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The Political Economy of Transnational Drug Trafficking:
Criminal Rackets and State-Making in Modern Mexico

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For Giulio Regeni

Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text

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Abstract

Far from embodying distinct social actors, the line separating the ‘police’ from the ‘criminal’ is historically fluid and at times very thin. Generated by the capitalisation of economic relations, waves of bandits and criminals have often been instrumental to advance the interests of their enabling economic and political elites by forming the security apparatuses (reliant on preying, delinquency and extortion) supporting the elites' hegemony. Mexicans, at multiple stages in the country's national history, have become well-acquainted with the blend of legality and illegality characterising the country's security sector. Building from historical sociology, comparative studies and critical approaches to policing, this thesis argues that criminal activities (in particular contraband and drug trafficking) were important political economies supporting the development of the state security apparatus under the PRI regime in Mexico (1940s to 1990s). The thesis documents the paradoxical but regular input of criminal markets into the political economies of pacification, policing and state repression, taking place at crucial junctures in the history of the single-party state, and assisting the production of its particular socioeconomic order. This ‘instrumentalisation’ of transnational criminal markets connects with and replicates little-studied Cold War security dynamics whereby the reach of the U.S. security apparatus (global policing, paramilitarism, counterinsurgency, dirty wars, etc.) was expanded by tapping into criminal activity in host nations. Building from the Mexican experience, the thesis argues that state rackets in (transnational) crime generated political economies that, embedded into local processes, played a notable part in the making of capitalist modernity, liberal state making and empire. The thesis documents in particular the ancillary role of drug and contraband markets in the operation of the PRI's central security bodies, the Dirección Federal de Seguridad and the Policía Judicial Federal. Drawing from multi-archival research and unprecedented testimonies by former law enforcement agents,

the thesis provides a new framework to grasp the important role of criminal-police entanglements in the making of Mexican modernity.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	3
Abstract.....	4
Table of Contents	6
Acknowledgements	7
Abbreviations	8
Introduction	9
Chapter 1 - Theoretical discussion: the <i>bandit</i> in historical perspective.....	18
Chapter 2 - Protection rackets and state-formation after the Mexican Revolution	61
Chapter 3 - Criminal rackets, political mandates	110
Chapter 4 - From national security to policing neoliberal chaos: the ‘commoditisation’ of drugs	148
Chapter 5 - Tamaulipas and the end of a centralised drug racket.....	170
Conclusions and discussion	214
Bibliography	240

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Abbreviations

AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia [United Self-Defenders of Colombia]
AFI	Agencia Federal de Investigación [Federal Investigative Agency]
ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
BEA	Brigada Especial Antiguerrillas [Special Anti-Guerilla Brigade]
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DFS	Dirección Federal de Seguridad [Federal Security Directorate]
DGIPS	Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales [General Directorate of Political and Social Investigations]
DIPD	División de Investigaciones para la Prevención de la Delincuencia [Division of Investigations for the Prevention of Delinquency]
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FBN	Federal Bureau of Narcotics
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
NNICC	National Narcotics Intelligence Consumers Committee
PGR	Procuraduría General de la República [Attorney General of Mexico]
PJF	Policía Judicial Federal [Federal Judicial Police]
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional [Institutional Revolutionary Party]
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WW II	Second World War

Introduction

On December 9, 2019, the architect of the War on Drugs in Mexico, Genaro García Luna, was taken into custody in Dallas by the FBI on charges of having taken millions in bribes from drug cartels since 2001. His arrest was a cognitive shock in Mexico. More than anyone else, García Luna embodied the government's assault on drug trafficking — an onslaught that has come to define the history of 21st century Mexico, nearing today half a million deaths. From 2000 to 2012, the power of García Luna over the security apparatus had been paramount. It included directing counterinsurgency operations at the country's national intelligence agency, as well as heading the increasingly militarised ranks of the national police. Learning that the top 'general' of the war on the cartels was being accused in the U.S. of *enabling* them was very hard to digest, particularly in a country devastated by the policies and decisions adopted by a national security elite headed by García Luna and his subordinates. Had the Mexican government been unaware of his connections to drug traffickers all this time? — a tricky question, given that García Luna embodied the federal security apparatus in Mexico to a large extent. What about the U.S.? Why was the U.S. government pressing drug trafficking charges against an official who had enjoyed full access to and support from U.S. security and law enforcement agencies for decades? The arrest of García Luna represented a cognitive puzzle that specialists and scholars in Mexico seemed ill-equipped to address. Some noted how the event called for a historical reinterpretation of the 'War on Drugs' in Mexico: a reconsideration of its internal logic and a reassessment of its fundamental aims.

Looking back, the arrest of García Luna should not have been all that surprising. The extent to which the federal government in Mexico (its central security institutions and national political elites) established protection rackets in the transnational drug business throughout the 20th century was historically constant. Part of the reason why these cases seem so puzzling, however, is the limited and tangential attention given by scholars to the historical connections between state institutions and the drug business, as well as the political aims and structural processes that these entanglements have historically enabled. On the one hand, the scholarship has tended to assume that 'state' and 'criminal' embody differentiated historical actors.

‘Police’ and ‘bandit’ are often cast as naturally opposed categories and the ‘corrupt’ deviations represented by their ‘entanglements’ are thought of as an exception rather than the norm. As this thesis will note, recent approaches to the drug business have tended to miss, in particular, the paradoxical importance of the ‘criminal’ in the consolidation of ‘security’ in 20th century Mexico. On the other hand, when describing the historical entanglements between criminal and state actors, the dominant post-structuralist frameworks in Mexican historiography have tended to overlook the input of these economies in processes and geographies that transcend local and culturalist boundaries. By casting power relations as notoriously heterogeneous and geographically dispersed, dominant approaches to Mexican history have downplayed the possibility of a synthetical understanding of the input of drug markets in the making of Mexican modernity. Of course, an emphasis on variation and heterogeneity has shed light on the messy and complex mosaic of power relations in 20th century Mexico, but it has also precluded a more nuanced understanding of the aims and drivers behind the extortion of criminal activities by national elites and state institutions. The literature’s characterisation of 20th century Mexico as a ‘weak’ state is particularly surprising when one considers, for example, the capacity of the central state to exert a highly coherent and integrated form of control over major criminal activities for decades. As the thesis will note, this capacity to control drug markets became an important sustenance in articulating national governance, deploying state violence, and paving the way for the capitalist process. The relatively low levels of criminal violence characterising the Mexican drug market until very recently have been noticed as a positive outcome stemming, especially, from this relatively centralised and coherent form of state control.

Limited interest in making sense of the central gradients in the history of drug markets partly explains why we seem puzzled when cases like García Luna turn our frame of reference (‘state versus criminals’, ‘entanglements are relevant mostly at local levels’) upside down. Looking to contribute towards a more encompassing understanding of the input of the ‘criminal’ in the state-making process in modern Mexico, the thesis will revisit key transitions in the history of criminal rackets in the drug and contraband economies, beginning with their

modern inception in the 1940s and concluding with their fragmentation in the 1990s. In contrast to predominant post-structuralist frameworks in Mexican historiography, which cast state power as the crystallisation of the ‘social’ or the synthesis of multiple ‘local’ processes, the thesis credits the role of the state and national elites in driving the political process and the structural transformations that shaped the country’s modernity. Likewise, it locates the Mexican ‘state’ within a transnational and highly unequal geography of power where domestic outcomes are not explicable without accounting for the input of external interventions and global economic interests. Rooted in a global perspective¹, the thesis emphasises in particular how the evolution of the state racket in the drug economy during the second half of the 20th century in Mexico replicates experiences and patterns that *connect* and *compare* with experiences in the transnational plane.

The thesis argues that the interest in studying state involvement in drug economies (and in criminal activities more generally) transcends the act of ‘corruption’ that it obviously embodies as well as the cultural landscapes where it is normalised into an everyday, acceptable routine. From a political perspective, drug rackets (especially in transnational markets) are interesting because of their association with security processes that, during the Cold War, in particular, allowed relevant states to generate a certain social order, repress class antagonisms and political dissent, police alienated populations, neutralise the manifestations of ‘internal enemies’, empower authoritarian politics and channel external interventions with dramatic implications for the ‘subaltern’. In other words, state rackets are also interesting because of their input in limiting the realm of the historically possible. The *instrumentalisation* of these markets in Mexico during the Cold War replicated to an important extent the logic and connected with the global history, of geographies in Indochina, Burma, Turkey, Lebanon, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, and Central America. In these heterogeneous and varied geographies, the need to police antagonised societies drove their underfunded, corrupt, and inefficient governments to tap into these economies to generate paramilitarised security to shape the

¹ See: Drayton, Richard, and David Motadel. "Discussion: the futures of global history." *Journal of Global History*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2018, pp. 1-21; O’Brien, Patrick. "Historical traditions and modern imperatives for the restoration of global history." *Journal of Global History*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2006, pp. 3-39; Conrad, Sebastian. *What is Global History?* Princeton University Press, 2016.

social order. In all of these geographies, state intervention in drug economies enhanced proactive and reactive capabilities to deal with peasant insurrections, militant labour unions, social leaders, nationalist movements, socialist and communist actors, thus paving the way for an agenda centred on the forceful deployment of (U.S.-led) capitalism. A point to underline here is that the instrumentalisation of criminal markets during this period served an agenda aimed not only at advancing U.S. foreign policy in Cold War theatres but aimed more precisely at pacifying the social antagonisms generated by it². The beginning of the Cold War in Mexico went hand in hand with the consolidation of the political system that would rule the country for the remainder of the 20th century: the single-party regime of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). This historical junction saw the establishment of a new national security agency tasked with extinguishing the remaining energies of the Mexican Revolution and paving the way for the intense form of capitalist relations that followed. Put differently, a new ‘long’ historical cycle, predicated on a much more embedded relationship between state and capital had to develop the coercive capacity to address the social antagonisms that capitalist accumulation was likely to entail. This national agency was the Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS), which from the beginning was supported by an unofficial ‘licence’ to generate rents through criminal activities. In other words, to compensate for the government’s fiscal incapacity to support its security necessities (an incapacity generated, amongst other things, by its close relationship with capital), the state turned to criminal economies to generate these rents. The extent to which criminal economies undergirded the security processes and bureaucracies supporting the regime in power hints at why these practices were fully tolerated and encouraged by the political elite. The instrumentalisation of criminal economies to ‘generate’ a new social order in Mexico enjoyed the support of, and replicated strategies deployed elsewhere by the U.S. government.

