2010 per 100,000 people.¹⁹¹ Additional cases of rape, sexual violence, and harassment also occurred during coup demonstrations and detentions, with some police officers and military identified as the perpetrators.¹⁹²

Regardless of flagrant citizen insecurity, an evaluation by the ICC determined the coup d'état to be a 'borderline case' that did not meet the thresholds of the Rome Statute's legal requirements to be considered a crime against humanity.¹⁹³ The ICC largely considered time span, legality, and applicability under Article 7 Elements of Crimes for their determination.¹⁹⁴ Though the US Ambassador Hugo Llorens had concerns with the illegality of the coup, the US moved to stabilise the country by encouraging the OAS to support the new elections amidst violent public protests, human rights abuses, and killings of civilians by security forces.¹⁹⁵ Thus, demonstrating the incongruence of US political actions, which simultaneously promoted human rights and democratic reforms, yet did not act to uphold protections for Honduran citizens.

Deaths and Drugs

The 2009 coup d'état caused significant political and social upheaval in Honduras. State fragility and citizen insecurity increased in part due to the redirection of Honduran military and police resources toward population control measures. The economic impact of the coup and the broader world economic crisis was seen in the drastically reduced annual GDP growth to -2.4% in 2009.¹⁹⁶ In turn, the increase of drugs available during what was stated as the 'cocaine gold rush' also affected individual environmental health fragility, promoting increases in local consumption.¹⁹⁷ The radical pause in the economy permitted an opening for drug trafficking organisations to expand operations. Furthermore, the redirection of state resources, combined with the embeddedness of corruption within the Honduran police, significantly decreased the government's ability to counter illicit trafficking.¹⁹⁸ In particular, corrupt police and drug traffickers were able to take advantage of the exacerbated political fragility to clear opposition by assassinating counternarcotic officials who had publicly denounced police involvement in organised crime, including those associated with the Sinaloa cartel.¹⁹⁹ In December 2009, the Head of Honduras' Office to Fight Drug Trafficking, Julián Arístides González Irías, was assassinated by low-ranking police officers while stopped at a red light in Tegucigalpa.²⁰⁰ The Honduran Human Rights Unit specifically cited a lack of cooperation by the Honduran military and police in their

investigations, including the failure to turn over firearms for ballistics tests and resistance in identifying police officers during murder and human rights abuse investigations.²⁰¹ Additionally, continued high impunity and lack of political will obstructed prosecutions of the perpetrators.²⁰²

While the arrests of El Salvadoran drug trafficker, Reimerio de Jesus Flores Lazo and Syrian international arms dealer Jamal Yousef were cited as successes by Honduran counternarcotic units and the US Drug Enforcement Agency, organised criminal groups took advantage of the lack of state presence and were able to expand operations.²⁰³ With the assistance of the US, the Honduran Government seized 6.6 tons of cocaine, 2,795 tones of crack cocaine, 923 kilos of marijuana, 13 ounces and 60 capsules of heroin, and 2.8 million pseudoephedrine pills in 2009.²⁰⁴ However, despite drug seizures an estimated 500-1,000 tons of cocaine were trafficked through Honduras largely by the Sinaloa cartel and the Zetas.²⁰⁵ Thus, the millions of dollars vested in counternarcotic efforts did little to curb drug trafficking in the country.²⁰⁶ In addition to drug trafficking, the Zetas kidnapped Hondurans traveling on the route to the US in exchange for ransom, while also forcing migrants to assist in drug trafficking operations.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, intensified territorial clashes over drug trafficking routes amplified gang violence and citizen insecurity.²⁰⁸

Restructuring Political Power

Shortly after his instatement, Micheletti announced a new cabinet, governmental strategy, and passed the 2009 budget. This budget included a 10% budget cut to the central government and a 20% cut to decentralised state entities due to loss of international funding support.²⁰⁹ In preparation for the November elections, Micheletti immediately annulled over 12 decrees and reforms made during Zelaya's term.²¹⁰ As an example, Micheletti withdrew Honduras' membership in the Bolivarian Alliance despite prior ratification by the National Congress.²¹¹ Micheletti also met with Honduran elites to negotiate and organise the transition of the government.²¹² Sources cite 'Carlos Roberto Facussé, José Rafael Ferrari, Juan Canahuati, Camilo Atala, José Lamas, Fredy Násser, Jacobo Kattán, Guillermo Lippman, Rafael Flores, Jorge Canahuati Larach, and Ricardo Maduro Joest' as part of the elite network behind the coup.²¹³

