



# From Pablo to Osama: Trafficking and Terrorist Networks, Government Bureaucracies, and Competitive Adaptation

*Michael Kenney*

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*From Pablo to Osama* is a comparative study of Colombian drug-smuggling enterprises, terrorist networks (including al Qaeda), and the law enforcement agencies that seek to dismantle them. Drawing on a wealth of research materials, including interviews with former drug traffickers and other hard-to-reach informants, Michael Kenney explores how drug traffickers, terrorists, and government officials gather, analyze, and apply knowledge and experience. The analysis reveals that the resilience of the Colombian drug trade and Islamist extremism in wars on drugs and terrorism stems partly from the ability of illicit enterprises to change their activities in response to practical experience and technical information, store this knowledge in practices and procedures, and select and retain routines that produce satisfactory results. Traffickers and terrorists “learn,” building skills, improving practices, and becoming increasingly difficult for state authorities to eliminate. The book concludes by exploring theoretical and policy implications, suggesting that success in wars on drugs and terrorism depends less on fighting illicit networks with government intelligence and more on conquering competency traps—traps that compel policy makers to exploit militarized enforcement strategies repeatedly without questioning whether these programs are capable of producing the intended results.

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