The instrumentalisation of criminals to service territorial expansion, political consolidation, and capitalist agendas, of course, represents a primal and well-established practice in global

² For a discussion of the concept of ‘pacification’, especially with regards to ‘pacifying’ the antagonisms generated by capitalism, colonialism and imperialism, see: Schrader, Stuart. *Badges without borders: how global counterinsurgency transformed American policing*. University of California Press, 2019; as well as Neocleous, Mark. "A brighter and nicer new life: Security as pacification." *Social & Legal Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2011, pp. 191-208.

history. The use of ‘criminals’, ‘predators’, or ‘bandits’ has been a key but often understudied vehicle employed by emerging dominant classes to ‘secure’ new forms of economic relations and consolidate broader geographies of power. The emergence of liberal states in the 18th and 19th centuries involved almost universally the incorporation and enablement of criminal gangs to contain the social antagonisms and state collapse generated by the liberalisation of feudal polities. The success of bandit gangs became predicated on their relationship with new elites, and the security of these new elites became contingent, in turn, on services provided by ‘licensed’ criminals and bandits. In Mexico, for example, the first national police (created by the early liberal state in the mid-1800s) incorporated bandit gangs (who continued preying, if more selectively) to impose new property and labour conditions on the liberalised peasantry. The intense social grievances implicated by structural liberalisation would spin out of control and trigger, a few decades later, the Mexican Revolution. An argument advanced here is that the global use of banditry to contain social antagonisms and consolidate emerging nation-states in the 18th and 19th centuries anticipates the aims and logic that are served, under different historical circumstances, by Cold War security apparatuses and their relationship to organised crime. Of course, the relationship between state actors and criminals in both periods is very different, and the arguments advanced here do not seek to gloss over the enormous qualitative disparities that separate these examples. However, in spite of these great differences, there are also notable regularities worth noting in order to grasp and synthesise little-studied dynamics in modern state formation and, in particular, the overlooked, regular and decisive input of criminals in political modernity.

In other words, the idea here is to make better sense of what has brought (and is likely to continue to bring) these two seemingly antagonistic actors —states and bandits, police and criminals— to collaborate so regularly. The first chapter lays down the theoretical framework. It adopts a Tillyan perspective on state-making whereby state-making involves, by definition, predatory extortion, and criminal activities. The chapter argues that the common identity of ‘criminals’ and ‘rulers’ stems from the fact that both depend on the same mechanism to generate income: the means of violence. Building on the theoretical affinity of extortion and state-making, the chapter then discusses the historical importance of extorters and

criminals in securing the chaotic transition from premodern to capitalist societies, a transition framed by state collapse, the suppression of political barriers to capital accumulation, and the emergence of bourgeoisie hegemony. An argument advanced here is that structural capitalisation/liberalisation tends to generate the very banditry that, subsequently, emerging classes have little option but to co-opt. Echoing these dynamics in the consolidation of early modernity, the instrumentalisation of transnational drug markets in the 20th century played a similar role in containing the social tensions generated by economic dislocation brought about by U.S.-led capitalism during the Cold War. By noting the relationship between liberalisation and the instrumentalisation of banditry in early capitalist Mexico, the chapter anticipates the analogous relationship between neoliberal reform, expanded banditry (the drug wars), and the co-optation of some of this banditry by neoliberal elites (through the likes of García Luna) to police and repress the social antagonisms generated by the liberalisation process.

The second chapter introduces the reader to the PRI regime, as well as to the role that criminal economies played in its early political consolidation. It introduces the regime by discussing the evolution of Mexican historiography on PRI development and noting, in particular, how predominant academic discourses that privilege subnational and localist frameworks have tended to underestimate or draw attention away from national and global actors of key importance in the making of PRI modernity. After this brief literature review, the chapter begins to problematise the relationship between the state and the bandit in the early PRI period. What explains the strong involvement of the Mexican state in criminal activity? What did the Mexican state gain from this involvement, other than economic benefits? Why were these ‘entanglements’ so blatantly encouraged by party elites? How do these processes reflect on other cases in global history?

The third chapter discusses the nexus between the DFS and transnational drug markets in the 1970s and early 1980s. The chapter not only notes the extent to which protection rackets in criminal economies became entangled with ‘pacification’ and counterinsurgency campaigns during this repressive period but the extent to which these campaigns led to a tighter form of state control of drug markets. The chapter documents novel aspects of the landmark 1977

drug enforcement *Condor* operation. This landmark, U.S.-led militarised eradication and interdiction campaign in northwestern Mexico marked the testing ground and early global deployment of the ‘War on Drugs’. An operation studied mostly as a drug enforcement campaign, Condor involved cloaked transfers of military hardware aimed at expanding the limited capabilities of the Mexican government to address mounting insurrection in the sierras. In this regard, Condor anticipates later drug enforcement campaigns in Latin America (such as Plan Colombia) that, rather than dismantling drug economies, built on these economies to police, pacify and repress social antagonisms. Condor is important because it lifts the veil on the logic that informs U.S. transfers to host countries under the veil of drug enforcement.

Chapter four documents how, following the dismantlement of the DFS in the mid-1980s (which resulted from the public exposure of its involvement in drug markets), the PRI state continued to extort transnational drug activity through an expanded national police: the Policía Judicial Federal (PJF). Using rare access to former PJF as well as Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) officials, the chapter documents the operations, processes, and hierarchies that a ‘racket’ of this scale can involve. Like the DFS before it, the very operation of the PJF became reliant on the extortion of drug trafficking and contraband activity, underlining the extent to which the political economy of security under the PRI regime continued to be supported by contraband and drugs. A key difference, however, was that the new racket under the PJF lost its association with a national security agenda (an agenda rooted in the hegemony of the PRI regime and Cold War compromises) and began instead to gravitate closer to the agendas of a technocratic faction that changed the socio-economic landscape of the country to an extent not seen since the days of the Mexican Revolution.

Chapter five shifts from the ‘national’ to the ‘local’ by focusing on the recent evolution of ‘rackets’ in the state of Tamaulipas, a region that not only represents the most important criminal corridor in Mexican history but the area where the recent explosion in drug violence originated first. The history of criminal rackets in Tamaulipas mirrors the general ‘racketeering’ trajectory that constructed and deconstructed the Mexican state in the 20th century, going from protection rackets supporting *local* power (1920s to 1930s) to rackets in support of a centralization process (1940s to 1980s) to rackets captured by an emergent technocratic and

neoliberal elite (1980s and 1990s) to the decentralisation of the drug racket and its embeddedness in local politics and centrifugal dynamics. The last chapter of the thesis contributes to the discussion of violence in Mexico by documenting more thoroughly the transition from a relatively centralised to a relatively de-centralised scheme of political protection of transnational criminal activity. The collapse of the PRI racket led to a proliferation of ‘security apparatuses’ that, in addition to the drug economy, began to tap into whatever low-barrier economy was made available. This led to a swarm of preying, extortion, and violence that changed the face of Mexico. This swarm emerged first in Tamaulipas and was called *Los Zetas*.

After fifty years of relative centralisation under the PRI state, the means of violence in Mexico became disjointed, protracted, disordered. Criminal economies formerly supporting an articulate and coherent organisation of the means of violence began at this hour to support, instead, a growing pool of non-state security apparatuses. Reflecting in some ways the security dynamics involved in the liberalisation process in late 19th century Mexico, the recent neo-liberalisation of the country not only led to a proliferation of ‘banditry’ but expanded the importance of ‘bandits’ in the security processes of a society undergoing unprecedented structural change. Along with an enormous militarised effort aimed at containing the outburst of organised crime, the emerging (neo)liberal state had little choice but to co-opt and instrumentalise some of the banditry that it had generated to bring some sense of security into this new socioeconomic order. The need to generate a security apparatus through the co-option of some of this banditry helps make sense of the puzzle that García Luna and many others currently embody.

The challenges associated with addressing the ‘obscure’ question of state involvement in organised crime are evident. Looking into the ‘deep’, ‘grey’, ‘parallel’ spaces in which ‘exceptions’ to ‘legalise the illegal’ are possible is a challenging undertaking. In spite of these obstacles, documenting these processes and casting them as an integral part of the history of the modern state ought to be an important item in the research agenda not only to present a more realistic picture of the history of the capitalist state but because of the need to challenge these practices if we aspire to construct democratic, functional and equal societies. The aim

of the thesis has not been to single-out particular actors for their involvement in criminal economies but to make sense of their actions, the historical context in which their actions took place, and the extent to which they can be better explained by looking at their resemblance and connections with global experiences. The thesis sits at the intersection of comparative studies, historical sociology, and critical approaches to policing. It seeks to contribute to a growing body of literature that, as will be noted in Chapter One, casts ‘criminals’ and the ‘police’ as social actors contingent on the dynamics of structural transformation. It also aims at making better sense of how the history of state involvement in drug markets in Mexico reflects on the embeddedness of ‘police’ and ‘criminals’ driving violent conflict in contemporary Mexico. The thesis employs historical methods and draws in particular from primary sources. These sources include, especially, multiple historical archives in Mexico and the United States, as well as semi-structured, open-ended confidential interviews with (retired) federal police officers and DEA agents.