Following the coup, new political opposition parties emerged including the National Popular Resistance Front (Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular), the Popular Bloc (Bloque Popular), and the National Coordinator of Popular Resistance (Coordinadora Nacional de Resistencia Popular) who protested the de facto regime. Despite protests, Porfirio Lobo Sosa, a wealthy landowner and Zelaya's former opponent in the National Party, was inaugurated on January 27, 2010.²¹⁴ The US supported the elections; however, since no independent observers like the OAS, EU, and Carter Center were included, it is therefore widely argued that the 2009 election was neither fair nor transparent.²¹⁵ As part of the post-coup reconciliation efforts, Lobo endorsed an amnesty decree for Zelaya and all persons involved in the 2009 coup, excluding human rights offenders, while calling for a UN commission against corruption similar to the Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala.²¹⁶ In 2010, Lobo created a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación) to investigate actions during the de facto government; Honduran civil society organisations created a separate commission.²¹⁷ However, human rights violations and impunity remained the norm. According to the Human Rights Unit of the Attorney General's Office, the significant lack of progress in prosecution cases was due to continuing issues of cooperation with state institutions and security forces, limited resources, lack of investigative capacity, witness protection, and judicial independence.²¹⁸

Restructuring Security

Under Lobo's administration and with Juan Orlando Hernandez Alvarado leading the National Congress, the restructuring of Honduran national and public security functions began with the removal of Honduran Security Minister Oscar Alvarez and the launch of a new security strategy in 2011.²¹⁹ Under the new security strategy anti-crime, violence, and counternarcotic initiatives would consolidate and intensify. The strategy included the merger of the Honduran Defence and Security Ministries and the temporary authorisation of the Honduran military to assist police reforms, community policing, prison reforms, and anti-gang and crime operations.²²⁰ A new National Defence

and Security Council was formed that violated a separation of powers as the president and his minister, head of Congress, defence and security ministers, chief justice of the Supreme Court, and the attorney general were appointed with legal protection and the capability to control electronic surveillance.²²¹ In 2011, a specific law on wiretapping was also passed. While the law includes a requirement for a court order, many citizens continue to cite fears of abuse and insist on non-electronic communication regarding public matters.²²² Honduras also passed an anti-terrorism financing law in 2010 which requires nongovernmental organisations to report all donations over \$2,000 and organisations have cited that it has been used selectively for suppression.²²³

Conflict-insensitive to Honduras' crimi-elite operating system, the US is cited as having encouraged Central American governments to impose a special security tax to pay for policing and counternarcotic measures.²²⁴ The Honduran Ministry of Security passed a 'population security tax' in 2011 with the aim to increase financial assistance for security measures like police and prison reform.²²⁵ However, when the security tax was approved, elites also successfully advocated for mining export tax cuts that reduced the tax funding originally proposed by former Security Minister Alvarez.²²⁶ The security tax is in addition to the allocated budget for the Security and Defence Ministries. Human rights organisations in the country have stated that there has been a lack of transparency and information sharing of how the \$260 million and 30% prevention budget collected in 2012 was spent due to an enacted law for classifying documents.

In 2013, while still president of the National Party controlled Congress, Juan Orlando Hernandez Alvarado approved the 2014 budget, increased government revenues, and expanded the power of the presidency.²²⁷ Subsequently, on January 27, 2014 Hernandez was inaugurated as president.²²⁸ In January 2014, the Honduran Congress passed the Law for the Classification of Public Documents or the 'Law of Secrets'.²²⁹ In addition, the Hernandez administration also established the National Defence and Security Council's 069/2014 Resolution in July 2014 classifying information within powerful state public and private institutions including the 'Supreme Court of Justice, Secretariat of the Interior Security and National Police Directorate, Office of the Public Prosecutor for Drug Trafficking, National Bureau of Investigation and Intelligence, Armed Forces Strategic Investigation Agency, Ministry of the Interior Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Directorate, National Migration Institute, Executive Revenue Agency, National Registry of People, Social Security Institute of Honduras, Property Institute, Financial Intelligence Unit for the Bank and Securities Commission, Merchant Marines, Aviation Authority, National Electric Power Firm, and Autonomous National Service of Aqueducts'.²³⁰