Archival material includes declassified intelligence memos, embassy cables, court records, government reports, and working papers produced by government agencies available at the National Security Archive (Washington D.C.), the National Archives and Records Administration (Maryland), the Charles Bowden Collection at the University of Texas (San Marcos) and the Archivo General de la Nación (Mexico City). Interviewees include two former high-ranking members of the PJF (who chose to remain anonymous), a former DEA field agent (Salvador Martinez), a former DEA director for National Intelligence (Phil Jordan), and the DEA agent tasked with the early investigation of Enrique Camarena’s murder (who chose to remain anonymous). The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured style, broadly following customised questionnaires but leaving ample room for the interlocutors to share their experiences. Contact with these actors was sometimes made through intermediaries in the Federal Police.

Chapter 1 - Theoretical discussion: the *bandit* in historical perspective

This chapter lays down the theoretical framework and anticipates the key ideas that guide the thesis. The aim of the chapter is to underline and make better sense of the often-overlooked role of *bandits* in the making of political modernity. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section, very briefly, invites the reader to consider ‘state-making’ at a very basic level. Employing a Tyllian framework, it argues that political power originates and matures as an extortion racket. The key attribute of this process is the generation of security; its plainest and crudest embodiment, an extorting criminal. State-making is a *process* continuously coinhabited by an economic actor (generating surplus) and its protector (a security apparatus). Building from this framework, the second section discusses banditry in historical praxis, in particular its role in the construction of political modernity. Drawing from the rich literature on social banditry introduced by Eric Hobsbawm, but more in particular from the revisionist literature advanced by Anton Blok, the section discusses the ancillary role of banditry in the consolidation of liberal states in the 18th and 19th centuries. The section shows how, paradoxically, bandits were often instrumental in the creation of the institution tasked with securing political modernity: the *police*. Finally, the third section shows how the instrumentalisation of banditry to advance the interests of states and empires extends to the contemporary world. The role of brigands and mercenaries in the 17th and 18th centuries anticipates the input of transnational drug markets in the security strategies of Cold War conflicts and the articulation of American global hegemony.

The bandit and the racketeering continuum

In his landmark essay, ‘War Making and State Making as Organized Crime’, Charles Tilly lays down a very useful and straightforward theory of how political structures develop. State-making results from the interaction and overlapping interests of two distinct social actors: economic actors and security agents. Economic actors need to secure their property. Security actors need to extract some surplus in order to make a living. The embeddedness of capital and security generates state-making, not as a historical end, but as a *process*. From ancestral gangs to fiefdom chiefs to medieval kings to constitutional governments, rulers extract levies

from economic agents, and they do so primarily to enhance their security capabilities. As Tilly notes, protection to farmers from predators, protection to shepherds from cattle-rustlers, protection to villagers from outside raiders, are examples of the austere dynamics that set the state-making process in motion. Successful ‘protection’ opens larger pools of taxable wealth that the security apparatus can tap into, hence expand³. Preying, banditry, piracy, gangland, policing, war-making are all forms of ‘extortion’ rackets whereby security actors sell or impose ‘security’. All belong to the same historical continuum and represent state-making as a fundamental, constantly updating social and historical process. Naturally, in the long term, the interests of economic agents must align with the interests of the security apparatus and vice-versa in order for the joint venture to be successful. The particulars of this alignment are, of course, contingent on many social and historical factors, but the fundamental dynamics of how power is built and rebuilt remain in place.

Power holders’ pursuit of war involved them willy-nilly in the extraction of resources for war making from the populations over which they had control and in the promotion of capital accumulation by those who could help them borrow and buy. War making, extraction, and capital accumulation interacted to shape European state making. [...] In the long run, the quest inevitably involved them in establishing regular access to capitalists who could supply and arrange credit and in imposing one form of regular taxation or another on the people and activities within their spheres of control⁴.

³ By security apparatus I refer to the internal and external security capabilities of states. Security is understood here in a literal sense, and thus ‘security apparatus’ refers to the bodies who protect rulers from internal and external threats, such as armies and the police. The term echoes Althusser’s “Repressive State Apparatus”, which includes the army, the police, the judiciary, and the prison system. Coercive capabilities are established on the ability to deploy violence, actual and latent. They are different from soft power, which is the ruling class’ ability to hold on to power by masking the exploited condition of the subaltern classes. See: Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)." *The anthropology of the state: A reader*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2006, pp. 86-98.

⁴ Tilly, Charles. "War making and state making as organized crime." *Bringing the state back in*, edited by Evans, Peter B., Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 169-191, p. 172.

From a similar perspective, Mancur Olson argues that early forms of state-making resulted less from *mobile* bandits (who came, plundered, and left) and more from *stationary* bandits (who rather than plundering and leaving, stayed on to prey). He reflects: “Why should warlords, who were *stationary bandits* continuously stealing from a given group of victims, be preferred, by those victims, to roving bandits who soon departed?”⁵. Olson suggests that, in contrast to itinerant and purely predatory theft, stationary bandits were bound to establish a more ‘rational’ form of protection racket, temper their predatory instincts, and offer at least one service to economic agents: protection from other predators. As Olson notes, “[w]ith the rational monopolization of theft - in contrast to uncoordinated competitive theft - the victims of the theft can expect to retain whatever capital they accumulate after tax [and] and therefore also have an incentive to save and to invest, thereby increasing future income and tax receipts”⁶.

The birth of the economy is thus contingent on the demand for ‘protection’, setting in motion the social dynamics that we associate with the category of the state. The transition from hunter-gathering to agricultural societies not only generated the first form of capital in need of protection but also the first form of surplus capable of supporting a structure of protection. Archaeologists have noted that the Neolithic revolution altered the edifice of politics in a fundamental sense: it transformed a society organised largely along communal lines and consensual politics into a more hierarchical and stratified social organisation where power began to concentrate in a handful few⁷. The demand and the possibility of protection generated the pivotal transition leading from the horizontal politics of *bon sauvage* to the hierarchical politics of Leviathan.

⁵ Olson, Mancur. "Dictatorship, democracy, and development." *American political science review*, vol. 87, no. 3, 1993, pp. 567-576, p. 568.

⁶ Idem, p. 568.

⁷ Earle, Timothy. *Bronze Age Economics: the first political economies*. Routledge, 2018; Earle, Timothy, and Kristian Kristiansen, eds. *Organizing Bronze Age Societies: The Mediterranean, Central Europe, and Scandinavia Compared*. Cambridge University Press, 2010. See also: Gilman, Antonio, et al. "The development of social stratification in Bronze Age Europe [and comments and reply]." *Current anthropology*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1981, pp. 1-23; Bar-Yosef, Ofer. "The Natufian culture in the Levant, threshold to the origins of agriculture." *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews*, vol. 6, no. 5, 1998, pp. 159-177.

Developing and supporting security capabilities became the pressing concern for those invested in providing it. In Europe, chiefs, kings, and emperors until the 18th century invested almost their entire income in expanding their capabilities to deploy violence. As Olson notes, “[t]hrough the pyramids, the palace of Versailles, the Taj Mahal, and even Imelda Marcos’ three thousand pairs of shoes were expensive, the social costs of autocratic leaders arise mostly out of their appetites for military power, international prestige, and larger domains”⁸. Levies collected by emerging polities were invested to a large extent in raising armies, paying for mercenaries, and running state armouries. Reflecting the austerity of the feudal economy, the low availability of capital until the 18th century made it very difficult for states to support professionalised and permanent military structures. Despite investing the lion’s share of state revenue in security, permanent security bureaucracies were inexistent in Europe until the 18th and 19th centuries⁹. War-making was mobilised by looting and the promise of rewards, rather than the meagre salaries or wages disbursed by rulers. This transient form of security apparatus corresponded with a political structure composed less of a centralised authority concentrating revenue powers and more of intermediaries and local power holders collecting levies from peasants and ruling fiefdoms as personal turfs. No European state made a serious attempt to institute direct rule until the French Revolution¹⁰.

This began to change, of course, when the underlying economic base began to expand. In Europe, this initially took place with the emergence of European burghs around the time of the Renaissance, which concentrated (geographically) the taxable wealth that rulers could tap into and reduced the transaction costs associated with tax collection¹¹. Larger extractions, ultimately spent in security and defence, allowed for the permanency and gradual professionalisation of armies. As Tilly points out, “After 1400, the European pursuit of larger, more

⁸ Olson, Mancur. "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development." *American Political Science Review*, vol. 87, no. 3, 1993, pp. 567-576, p. 569.

⁹ Tilly, Charles. "Cities and states in Europe, 1000–1800." *Theory and Society*, vol. 18, no. 5, 1989, pp. 563-584; also: Tilly, Charles. "Armed Force, Regimes, and Contention in Europe since 1650." *Irregular Armed Forces and Their Role in Politics and State Formation*, edited by Diane E. Davis and Anthony W. Pereira, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 37-81.

¹⁰ Tilly, Charles. *Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990-1992*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

¹¹ Levi, Margaret. *Of rule and revenue*. University of California Press, 1989.

permanent, and costlier varieties of military organisation did, in fact, drive spectacular increases in princely budgets, taxes, and staffs. After 1500 or so, princes who managed to create the costly varieties of military organisation were, indeed, able to conquer new chunks of territory”¹². Even more importantly, the availability of taxable capital expanded further with the advent of the bourgeoisie and liberalised forms of economic production in the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as the concomitant establishment of parliamentary institutions increasing the “discount rates” of tax collection¹³. The availability of larger pools of wealth in a number of (northern) European states enabled mounting ambitions of rulers, particularly abroad. This translated into technological innovations, permanent armies, navies, foreign conquest, and the laying down of commercial empires in partnership with capitalists and financiers. From early ‘stationary’ bandits to successful empires, the dynamics supporting political structures rested always in protecting and promoting the interests of capital.

Internally, political modernisation meant not only the gradual removal of feudal intermediaries and the centralisation of government functions (in particular, taxation) but the undertaking of more ‘managerial’ commitments in population control after the 18th century. Proletarianisation in the countryside, then in the cities, tended to respond to state policies, including fiscal policy, which sought to rationalise economic production and increase taxable wealth¹⁴. The making of capitalist societies shifted the orientation of ‘security’ from a predominantly ‘external’ to a predominantly ‘internal’ bearing, invested now in a colonisation process aimed at modelling populations to fit capitalist needs. The institution tasked with generating this capitalist order was, first and foremost, the police. As Mark Neocleous points out, early police bodies were not only concerned with law enforcement but played a pivotal role in the administrative regulation of bourgeois society. “While it is true that early police measures were designed to prevent disorder, violence, and crime, their primary function would seem to be the reformation, by juridical means, of relations of authority and service which had been previously ensured by the customary bonds of the serf to his manor and the laborer to his

¹² Tilly, Charles. "War making and state making as organized crime." *Collective Violence, Contentious Politics, and Social Change*, edited by Ernesto Castañeda and Cathy Lisa Schneider, Routledge, 2017, pp. 123-139, p. 131.

¹³ Levi, Margaret. *Of rule and revenue*. University of California Press, 1989.

¹⁴ Tilly, Charles. "States, Taxes and Proletarians." *CRSO Working Paper no. 213*, University of Michigan, 1980.

master.”¹⁵ The creation of policing bodies was, similarly, aimed at consolidating the broader political geographies enshrined by national states. The police oversaw the transition from premodern modes of production taking place in decentralised polities to a world of enclosures, wage labour, and generalised alienation where power began to concentrate in a bourgeois elite. For Tilly, European governments reduced their reliance on indirect rule by means of two expensive but effective strategies: (a) extending their officialdom to the local community and (b) encouraging the creation of police forces that were subordinate to the government rather than to individual patrons¹⁶. Cyril D. Robinson and Richard Scaglione argue along similar lines and locate the advent of modern policing in the context of an emerging capitalist system and the simultaneous rise of liberal states. To them, the origin of a specialised police function was a necessary development to create dominant and subordinate classes, to restrict class access to basic resources, and to transform ‘policing’ from an activity embedded in communities to a dislodged instrument in the hands of an emerging dominant class¹⁷. From these perspectives, the police generates, through various means, the hierarchical order conducive to capitalist accumulation.

The genesis and evolution of the police is thus closely associated with the creation of a liberal world defined by the paramountcy and universality of the law¹⁸. And yet, rather than the embodiment of the ‘rule of law’, the genesis and evolution of the security apparatus tasked with consolidating the capitalist order rested on the shoulders, paradoxically, of incorporated bandits and criminals. As noted in the following section, generating a police force involved (and continues to involve in many cases) a constant violation of the legal order and the selective enablement of ‘crime’ to generate the very economies that support ‘policing’. Reflexively thought of as the antagonist of criminality, the genesis and evolution of the police relied,

¹⁵ Neocleous, Mark. *The fabrication of social order: A critical theory of police power*. Pluto Press, 2000.

¹⁶ Tilly, Charles. "War making and state making as organized crime." *Collective Violence, Contentious Politics, and Social Change*, edited by Ernesto Castañeda and Cathy Lisa Schneider, Routledge, 2017, pp. 123-139.

¹⁷ Robinson, Cyril D., and Richard Scaglione. "The origin and evolution of the police function in society: Notes toward a theory." *Law and Society Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1987, pp. 109-153.

¹⁸ Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Civil Government*. Ch. IV, sec. 22, 1690.

instead, on a more updated form of Tilly's 'racketeering' continuum: a police racket. As noted by Kristian Williams, the history of American policing

...gives concrete expression to Tilly's theoretical claim. [...] [G]overnment agencies and organized criminal enterprises were not only moral equivalents, they often comprised *the same people*. Nineteenth-century policing did not just resemble racketeering, it was unmistakable gangsterism. The police were a central component of this system. Both the protection schemes that ensured the cooperation of the underworld and the brawling gangs that controlled the polls on election day relied on—at the very least—the acquiescence of the police. In many respects the development of the political machines depended upon the simultaneous development of the modern police¹⁹.

What defines the police is not its attachment to the rule of law but its ability to operate above it in order to accomplish its true *raison d'être*: to police, through preventive and proactive mechanisms, the populations alienated by economic modernity. The extortion mechanisms that enabled the birth and evolution of policing belong to a racketeering continuum going back to the common agenda of early protectors and primordial forms of capital. Extortion, now and then, translates into a particular form of security and order. Echoing the ancillary importance of preying and looting in the construction of early and externally oriented security apparatuses in precapitalist societies, bandits and criminals were also ancillary in the creation and historical evolution of the policing bodies tasked with shaping society in accordance with capitalist needs.

¹⁹ Williams, Kristian. *Our enemies in blue: Police and power in America*. AK Press, 2015, p. 63 (E-book).

Banditry, policing, and liberal states

What king or country has not had sense enough to attempt to turn bandits into policemen? To let the lawless, enforce the law? [...] Bourbon kings [...] pardoned bandits and inducted them into royal service. Russian tsars and lords gave the Cossacks land and privileges for police protection. The Khonds of India's Bengal area, displaced by British capitalism, plundered openly and in good conscience until many turned to law enforcement for the imperialists. [...] Former outlaws figured among the best lawmen who brought order to the American west.²⁰

The paradoxical input of banditry into the early policing apparatuses of emerging capitalist states is a recurrent theme in 'bandit' historiography. This was a period in global history where the direction of 'security' shifted its predominantly 'external' orientation towards a predominantly 'internal' adversary (the proletarian class). Any attempt by the emerging dominant classes to secure a capitalist order had to reckon with 'pacifying' two unwanted by-products of the social alienation generated by it: angry social protest and the generalisation of delinquency. Liberal elites had little choice but to instrumentalise some of this delinquency in order to establish a security apparatus in support of their ascendancy. From this perspective, bandits co-opted by the new ruling classes can be regarded as the seminal reactionary body deployed to push back on the social antagonisms generated by capitalist alienation. Formally or informally incorporated into the security apparatuses of emerging capitalist states, the bandit was often its seminal policing apparatus.

Emergent 'liberal' states can be said to have embodied historical processes whereby bourgeois interests began to exhibit growing capabilities to shape social and economic relations

²⁰ Vanderwood, Paul J. *Disorder and progress: Bandits, police, and Mexican development*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1992, p. 53.

in expansive (national) geographies and in accordance with capitalist requirements. The transition from ‘traditional’ (manorial, feudal, patrimonial) to capitalist economies involved multiple and incomplete routes contingent on local conditions and timetables²¹, but a more ‘global’ expansion of liberal and national statehood took root in particular in the 18th and 19th centuries. This was a time when emergent liberal elites became invested in ‘national’ projects of internal colonisation. Like the emergence of capitalism more generally, the empowerment of these new elites was supported by a process of ‘primitive accumulation’ enabled, in particular, by the capitalisation of rural landscapes²². Marking the end of the ‘moral’ economies of manorial and feudal periods²³, primitive accumulation involved often (but not exclusively) the creation of free labourers and the enclosure of communal lands²⁴. According to Hobsbawm, the political elites emerging from the capitalisation of agriculture constituted “no more than the forces of profit-pursuing private enterprise” seeking “to turn land into a commodity” and “to pass this land into the ownership of a class of men impelled by reason”²⁵. Large-scale land dispossession preceded capitalism, but new elements in the late 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries (first in Northern Europe, then in Southern Europe, Latin America, India, and Asia) were making it possible to shape the rural economy in accordance with rational-legal principles. These capabilities included, according to Marx, a more methodical reliance on legal frameworks that ‘legitimised’ dispossession, as well as a systematic deployment of new techniques of survey, representation, and land apportionment²⁶. Turning the

²¹ A good overview on the transition from feudalism to capitalism, involving in particular Marxist approaches, is Blackledge, Paul. *Reflections on the Marxist theory of history*. Manchester University Press, 2013. See also: Katz, Claudio J. "Karl Marx on the transition from feudalism to capitalism." *Theory and Society*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1993, pp. 363-389.

²² See, for example: Blok, Anton. "The peasant and the brigand: social banditry reconsidered." *Comparative studies in Society and History*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1972, pp. 494-503; Vanderwood, Paul J. *Disorder and progress: Bandits, police, and Mexican development*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1992; Gallant, Thomas W. "Brigandage, piracy, capitalism, and state-formation: transnational crime from a historical world-systems perspective." *States and illegal practices*, edited by Josiah McC. Heyman, Hart Publishing, 1999, pp. 25-62.

²³ Scott, James C. *The moral economy of the peasant: Rebellion and subsistence in Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press, 1977.

²⁴ Looking at the acceleration of capitalist relations under (neo)liberalism, recent critical interpretations recast the concept of ‘primitive accumulation’ as a continuous phenomenon contingent to the reproduction of capital rather than an ‘original’ historical moment. See, for example: Glassman, Jim. "Primitive accumulation, accumulation by dispossession, accumulation by ‘extra-economic’ means." *Progress in human geography*, vol. 30, no. 5, 2006, pp. 608-625. Also: Hall, Derek. "Primitive accumulation, accumulation by dispossession and the global land grab." *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 9, 2013, pp. 1582-1604.

²⁵ Hobsbawm, Eric. 1962. *The age of revolution. Europe 1789–1848*. London: Abacus, p. 184.