The Law of Secrets is highly significant as it permits the Honduran government to classify public information regarding security and defence activities for 5, 10, 15, and 25 years.²³¹ Critics of the Law of Secrets state that it undermines a 2006 Transparency Law by taking away the function of the autonomous Institute for Access to Public Information (IAIP) to classify documents, and transfers several responsibilities to the National Security and Defence Council.²³² The law also does not define what is deemed as national security, opening opportunity for the government to interpret what can be classified as 'reserved, confidential, secret, or ultra-secret'.²³³ The law was originally blocked by the Honduran Community Media Association (AMCH) and international organisations due to concerns of human rights violations; however, it passed without any parliamentary archives or audio records.²³⁴ Human rights experts highlight that because the statute of limitation in Honduras is 25 years, corrupt officials can classify evidence of their illicit activity for 25 years as ultra-secret and essentially avoid prosecution.²³⁵ Furthermore, the law impedes fragility coping mechanisms of voice, accountability and access to justice, as the broad classification prevents investigators from requesting, evaluating, and sharing documentation, interestingly on how the country's security and development assistance is spent.²³⁶

Although Hernandez's government has initiated Action Plan 2014-2016, including an Open Budget Initiative (OBI) at national and municipal levels, and implemented governmental platforms like the National Centre for Social Sector Information or Centro Nacional de Información del Sector Social (CENISS), accurate reporting of expenditures and

assistance remains superficial and is thus a significant challenge.²³⁷ The lack of transparency from Honduran executive and security institutions undermines state-society relations and reinforces a climate of judicial restraint and elite protection.

Restructuring Judicial Power

In 2011, the restructuring of the Honduran judicial system increased with the establishment of the National Council of the Judiciary (Legislative Decree 219-2011) given the authority to dismiss and appoint magistrates on the Courts of Appeals, judges, and other personnel with judicial and administrative functions.²³⁸ According to the IACHR, by 2014 the National Council had fired 29 judges and suspended 28 without clear legal guidelines for due process and disciplinary action.²³⁹ This was above the number of dismissed judges who participated in the 2009 criminal complaint against military and congressional members for their involvement in the coup. In December 2012, the Honduran Congress removed four of the five Constitutional Chamber justices who had previously declared the 'Police Purge Law' (Legislative Decree N. 89-2012) unconstitutional and were against the Model Cities programme.²⁴⁰ However, the unconstitutionality claimed by the judges was cited as regarding the ability to conduct polygraphs on the Honduran police force that would violate their basic rights.²⁴¹ The decision to remove the justices was not reversed despite the Honduran Minister of Justice and Human Rights declaring their removal as illegal and a threat to the independence of the judiciary.²⁴²

Increased Counternarcotic Operations and Militarisation

In 2012, the Honduran National Congress passed a new law to permit the US to extradite Honduran nationals indicted on drug trafficking charges and terrorism charges.²⁴³ Under this law, Honduran agencies captured drug traffickers and assets from top 'Kingpins' like 'El Negro' Lobo and extradited them to the US between 2013-2014.²⁴⁴ Conversely, in 2012 43.7% of the 32,464 Hondurans deported from the US to Honduras had criminal records.²⁴⁵ Thus, repeating the pattern of US deportation of criminals into weak Honduran justice and security institutions.

However, in order to address the high levels of violence and crime in the country, in August 2013 the National Congress used funding from the new security tax to pass legislation authorising the creation of a new Military Police of Public Order (PMOP).²⁴⁶ Since its implementation in October 2013, Hernandez has attempted to incorporate the PMOP into the Honduran constitution but has been unsuccessful due to opposition in the National Congress.²⁴⁷ However, the PMOP was given the authority to conduct policing functions like citizen protection and political arrests, despite prior human rights abuses and killings of civilians by military and police.²⁴⁸ Critics maintain that the PMOP lacks expertise in community policing and does not uphold strict human rights regulations.²⁴⁹ Furthermore, under Honduran law the PMOP is legally protected from prosecution by the Attorney General's Office, thus establishing a permanent barrier to accountability and justice for citizens.²⁵⁰

The climate of impunity is so high in Honduras that according to the Honduran Alliance for Peace and Justice, less than 4% of murder cases resulted in a conviction in 2014.²⁵¹ In addition, military personnel are susceptible to illicit corruption through financial incentives, especially when they are stationed near areas with high drug trafficking under conditions of high impunity.²⁵²