²⁶ Cited in: Alden Wily, Liz. "Looking back to see forward: the legal niceties of land theft in land rushes." *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 39, no. 3-4, 2012, pp. 751-775.

manorial serf into a wage labourer shifted economic production from direct use to the market economy. Similarly, the creation of ‘exchange value’ began to transform the attitudes of producers²⁷. Towns re-emerged and acted as magnets for the peasant’s ‘flight’ from the land²⁸, a process that further encouraged the fiscal and political centralisation ancillary to the emergence of modern, national states²⁹.

Nurtured by these structural processes, the emergence of ‘liberal’ or ‘capitalist’ states is thus understood as a complex, highly contingent but relatively universal process in which political agency, inspired by bourgeois doctrine, became concerned with breaking the ‘irrational’ fetters to capitalist accumulation, first in the countryside, then in the cities. Structural transformations in the 18th and 19th centuries weakened the grip of dominant classes whose power had been established on the very ‘obstacles’ to economic efficiency targeted by liberal policies, opening channels for emerging liberal groups to take control of the political process and shape the sociolegal order in accordance with bourgeois interests. Departing from the notorious ‘parcellated’ form of sovereignty characterising manorial and other pre-modern political economies (where surplus was not extracted by the state but by landowners), the progressive capitalisation of economic relations allowed for the consolidation of the increasingly extended geographies of power (and taxation) associated with the nation-state. As Elden notes, states at this hour “became consolidated as territorial agencies fostering a new rationale of abstraction and calculation, contributing to intensified land commodification, and diluting [land’s] traditional cultural significance”³⁰. The emergence of ‘modern’ or ‘liberal’ states thus involved a process of ‘internal colonisation’ mobilised, in particular, to generate proletarianisation³¹. Ancillary to the rise of the ‘liberal’ state, economic liberalisation is understood

²⁷ Sweezy, Paul M., and Maurice Dobb. "The transition from feudalism to capitalism." *Science & Society*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1950, pp. 134-167.

²⁸ Idem.

²⁹ Tilly, Charles. "States, Taxes and Proletarians." *CRSO Working Paper no. 213*, University of Michigan, 1980.

³⁰ Elden, Stuart. "Governmentality, calculation, territory." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2007, pp. 562–580, cited in: Sevilla-Buitrago, Alvaro. "Capitalist formations of enclosure: Space and the extinction of the commons." *Antipode*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2015, pp. 999-1020.

³¹ Tilly, Charles. "States, Taxes and Proletarians." *CRSO Working Paper no. 213*, University of Michigan, 1980.

here as a process whereby socio-economic relations are adapted to ‘rational-legal’ frameworks conducive to more efficient and exploitative schemes to accumulate capital³².

Importantly, the extent to which ‘liberalisation’, generally speaking, is contingent on mass dispossession makes ‘security’ and ‘pacification’ key ingredients in the successful implementation of this process. Marx argues that ‘security’, not ‘liberty’, is the supreme concept of bourgeois society “because of the need to manage the contradictions of a capitalism being constantly restructured according to the shifting levels of class confidence expressed by the ruling class”³³. Deploying “security as liberty”, Mark Neocleous notes, underpins the exercises of liberal power. Liberalism’s various formulations concerning, for example, ‘individual liberty’, ‘freedom of expression’, ‘free market’, ‘freedom of contract’, and so on, “all seem to articulate a vision of society with a large degree of insecurity”³⁴. The security apparatus created to ‘secure the insecurity’ implicated in the consolidation of liberal political economies is, as noted above, the police — an institution whose genesis not only takes place amidst the ‘liberalisation’ of economic relations but is often instrumental to deepen and extend the internal colonisation process that configured national-liberal states. But whereas the creation of police forces has been noted as a pivotal mechanism allowing for the emergence of liberal orders, the crucial but paradoxical role of bandits in generating this capacity has gone, in contrast, mostly ignored.

Central to discussions about the history of banditry and the liberal state are the following questions: To what extent is the bandit an enabler, rather than an antagonist, of the structural processes that constituted political modernity? To what extent can the bandit generate a centripetal, rather than centrifugal pull? To what extent did bandits facilitate the consolidation of liberal polities in the 18th and 19th centuries, and in what ways do co-opted bandits continue to generate statehood today? These questions seem relevant if we consider that bandits in

³² Critical approaches have noted the dialectical relationship between ‘communing’ and ‘enclosure’ in contemporary (neo)liberalism. See, in for example, Alden Wily, Liz. “Looking back to see forward: the legal niceties of land theft in land rushes.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 39, no. 3-4, 2012, pp. 751-775; Harvey, David. “Neo-Liberalism as creative destruction.” *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, vol. 88, no. 2, 2006, pp. 145-158; De Angelis, Massimo. *The Beginning of History: Value Struggles and Global Capital*. London: Pluto Press, 2007.

³³ Neocleous, Mark. *Critique of Security*. Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

³⁴ *Idem*.

the literature were originally cast as ‘social rebels’ pushing back on capitalist transformation and national statehood³⁵. Building on the revolutionary work of Anton Blok on *Cosa Nostra*, revisionist studies began to challenge the idea of bandits as champions of the people, noting instead that, in the long run, the success of the bandit was predicated on its attachment to political power³⁶. Rather than being enemies of the landed elites (as is often romantically portrayed) bandits tended more often to operate under their protection.

In the transformative rural geographies of the 19th century, “banditry was not a deliberate, individual choice, a release from boredom or excitement”, but the result “of an existence compelled by circumstances”³⁷. As Alan Knight notes, bandits most often had banditry thrust upon them³⁸. The abolishment of communal property and the commercialisation of agriculture set redundant rural masses into circulation. Thomas Gallant notes how “[i]n peripheral areas, capital accumulation occurred in the form of large landed estates that were usually created through the extirpation of small, subsistence-oriented peasant forms of agriculture and their replacement by more commercialized agrarian regimes”³⁹. Demobilised peasants often had little option but to join brigand gangs to live off theft, kidnapping, and extortion. As Gallant points out, “[w]herever this transformation occurred, be it in southern Europe,

³⁵ Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Primitive rebels: Studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries*. Manchester University Press, 1971.

³⁶ Notable examples include: Antony, Robert J. "Peasants, heroes, and brigands: The problems of social banditry in early nineteenth-century South China." *Modern China*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1989, pp. 123-148; Brown, Nathan. "Brigands and state building: The invention of banditry in modern Egypt." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1990, pp. 258-281; Gallant, Thomas W. "Brigandage, Piracy, Capitalism, and State-Formation: Transnational Crime from a Historical World-Systems Perspective." *States and Illegal Practices*, edited by Josiah McC. Heyman, Hart Publishing, 1999, pp. 25-62; Davis, Diane E., and Anthony W. Pereira, eds. *Irregular armed forces and their role in politics and state formation*. Cambridge University Press, 2003; Vanderwood, Paul J. *Disorder and progress: Bandits, police, and Mexican development*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1992; Singelmann, Peter. "Political structure and social banditry in Northeast Brazil." *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1975, pp. 59-83; Barkey, Karen. *Bandits and bureaucrats: The Ottoman route to state centralization*. Cornell University Press, 1994; Gingeras, Ryan. *Heroin, organized crime, and the making of modern Turkey*, Oxford University Press, 2014; Blok, Anton. "The peasant and the brigand: social banditry reconsidered." *Comparative studies in Society and History*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1972, pp. 494-503.

³⁷ Knight, Alan. *The Mexican Revolution. Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants, and Volume 2: Counter-revolution and Reconstruction*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986, p. 123.

³⁸ *Idem*.

³⁹ Gallant, Thomas W. "Brigandage, Piracy, Capitalism, and State-Formation: Transnational Crime from a Historical World-Systems Perspective" *States and Illegal Practices*, edited by Josiah McC. Heyman, Hart Publishing, 1999, pp. 25-62, p. 30.

India, Latin America or Asia, banditry developed”⁴⁰. Securing property in this chaotic transition became a private obligation. It was from amongst the “disgruntled and displaced young men” that the new landowners and estate managers recruited private armed bands to discipline an alienated labour force and secure capitalist property⁴¹. These new guards continued to selectively rob, kidnap, and extort as a way of living despite their formal or informal incorporation as ‘policing’ bodies. Their ability to do so was firmly established on their attachment to the ruling classes and the liberal state.

[Banditry] in rural India during the 19th century, for example, was closely connected to the advent of agricultural commercialization and the practice by holders of zamindari estates of hiring armed guards. In Egypt as well, “notables also tried to stay on the good side of bandits in order to avoid being their targets”. The pattern holds for other parts of Africa. In the Huaibei region of north China (...) large farm owners hired gangs of armed men to guard their fields during the harvest, and these were the same men who were often bandits. (...) From this brief global survey, it appears that there were very strong structural and causal linkages between certain key aspects of economic peripheralization relating specifically to capital accumulation and labour extraction that created constraints, pressures, and opportunities for the formation of military entrepreneurs⁴².

Eric Hobsbawm points to two conditions that encourage the emergence of banditry. First, in terms of timing, banditry is epidemic amidst the pauperisation and economic crisis that frames the end of a relatively “long” cycle of history⁴³. Thus, banditry is - not surprisingly –

⁴⁰ Idem, p. 30.

⁴¹ Idem, p. 30.

⁴² Idem, p. 31.

⁴³ Hobsbawm, Eric. *Bandits*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010, p. 22.

particularly relevant in the key transitions to capitalist economies. Second, in terms of location, banditry is much more common in peripheral or ‘backward’ regions where state rule is weak⁴⁴. During these periods, and in these regions, the more organised types of banditry are often co-opted by the ruling classes as a mechanism to create a state of security. Bandits develop close ties with capital, preying on their own class to enable the power of those protecting them. As Marx harshly noted:

The “dangerous class”, [lumpen-proletariat] the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue⁴⁵.