The Honduran Government attributes citizen security improvement and the decreasing homicide rate in part to activities implemented by the PMOP. However, focusing largely on homicide rates is problematic. The temporary gang truce between MS-13 and Barrio 18 mediated largely by the Catholic Church also likely contributed to decreases in intentional homicides.²⁵³ Variations also exist between the lower figures of the Honduran Police Statistic System (SEPOL) and the higher figures of the Violence Observatory at UNAH and the Centre for Women's Rights.²⁵⁴ Despite slight improvement, violent death rates remain excessively high and many Hondurans continue to flee the country. The combined fragility factors of high impunity, high crime, violence, and a lack of judicial independence continue to

undermine citizen security and human rights. Furthermore, the increased militarisation within the country has been cited as taking away necessary resources from police reform, community-based prevention programmes, development, and humanitarian assistance to address the increased migration.²⁵⁵

By 2015, Honduras continued to be amongst the top 10 recipients of Overseas Development Assistance receiving \$590 million (three-year average) from OECD donors in addition to special debt relief.²⁵⁶ However, how this money was spent remains unclear. In addition, in 2015 the Ministry of Security's budget was allocated \$236 million, the security tax was estimated at \$100 million, and the government executed two security loans from the IDB and World Bank for \$75 million, together totalling \$411 million.²⁵⁷

Still, corruption amongst the security forces and crimi-elites persists. The anti-extortion task force the Fuerza Nacional de Seguridad Interinstitucional (FUSINA), and an advanced expeditionary force Tropa de Inteligencia y Grupos de Respuesta Especial de Seguridad (TIGRES) trained by US special forces have both been caught in corruption scandals.²⁵⁸ The TIGRES were found to have stolen \$1.3 million from a raid, while FUSINA was also implicated in the involvement of the assassination of environmental rights defenders.²⁵⁹ As an example of the continued penetration of drug trafficking within the Honduran crimi-elite network, as of May 2016, Fabio Porfirio Lobo, former President Porfirio Lobo's son, pleaded guilty to conspiring with Mexican drug traffickers to ship cocaine to the United States via negotiating channels from 2004-2014.²⁶⁰ Thus, reforming internal crimi-elite networks and the National Police has proven very difficult due to continued interconnected high corruption and impunity, especially for killings conducted by police.²⁶¹ According to UNAH, from January 2011-May 2013 at least 149 civilians were killed by police, including extrajudicial executions.²⁶² In addition, despite the government placing security sector reform as a priority since 2011, by mid-2013 only seven officers had been dismissed, and some were permitted to re-join the police.²⁶³ In addition, in late 2013 a large police purge inappropriately fired officers who were deemed 'clean'.²⁶⁴

Security reform successes are cited in the decrease of the annual murder rate by 26% to 42.8 per 100,000, and in the establishment of the Financing, Transparency and Auditing for Political Parties and Candidates Law which has also accompanied a US-Honduran intelligence investigation into the illicit activities of approximately 35 mayors, congressmen, judges, military and police officers.²⁶⁵ However, the murder rate remains high, and it is evident that the systemic problem of addressing embedded corruption persists. For example, on July 2, 2017 Wilter Neptali Blanco Ruiz, the alleged previous head of the Atlantic Cartel, agreed to give information on illicit activities on Hondurans, and pleaded guilty to drug trafficking with the potential to implicate high ranking officials in the Honduran security forces.²⁶⁶

Lack of Donor Accountability

Although the US first denounced the coup and cut intelligence information-sharing ties, US funding streams never halted.²⁶⁷ US funding during the coup and subsequent administration included a decrease in economic aid from \$87,674,835 in 2009 to \$54,461,000 in 2010 and a slight decrease in security aid from \$7,789,950 to \$5,148,957. While it is a challenge to obtain exact figures, US security aid to Honduras increased again from \$5,148,957 in 2010 to \$11,032,591 in 2011; while economic aid decreased from \$54,461,000 to \$54,452,025.²⁶⁸ The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) notified the US Congress that the foreign aid provided to Honduras was direct assistance for the Honduran people, however, Honduran due diligence and accountability mechanisms cannot be considered transparent because of significant issues with regulatory mechanisms prior, during, and following the coup.²⁶⁹ For example, in June 2009 several magistrates and judges were arbitrarily dismissed without due process and a Transparency Law excluded political elites in all three governmental branches including ministers, mayors, city councillors, and deputies leaving only public servants available for public information requests.²⁷⁰

Additional issues in donor accountability and oversight have continued under the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) programme. CARSI resides under the US Strategy for Engagement in Central America and the Bureau

of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). The programme is significant as it has provided \$979 million in assistance to Central American governments since 2008, yet discrepancies remain around the evaluation and impact of CARSI-funded community violence prevention programmes. As an example, debate continues in relation to a Vanderbilt University Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) which was conducted as one of the only comprehensive assessments of the CARSI programme.²⁷¹ LAPOP cites the coup as a reason for CARSI impact evaluation issues. However, additional critiques regarding the implementation and sampling of the research were highlighted by the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR). For example, USAID had already selected some of the sample communities in Honduras by the time the LAPOP research began.²⁷²

Repeating the Past: The 2017 Crimi-Legal Election

The evidence of the consolidation of Honduran power amidst an explicitly corrupt system suggests that opportunities for true reform remain elusive. Only after the Social Security embezzlement scandal in 2016 became public, and under immense societal pressure, Hernandez established the Mission Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH).²⁷³ By the time of MACCIH's creation, Hernandez had already consolidated state power, launched an iron fist counternarcotic approach to drug trafficking and gang violence, militarised state institutions, and increased citizen insecurity and human rights abuses. Since its implementation, MACCIH's aim has been to deal with high profile corruption and organized crime cases, while supporting institutional reforms.²⁷⁴

However, institutional reforms - such as the April 2015 Supreme Court ruling voiding single-term prohibition (Article 239) on presidential re-elections - permitted Juan Orlando Hernandez to stand for re-election on November 26, 2017.²⁷⁵ Hernandez ran against opposition challenger Salvador Nasralla amidst drug trafficking allegations against his brother Juan Antonio Tony Hernandez, despite re-election being the justification for the coup against Manuel Zelaya.²⁷⁶ A repeat of US complicity was demonstrated on November 28, 2017 when US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson certified Honduras as meeting accountability requirements in order to receive a US aid package of \$644 million. This certification was made amidst a controversial election, political crisis, and surmounting human rights abuses. From November 19 to January 21, 2018, civil society agencies have documented 21 killings by the military police, 232 people injured, and 1085 arrests with 35 incidents against human rights defenders and journalists.²⁷⁷

It was not until December 17 that the Tribunal Supremo Electoral (TSE) or Supreme Electoral Tribunal officially proclaimed the election results, with Juan Orlando Hernandez as winner. Furthermore, a new January 2018 law, (Decree 141-2017), shifts the judicial capacity to investigate corruption cases from the Public Ministry into the realm of the 'Tribunal Superior de Cuentas' (TSC) or Superior Court of Accounts. This shift has significant implications to halt progress on anti-corruption cases, particularly favouring potential impunity for the 'red de diputados' or network of officials, involving the corruption investigation against 60 current and former members of Congress.²⁷⁸ The re-election of Juan Orlando Hernandez and the US State Department's certification of Honduras signifies the weaknesses of international indicators and actors in countering Honduras' negotiated and corrupt elite-bargain state. Thus, there is a significant need to re-evaluate current international metrics against donor political aims, support independent anti-corruption efforts, and utilise better measures that address transnational crimi-elite power as a destabilising mechanism.

Section 6: A Call for New Metrics

While the overall OECD States of Fragility methodology should be evaluated more extensively, there is no indicator that measures elite power and its pervasiveness across all five dimensions. Although there have been attempts to quantify elite power through the OECD violence lens, expanding the research by conducting a network analysis on transnational elite power across all five OECD dimensions could provide further insight into how transnational elites undermine sustainable development.

Re-evaluating how the OECD fragility indicators like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Homicide rate, IPD level of violent criminal activity, Uppsala Conflict Data Programme deaths by non-state actors per capita, and the Worldwide Governance Indicators interlink with elite corruption and power could better illuminate both intended and unintended consequences on citizen security, health, and human rights. Combined with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), local citizen security metrics provide an additional opportunity to align fragility frameworks within a broader and more synergistic development agenda.