After Hobsbawm, the topic of banditry attracted a large number of historical studies. These studies focused on a historical period orbiting the 18th and 19th centuries framed often by the birth of the liberal nation-state. Anton Blok’s landmark studies of the Sicilian mafia tilled the field for further demonstrations of the proximity between rulers and bandits. As a strategy of rule organised banditry was understood as what can be described as state-supported paramilitary or parapolice activity. The distinction of banditry, of course, rests on the methods it employs to support itself as an appendant ‘security apparatus’: racketeering, extortion, theft, kidnapping, and other ‘outlaw’ economies. What gives the bandit economy its distinctive mark is that it ‘creates’ its own economy by drawing from the increasingly pertinent distinction of legal and illegal in the modern world. The key importance of criminal economies is that they represent relatively easy-to-access sources of income that can quickly generate vo-

⁴⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵ Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The communist manifesto*. Penguin, 2002.

luminous profits for violent entrepreneurs. Criminal economies constitute what Snyder describes as low-barrier commodities that ‘rulers’ can control with relative ease in austere contexts⁴⁶.

Banditry in historical praxis

States and bandits are often thought of as opposite figures — perhaps because the liberal justification for the state is the war against the ‘bestly’ impulses embodied by the criminal. According to unempathetic liberal accounts (Locke), the criminal is an individual who, “by renouncing reason [and] succumbing to the impulses of savage beasts [...] preys on the civil order”⁴⁷. However, overlooked by Locke and other liberal thinkers, the criminal is a key enabler and angular stone of this ‘civil order’. A good example of the role of incorporated banditry in the consolidation of liberal polities in the 18th and 19th centuries is, of course, Mexico. Banditry thrived in the anarchic conditions that followed the collapse of Spanish rule and the progressive capitalisation of Mexican agriculture in the mid-19th century. In 1810, the revolution of independence resulted, crucially, from the increasingly capitalist orientation of the rural region where mass revolts first erupted: the Bajío⁴⁸. From the time of independence (1821) to the liberal dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz (1875), Mexico suffered 800 revolts, focused most particularly on land tenure⁴⁹. As Berry has noted, the beneficiaries of land liberalisation in the second half of the 20th century were mostly liberal elites in a position to purchase the disincorporated lands at bargain prices⁵⁰. These structural transformations drove indigenous peoples and alienated peasants to fill up the sad ranks of the *haciendas* or, alternatively, join a bandit gang.

To contain the generalisation of banditry and the social antagonisms triggered by economic liberalisation, the liberal government had little option but to incorporate bandits as its pivotal

⁴⁶ Snyder, Richard, and Ravi Bhavnani. "Diamonds, blood, and taxes: A revenue-centered framework for explaining political order." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2005, pp. 563-597.

⁴⁷ Cited in Neocleous, Mark. *War Power, Police Power*. Edinburgh University Press, 2014, p. 25.

⁴⁸ Katz, Friedrich. *Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution: Rural Social Conflict in México*. Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 547.

⁴⁹ Idem.

⁵⁰ Berry, Charles Redmon. *The reform in Oaxaca, 1856-76: a microhistory of the liberal revolution*. University of Nebraska Press, 1981.

security apparatus. First, the federal government encouraged local governments to form regional policing bodies to protect landowner interests. These ‘policing’ bodies were, as Paul Vanderwood notes, almost indistinguishable from the bandits they were called to repress⁵¹. Then, in 1861, brigand groups were incorporated by the liberal government to form the country’s first national policing body, *Los Rurales*. This policing body was to become the main vehicle to pacify and repress the social antagonisms generated by the emergence of the agro-industrial and industrial classes. As late as 1872, newspapers continued to report how *Los Rurales* were involved in ‘selective’ banditry, robbing, and abuse⁵². As Vanderwood notes,

Pacification required assimilation of the bandits into a police force, so brigands like Abraham Plata were amnestied into service as corps commanders. Not only did the practice help to ensure a semblance of public order, it also removed, or at least eroded, a major obstacle to political centralization and national integration. [...] Well-known brigands, along with any number of suspect characters, became rural policemen, but many of them also kept a hand in banditry, and as a result order and disorder developed still another blend⁵³.

The role of banditry in capitalist transformation and national statehood is also notable in the construction of modernity in Brazil, in particular, the input of *cangaceiros* and *capangas* (bandit gangs)⁵⁴. Brazil had been organised, since colonial times, in massive estates. Estate owners under Portuguese rule formed, by right, security brigades for internal policing, recruiting in particular from fugitive outlaws whose freedom became fully dependent on their hiring patron. Conflict between estate-owners was common, and they often made use of these *capangas* and *cangaceiros* to fight one another. When Brazil became an independent empire

⁵¹ Vanderwood, Paul J. *Disorder and progress: Bandits, police, and Mexican development*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1992.

⁵² Idem.

⁵³ Idem, pp. 51, 54.

⁵⁴ Singelmann, Peter. "Political structure and social banditry in Northeast Brazil." *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1975, pp. 59-83.

(1822), the domain of the central government extended to the regions via imperially appointed regional commanders of the National Guard which served as regional strongmen, or *coroneis*, in what constituted a period known as *coronelismo*. As Singelmann notes, *coroneis* recruited bandits to police their terrains and harass political opponents: “The cleverest *cangaceiros* managed to fit themselves into this political milieu by simply allying themselves strategically and robbing selectively, supported by widespread sympathy and admiration in the population for their apparent attacks on the rich and generosity toward the poor”⁵⁵. Opposing the idea of ‘social banditry’, Singelmann shows that becoming a *cangaceiro* was not a reaction against, but an adaptation to the new political structures of late 19th century Brazil. He writes: “Once in the *cangaço*, bandits often managed to switch back to the side of the law by finding the right employer, while others were unable to make the change, but continued their association with politicians willing to hire them”⁵⁶. A prominent example of a *cangaceiro* was the legendary Antonio Silvino. Despite his popular image as Brazil’s ‘Robin Hood’ of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Silvino operated with the support of the military, the police, the church, and the state government. As noted by Lewin, “Silvino's incredibly prolonged survival as a *cangaceiro* is explained by the fact that his most reliable protection derived consistently from his connections with the powerful rather than with the humble in rural society. And those connections defined him more as a landlords' bandit than a people's bandit”⁵⁷. Singelmann notes how *cangaceiros* were no ‘romantic bandits’ or representatives of a class struggle: they instead were hired killers for the powerful, “willing to take up arms against true revolutionary movements such as the *Coluna Prestes*”⁵⁸. The use of *cangaceiros* and *capangas* throughout the 19th century in Brazil, and its importance in the violent politics of *coronelismo*, underlines the importance that organised banditry often had in transitions to more rationalised agricultural economies in contexts with a weak political centre.

⁵⁵ Idem, p. 72.

⁵⁶ Idem, p. 81.

⁵⁷ Lewin, Linda. "The oligarchical implications of social banditry in Brazil: The case of the 'good' thief Antonio Silvino." *Past and Present*, vol. 82, February 1979, pp. 116-146, p. 128.

⁵⁸ Singelmann, Peter. "Political structure and social banditry in Northeast Brazil." *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1975, pp. 59-83, p. 81.

A more recent example of the instrumentalisation of banditry to consolidate national governance is Turkey. The transition from a patrimonial polity (the Ottoman Empire) to a liberal state (the Turkish Republic) in the early 20th century developed in a context of generalised chaos, centrifugal pull, and widespread lawlessness and banditry. Bandit gangs, or *çetes*, involved in contraband and extortion, were regularly co-opted as paramilitary bodies to rearticulate national sovereignty amidst Ottoman collapse. The co-optation of *çetes* served multiple purposes aimed, particularly, at developing state capacity and centralising political power. For example,

[t]he newly demarcated territorial boundary between Greece and Turkey needed to be guarded. And who better than the local bad men? But as before, they preyed on cross-border traffic. Moreover, since the border guards were drawn from the same class of military entrepreneurs, they would venture on bandit raids across the border. When they did this, they often had the unacknowledged approval of their government⁵⁹.

As Ryan Gingeras has noted, *çetes* were used by the leaders of the young Turkish Republic in the early decades of the 20th century to conduct irregular warfare against separatist groups of Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians⁶⁰. The leaders of the republic recruited and utilised gangs as effective and brutal instruments in what were often genocidal wars against separatist forces threatening the integrity and hegemony of the Turkish state. Importantly, bands of *çetes* employed as proxies during the early years of the Turkish Republic were coordinated by the national security agency, the Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa, or Special Organization. The instrumentalisation of *çetes* by the nascent security services is significant in that it points to the institution that, in the 20th century, takes charge of ‘managing’ bandit economies to support

⁵⁹ Gallant, Thomas W. "Brigandage, Piracy, Capitalism, and State-Formation: Transnational Crime from a Historical World-Systems Perspective" *States and Illegal Practices*, edited by Josiah McC. Heyman, Hart Publishing, 1999, pp. 25-62, p. 47.

⁶⁰ Gingeras, Ryan. *Heroin, organized crime, and the making of modern Turkey*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

parapolitical activity: the national security apparatus. As Gingeras notes, “[t]he Special Organization served an important purpose in bringing together various parties interested in or committed to the empire’s preservation. [...] *Çetes* provided the muscle to do this cabal’s dirty work”⁶¹. Early collaboration between *çetes* and the Turkish security services supported the surveillance of Armenian propagandists, supporters of the banished Ottoman monarchy, individuals charged with treason, communists, revolutionaries, foreigners, and Kurds. The Turkish national security service (which grew out of the Special Organization) would in the 1950s and 1960s become entangled with the new ‘key’ commodity in global illicit markets: heroin. The individuals considered the ‘first godfathers’ of the so-called Turkish mafia (Dündar Kilic, Abuzer Ugurlu, Bechet Canturk, and Abdullah Catli) would gain equal notoriety as clandestine agents and provocateurs allied with the more reactionary circles of the Turkish establishment⁶². These gangsters became in the 1970s “the instrument of a robust and paranoid government apparatus committed to the preservation of the state at all costs”⁶³. The use of *çetes* by the Turkish state to consolidate territorial integrity (following Ottoman collapse), as well as the proximity that it subsequently developed with the heroin trade, is interesting in that it shows the continuing importance and evolution of co-opted banditry in a single ‘national’ trajectory. The proximity between drug economies and security services in Turkey echoes to some extent the Mexican experience described in subsequent chapters. In both cases, the point to be underlined is that bandit and criminal economies serve, often, a much larger purpose than themselves and their most immediate operators and enablers.