In the interest of local accountability and smarter international investment, new locally-based metrics have been developed to better evaluate progress made toward improving citizen security, human rights, and anti-corruption efforts in Honduras.²⁷⁹ The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) in partnership with Northern Triangle-based partners developed the Central American Monitor to evaluate progress in the region in the areas of ‘reducing violence and insecurity, strengthening the rule of law, improving transparency and accountability, protecting human rights, and combating corruption.’²⁸⁰ These metrics have the potential to emphasise locally-driven micro-level indicators for data collection and applicability.

However, with incoherent Honduran and US security policy approaches prioritising criminal gangs, drug trafficking, and organised crime, further investigation is needed to understand the impact of new drug policies that curb violence and decrease inequality.²⁸¹ Calls for better data by agencies like the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), UNODC, UNDP, member states and NGOs continue to highlight the significance for new metrics.²⁸² While there has been some progress to alter the discourse on drug policy metrics, progress is lagging in specific guidance. New drug policy indicators like the ‘proportion of total drug policy funds dedicated to treatment/harm reduction, by region/jurisdiction’ are being developed to incorporate drug policy metrics into the SDG Framework.²⁸³ This incorporation is an area for further exploration, in conjunction with further research of how crimi-elite networks and international donors utilise fragile and corrupt contexts to sustain operations and undermine development. In this regard, fragility frameworks, drug policy and sustainable development metrics and agendas should be reinforcing and not counterproductive. Thus, cohesive guidance and measurements are crucial to mitigate incoherent policies that often produce negative effects on local communities. To highlight the variance in indicators as an area for future research, an example of a cross-indicator chart within the OECD’s States of Fragility Security Dimension (**Box 16**) is included over leaf.

Box 16 Example: Security Dimension Cross-indicator Chart¹⁶

OECD States of Fragility Framework Security Dimension	WOLA Central American Monitor	SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions Targets	Examples of SDG Drug Policy Indicators
<p>Homicide Rate UNODC Indicator Intentional homicide rate per 100 000 population.</p>	<p>Crime Reduction Convictions for homicides, extortion,</p>	<p>Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.</p>	<p>Proportion of post-arrest decisions for minor nonviolent drug offenses that resulted in criminal/non-criminal/prison-based/pre-trial detention sanctions.</p>
<p>Level of Violent Criminal Activity IPD Indicator Intensity of violent activities by underground political organisation: by criminal organisations (e.g. drug trafficking, arms trafficking, prostitutions etc.).</p>	<p>against criminal networks, as well as a reduction in serious and violent crimes.</p>	<p>By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime.</p>	
<p>Deaths by non-state actors per capita UCDP Indicator Total of one-sided and non-state actor datasets – average per capita rate of 2011-14.</p>		<p>Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.</p>	
<p>Impact of terrorism IEP/START The Global terrorism index score for a context in a given year accounts for the relative impact of incidents in the year. Four factors are counted: number of terrorist incidents; number of fatalities caused by terrorism; number of injuries caused by terrorism; and approximate level of total property damage from terrorist incidents in a given year. It is a five-year weighted average to capture lingering fear effects.</p>		<p>End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.</p>	

¹⁶ Box 16 Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2016). States of fragility 2016. Understanding violence. *ibid.*; Washington Office on Latin America. (2017). *Evaluating Progress in Central America. Indicators of Progress*. WOLA <https://www.wola.org/evaluating-progress-central-america/>; United Nations. (2015). *Goal 16: promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies. UN Sustainable Development Goal 16 targets*. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>; International Expert Group on Drug Policy Metrics. (2018). *ibid.*

<p>Conflict risk GCRI Indicator Statistical risk of violent conflict in the next 1-4 years based on 25 quantitative indicators from open sources.</p>			
<p>Restricted gender physical integrity value OECD Indicator Measures prevalence of laws on rape and domestic violence. Experience of violence is also captured.</p>			
<p>Police officers per 100 000 population GPI Indicator Number of Police officers per 100 000.</p>	<p>Functioning of Police Career Systems Existence and effectiveness of police recruitment and promotion mechanisms, training processes, and disciplinary systems, as well as the structure of police bodies.</p> <p>Allocation and Use of Budgetary Resources Allocation and effective use of public funds and percentage designated for the wellbeing of members of the civilian police forces.</p>		<p>Number of lethal outcomes of drug-related police and military interventions.</p>
<p>Armed security officers per 100 000 population GPI Armed security officers per 100 000.</p>	<p>Development and Implementation of a Concrete Plan</p>		