The most studied case of banditry and its relationship with the emergence of the liberal regime is Cosa Nostra. From its instrumental role in the liberalisation of agriculture in mezzogiorno Sicily to its role in the security dynamics that led to the collapse of the First Italian Republic in 1992, Cosa Nostra (like the Turkish case) is an illustrative example of the enduring role that co-opted outlaw economies can play at different historical stages and under

⁶¹ Idem, p. 41.

⁶² Idem.

⁶³ Idem, p. 217.

changing internal and external political conditions. Akin to other examples of organised banditry, the emergence of Cosa Nostra took place in a context marked by the collapse of baronial and communal property in the mid-19th century and the concomitant need to secure the property consolidated by liberalisation. In a context of growing insecurity and chaos, safeguarding new forms of property became a private responsibility. Securing these new estates was a service provided by gangs of armed men commanded by a *gabellotto*, or foreman, in charge of managing the new properties of absentee wealthy capitalist landowners based in Palermo⁶⁴. The gabellotto offered his services to multiple landowners, orchard exporters, and sulfur mines proprietors⁶⁵, becoming increasingly specialised in what Gambetta calls ‘the business of private protection’⁶⁶. He also became adept in the provision of services like recovering stolen property, mediating feuds between peasants, and gathering votes for Sicilian notables. This led to the gradual ‘usurpation’ by the gabellotto of functions associated with ‘state’: targeting other bandits, administering justice, settling disputes, dispensing patronage⁶⁷. As Renda has noted, the national politicians of the newly unified Italian state opted to govern Sicily *through* rather than *against* extortionist groups in part because they proved capable of regulating banditry⁶⁸.

By the end of the 19th century, these men of violence became increasingly organised in secret fraternities in which a common framework for the extra-legal regulation of violence slowly developed: this new institution was called the mafia, or Cosa Nostra. The emergent Cosa Nostra divided rackets into territorial turfs in which a *cosca* (family) held a monopoly over the regulation of illegal activities (such as extorting the *pizzo* [extortion fee] from local business). Money generated by the ‘families’ was invested, in particular, in expanding their capabilities to generate violence⁶⁹. Governing bodies such as the Commission of Palermo, or the dominance of a particular faction (for example, the Corleonesi in the 1970s) would at

⁶⁴ Blok, Anton. "Reflections on the Sicilian mafia: peripheries and their impact on centres." *Organized crime: culture, markets and policies*, edited by Dina Siegel and Hans Nelen, Springer, 2008.

⁶⁵ Graziano, Luigi. "Patron-client relationships in Southern Italy." *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1973, pp. 3-34.

⁶⁶ Gambetta, Diego. *The Sicilian Mafia: the business of private protection*. Harvard University Press, 1996.

⁶⁷ Stille, Alexander. *Excellent cadavers: the Mafia and the death of the first Italian republic*. Vintage, 1996.

⁶⁸ Renda, Francesco. *Storia della mafia*. Sigma, 1998.

⁶⁹ Falcone, Giovanni, and Marcelle Padovani. *Men of honour: The truth about the mafia*. Fourth Estate, 1992.

times make of the Cosa Nostra an articulate and relatively vertical organisation, while at others, conflict would make it anything but a unitary society. As Paoli has noted, the degree of centralisation and cohesiveness in Cosa Nostra was historically fluid⁷⁰.

By the end of the 19th century, the services provided by Cosa Nostra to the emerging Sicilian elite were not restricted to securing their property but began to exhibit a more proactive form of ‘policing’ attached to nascent capitalist interests. As Acemoglu, De Feo, and De Luca have documented, the empowerment of Cosa Nostra in Sicily was triggered to a considerable extent by landowners, estate managers, and local politicians seeking to combat peasant demands originating from the first socialist movement in Italy, the *Fasci dei Lavoratori*⁷¹. The authors note how “[t]he first mass socialist movement in Italy, the Peasant Fasci, emerged in Sicily [partly] because of the extremely harsh working conditions of the island’s peasants. Our results indicate that as much as 37 per cent of the strength of the Mafia in 1900 may be related to its involvement in the suppression of the Peasant Fasci”⁷².

The evolution of Cosa Nostra also began to involve a mutually beneficial relationship with the political establishment in both Palermo *and* Rome. With the triumph of liberalism came electoral politics. In return for protection to conduct their illegal activities with impunity as well as to exert control over a considerable share of public spending in Sicily, Cosa Nostra provided the votes that the emergent political parties needed to win elections. According to Antonino Calderone, “an average mafioso of post-war Sicily could guarantee the loyalty of 40 to 50 persons. As there were some 1,500 to 2,000 men of honour in the province of Palermo, that would add up to from 75,000 to 100,000 “friendly” votes in that province alone”⁷³. Similarly, Graziano notes that “the obvious advantages derived in such a milieu by anybody who could put together one hundred votes (...) meant that in the Mezzogiorno, [electoral]

⁷⁰ Paoli, Letizia. *Mafia brotherhoods: Organized crime, Italian style*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

⁷¹ Acemoglu, Daron, Giuseppe De Feo, and Giacomo De Luca. “Weak States: Causes and Consequences of the Sicilian Mafia.” *NBER Working Paper*, no. 24115, 2017, p. 32.

⁷² *Idem*, p. 1.

⁷³ Cited in Schneider, Jane, Peter T. Schneider, and Peter Schneider. *Reversible Destiny: Mafia, Antimafia, and the Struggle for Palermo*. University of California Press, 2003, p. 52.

groups were often infiltrated by *mafia* and *camorra*⁷⁴. With the rise of mass politics after the Second World War (WW II), Cosa Nostra became the most notable electoral machine in Sicily. Securing votes for the Democrazia Christiana party (the party that almost single-handedly controlled Italian politics for the entire Cold War period) was part of a quid-pro-quo or *wicked deal* paid not only with protection and impunity but by giving Cosa Nostra a centre-stage in the patronage politics of Southern Italy⁷⁵. Throughout the Cold War period, Cosa Nostra became a para-political actor in the struggle against the Italian Communist Party (the largest in Western Europe) and the neutralisation of the socialist movement, particularly in the impoverished South. The pro-capitalist orientation of the mafia opened bridges of covert collaboration between Cosa Nostra and the Italian security services that, as Schneider and Schneider have noted, resembled the collaboration of covert cliques of army coronels and espionage specialists staging *coups d'état* in Latin American countries during the 1960s and 1970s to counter the alleged threat of communism⁷⁶. As Blok has also noted, the proximity between the Italian state and the Mafia started to become antagonistic only after the threat of communism had ended, a fact that underscores the importance of Cosa Nostra as a Cold War 'bandit'. Stille points out how, "[u]ntil the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the U.S. government was also keenly interested in keeping the Christian Democrats in power and the Communists out. In the 1940s and 1950s, the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] funded the Christian Democrats, just like the Russians funded the Italian Communist Party. [...] [T]he United States' closest political allies continued to be many of the same politicians suspected of being in league with the Mafia"⁷⁷. The 'instrumentalisation' of the Sicilian mafia to regulate violence and influence political outcomes in Sicily is a notable example of the role that outlaw economies can play in longer state trajectories traversing multiple historical periods and framed by both national and transnational political contexts.

⁷⁴ Graziano, Luigi. "Patron-client relationships in Southern Italy." *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1973, pp. 3-34, p. 14.

⁷⁵ Renda, Francesco. *Storia della mafia*. Sigma, 1998.

⁷⁶ Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. "Is transparency possible? The political-economic and epistemological implications of cold war conspiracies and subterfuge in Italy." *States and Illegal Practices*, edited by Josiah McC. Heyman, Hart Publishing, 1999, pp. 169-198.

⁷⁷ Stille, Alexander. *Excellent cadavers: The Mafia and the death of the first Italian republic*. Vintage, 1996, p. 10.

Protection rackets in criminal economies have often generated the ‘security’ of their political enablers; the instrumentalisation of banditry is an important part of the story behind the consolidation of liberal elites and the formation of a world capitalist system. As the examples above suggest, the particular ways in which ‘protected’ bandits contributed to the formation of national sovereignties were contingent on the peculiarities of the local and national histories that generated and co-opted them. The arguments advanced here do not seek to gloss over the considerable qualitative differences that gave the banditry spectrum (and its connections with power) its diverse and assorted character. Rather, the chapter notes important regularities across space and time that show that, despite these differences, the instrumentalisation of banditry to generate security structures was a regular and notable process in the consolidation of broader geographies of power and the formation of a global capitalist world. Criminal gangs may appear to challenge the ‘monopoly’ of violence that the state ideally embodies, but often their covert instrumentalisation by supra-local powers strengthens this ‘monopoly’ by rendering local geographies and populations malleable to state and elite interests. In this respect, a Tyllian approach is particularly well-suited not only to note the identification between the criminal and the security process but to note also how the ‘racketeering’ of illicit economies has been relevant to the production of security in capitalist states.