	<p>The design and implementation of a publicly accessible and verifiable plan with goals, timelines, activities, and clearly established indicators; repeal of legal norms authorizing participation of armed forces in public security, and access to information regarding payroll and assigned resources.</p> <p>Conduct of Military Forces Complaints, accusations, and sentences regarding human rights violations perpetrated by members of the armed forces and the level of public trust in the armed forces.</p>		
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<p>Rule of law WGI</p> <p>Reflects perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence.</p>	<p>Advancements in Criminal Investigations</p> <p>Number of corruption cases filed, prosecuted, and resolved, as well as the progress made in emblematic cases.</p> <p>Capacity Building</p> <p>Existence and functioning of specialized anti-organized crime units, application of scientific and technical investigative methods, and functioning of judges or tribunals dedicated to the prosecution of organized crime.</p> <p>Advances in Criminal Investigations</p> <p>The number of organized crime-related cases filed, prosecuted, and resolved, as well as the progress made in emblematic cases.</p>	<p>Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.</p> <p>Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.</p> <p>Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.</p> <p>Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.</p>	<p>Number of investigations/prosecutions for drug-related corruption/money laundering cases involving governmental officials.</p>
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Control over territory V-DEM Over what percentage of the territory does the state have effective control?			Displaced population due to drug-related violence.
Formal alliances COW Formal alliance between at least two states that fall in the classes of defence pact, neutrality or non-aggression treaty, or entente agreement.			

Section 7: Concluding Reflections

It is apparent that although some evidence points to the utility of fragility frameworks for security and development donors, much work is needed to increase transparency within the frameworks, accountability amongst donors and local actors, and to promote locally-based and sustainably-focused metrics. Factors like the interconnectivity of criminal corruption through illicit markets and ineffective drug policy serve as an example of an oversimplified and under investigated arena within the fragility analyses and drug policy discourse.

Furthermore, while corruption has been noted as undermining development, it is often difficult to measure and address due to the implicit network that both promotes and sustains systems of corruption. Corruption, like violence, is multi-dimensional and cannot be addressed through policies that do not take into account political agendas within both countries receiving economic and security assistance and within donor countries as well. In particular, further investigation is required to understand how fragility, elite control, corruption, and sustainable development interlink across borders. It is important to not only understand how international donors control the measurement process, but also how transnational crimi-elite network capture promotes ineffective policy implementation. Without considering political realities within the donor countries themselves, fragility frameworks are overlooking donor political influence and inconsistencies.

As an example, although already inherently fragile when the Honduran system was shocked during the 2009 coup, crimi-elite networks mobilised to further take advantage the crisis to strengthen their socio-political power through increasing drug trafficking, crime, citizen insecurity, and human rights abuses. Specific pledges for a renewal in police reform and actions against corruption have only taken place recently after significant denunciations from international donors like the US, who finance security reforms. However, police corruption, conflict-insensitive assistance by the US, militarisation into public security and state institutions, and crimi-elite abuse of power continue to impede much needed citizen security assistance and human rights protection. In this regard, the high levels of organised crime and gang violence are the manifestation of underdevelopment, inadequate donor assistance, lack of regulation, stark inequality, and the permissive crimi-legal nature of Honduran society funded in part by donors like the US and OECD.

While the Honduran Government has contributed a decrease in the homicide rate as an indicator of citizen security improvement, this is not indicated in the high rates of GBV, migration, and forced displacement. Many Hondurans, especially vulnerable youth and women, continue to flee insecure spaces, while facing increased violence, abuse, and criminal exploitation along the migration route to the US. In addition, the conflict-insensitive retention and deportation practices of the US return migrants to the same insecure environment with little protection.

The 2017 certification of the re-election of Juan Orlando Hernandez particularly signifies that there will be limited action from the US in challenging the corrupt operating system in Honduras. Without more holistic metrics and

application, external donors with their own political interests like the US, OECD, and IMF will continue to enact ineffective policies and co-operation programmes that finance Honduras' highly corrupt and deeply fragile crimi-elite political and security networks.

The introduction of new metrics to guide policy poses a significant challenge; increased due diligence and transparency will be required for both donor and recipient countries. However, with the adoption of the SDGs aligned with additional fragility, drug, and local metrics, donor countries like the US have an opportunity to reconcile internal security and development policy discrepancies if there is the political will to do so.

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