The role of banditry in supporting unequal relations at global levels (for example, in the dynamics of empire, or the global division of labour) makes it a noteworthy subject to centre-periphery perspectives concerned with the logistics generating unequal exchange at the global level. Conversely, questions of economic structure are particularly relevant in bandit historiography given the extent to which the generalisation of banditry (and its instrumentalisation by the state) connects with accelerated socio-economic transformation. Put differently, the instrumentalisation of banditry has been a relevant component in the construction of the global hierarchy intrinsic to centre-periphery relations. Global hierarchies can be conceived *narrowly* as relations of legitimate authority between states and more *broadly* as

organised inequality⁷⁸. As Zarakol notes, “[a]t issue is how different forms of power—coercion, dominance, legitimacy, and so on—give rise to different kinds of hierarchies that have different kinds of effects on international politics”⁷⁹. Zarakol also notes how a world-systems perspective enables a type of analysis of hierarchical organisation that interrogates the particular machinations through which capital establishes and perpetuates global order, the nature of the inequalities entailed by it, and the moral, social and behavioural dynamics that follow⁸⁰. Without disregarding the role that legitimacy undoubtedly plays in structuring hierarchy at any level, a key aim here is to bring to light little-studied but important ‘coercive’ mechanisms that articulate the global hierarchy implicated in centre-periphery approaches. Whereas a centre-periphery approach is suitable to understand the relationship between a supraordinate and a subordinate entity (such as the U.S. and Mexico), a Tillyian perspective seems particularly apt to capture and unpack the flow of criminal rents into the security processes cementing these unequal relationships. A Tillyian approach allows the thesis to underline the importance of state rackets in driving these security processes, in supporting policing capabilities, and in allowing the ‘centre’ to exert relative control over the ‘periphery’. To recapitulate: the *political* nature of the bandit lies not only in its embodiment of mechanisms tantamount to state-making (i.e. Tilly) but also in its regular and significant input into key security processes structuring national and global hierarchies. The ‘instrumentalisation’ of organised crime to form internally- and externally oriented security apparatuses has a solid record in the history of nation-states and empires. From this perspective, the importance of banditry in the 18th and 19th centuries, briefly explored in the examples above, points to patterns and processes in the making of modernity that cut across geographies and time, and that constitute an important element in the history of global modernity. As ever, a ‘license’ to

⁷⁸ Two crucial works in this body of literature are: Ikenberry, G. John. *Liberal Leviathan: The origins, crisis, and transformation of the American world order*. Princeton University Press, 2011; and Lake, David A. *Hierarchy in international relations*. Cornell University Press, 2011.

⁷⁹ Mattern, Janice Bially, and Ayşe Zarakol. "Hierarchies in world politics." *International Organization*, vol. 70, no. 3, 2016, pp. 623-654.

⁸⁰ Key contributions noting the role of hierarchy and order in international relations (as opposed to anarchy) include: Long, David, and Brian C. Schmidt, eds. *Imperialism and internationalism in the discipline of international relations*. SUNY Press, 2005.

prey compensated for fiscal weakness, but now these rents resulted from an increasingly pertinent distinction between legality and illegality that the state, instead of enforcing, selectively abused.

Drug trafficking in social histories

No other criminal commodity in the second half of the 20th century has had a more profound political impact on the state-making process than drug trafficking. In ‘peripheral’ local contexts, *who* controls the points of access to the drug economy can determine *who* has access to key resources invested in purchasing arms, bullets, and enforcers. The role of the drug economy in local settings has been studied in ghettos, prison gangs, local *cacicazgos* and as an economy in warlordism. David Skarbek⁸¹ shows how a gang’s hegemony in a prison is often predicated on its ability to control the drug economy. Controlling the flow of ‘drug taxes’ often goes hand-in-hand with developing capacities to monopolise a highly discretionary use of violence that, in turn, is able to affect social, political, and cultural life. For Graham Denyer Willis, drug profits in urban slums are viewed less as an end in itself but rather “as a necessary means to strengthen and expand the organization”⁸². Monopolising control of drug sales creates a political economy enabling a gang to enforce property rights, dictate legitimate death warrants, impose codes of conduct, among other ‘state-like’ activities. Dennis Rodgers explains how gangs in Managua in the 1990s produced “social sovereignty” by providing “a sense of predictability and symbolic reference point for everyday local life”⁸³. Gangs “constituted the principal anchor for a notion of community in a wider context of extreme social fragmentation”⁸⁴. Rodgers notes how gangs can evolve into predatory institutions, imposing order through terror as a way to protect, especially, drug interests. From a different perspective, Snyder suggests that lootable wealth (such as the drug market) can lead to social order if rulers (in this case, gangs) are able to impose monopolised extortion

⁸¹ Skarbek, David. "Governance and prison gangs." *American Political Science Review*, vol. 105, no. 4, 2011, pp. 702-716.

⁸² Lessing, Benjamin, and Graham Denyer Willis. "Legitimacy in criminal governance: Managing a drug empire from behind bars." *American Political Science Review*, vol. 113, no. 2, 2019, pp. 584-606, p. 604.

⁸³ Rodgers, Dennis. "The state as a gang: Conceptualizing the governmentality of violence in contemporary Nicaragua." *Critique of Anthropology*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2006, pp. 315-330, p. 326.

⁸⁴ *Idem*, p. 320.

rackets over these crucial commodities. In contrast, the breakdown or absence of rackets can produce instability in two ways: first, by causing a fiscal crisis that renders authority vulnerable, and second, by making it easier for rebels to organise⁸⁵.

The drug economy can also enable warlords and *caciques* whose power rests in their ability to tax and restrict access to drug production. In his study of the drug economy in western Mexico, Pansters, for example, notes how local drug production has at times become “deeply embedded in particular local and regional social relations and economies, through which [it] play[s] a functional role in governance systems”⁸⁶. The arbitrary and informal nature of *caciquismo* in Mexico, Pansters notes, is well-suited to accommodate and incorporate criminal entanglements. For Pansters, the protective mechanisms and the corresponding corruption that apply to the complex relations between state (law enforcement) and criminal organisations and economies can be argued to have evolved more ‘naturally’ from historically and socially rooted cultural practices of informal arrangements and personalistic mediation of the law (impunity). These informal practices, which Pansters identifies as ‘informal orders’, shape processes and transactions in politics, society, and the economy, and as such they have been able to absorb or extend into illegal/criminal activities. This interpretation stresses an endogenous role of criminal economies in structuring political authority but does not preclude the possibility that exogenous actors instrumentalise these culturally rooted practices and criminal economies to channel interests into local and social milieus⁸⁷. An important observation at this point is that these forms of ‘criminal governance’ and ‘criminal sovereignties’ do not occur in political vacuums but in geographies claimed by formal structures of the state and may be connected to political dynamics attached to global hierarchies. As Denyer Willis and Lessing point out: “In the spaces where criminal organisations arise and assert control (prisons, urban peripheries, and illicit markets), the state may be weak, but it

⁸⁵ Snyder, Richard. "Does lootable wealth breed disorder? A political economy of extraction framework." *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 39, no. 8, 2006, pp. 943-968.

⁸⁶ Pansters, Wil G. "Drug trafficking, the informal order, and caciques. Reflections on the crime-governance nexus in Mexico." *Global Crime*, vol. 19, no. 3-4, 2018, pp. 315-338, p. 317. For a similar approach, see: Smith, Benjamin T. "The Rise and Fall of Narcopopulism: Drugs, Politics, and Society in Sinaloa, 1930–1980." *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2013, pp. 125-165.

⁸⁷ Idem.

is far from absent”⁸⁸. Criminal structures regulating violence in informal contexts tap into the drug business but operate most often by virtue of protection rackets established by actors of the state. As Snyder notes, “[p]rotection rackets are especially likely to emerge in connection with illicit products, because the “service” of non-enforcement of the law will have a high value to private actors”⁸⁹. Two observations can be made as a result: first, that drug markets are notorious political economies operating at multiple political levels inclusive of the more alienated landscapes studied by social anthropology. Second, that these informal structures, although embodying state-like characteristics, become ‘entangled’ with the ‘formal’ state.

What is often missing is a better picture of how criminal organisations (and especially drug traffickers) interact with the state at multiple levels. For this work, the interest lies in understanding the ways in which states often make use of criminal organisations to channel exogenous interests and security processes. Just as *local* drug economies often play a functional role in governance systems by structuring political authority and supporting security apparatus at subnational levels (*cacicazgos*, favelas, prisons, etc.), the *transnational* drug economy has often played a less studied but analogous ‘bandit’ role in the structuring of hierarchy at the national and transnational levels. The examples of 18th- and 19th-century banditry advanced before hint at where I am trying to go: the ‘political’ importance of transnational drug trafficking, while often rooted in local processes, connects and is fully compatible with more ‘macro’ processes in global history. The aim of the final section of this chapter is to show how transnational drug markets have often deployed these exogenous politics. The aim is to introduce transnational drug trafficking as a ‘bandit’ economy that has supported the state-making and empire-making process at more recent historical junctures.

⁸⁸ Lessing, Benjamin, and Graham Denyer Willis. "Legitimacy in criminal governance: Managing a drug empire from behind bars." *American Political Science Review*, vol. 113, no. 2, 2019, pp. 584-606, p. 604.

⁸⁹ Snyder, Richard. "Does lootable wealth breed disorder? A political economy of extraction framework." *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 39, no. 8, 2006, pp. 943-968, p. 951.

Drug trafficking in global history

Authors have proposed different frameworks and typologies to understand the ways in which states interact with organised crime. These include, for example, Lessing's distinction between 'violent lobbying' and 'violent corruption'⁹⁰, which echoes the *plata o plomo* [silver or lead] alternatives that politicians can face in their dealings with delinquents, as well as Staniland's 'armed politics' framework, which focuses on the various types of interactions that occur between armed factions and criminal activities amidst civil wars⁹¹. These typologies tend to focus on confrontational types of interactions between state and criminals or contexts of considerable violence. A more complete typology that includes both coexistence and confrontation in both violent and non-violent contexts has been proposed by Nicholas Barnes⁹². I will briefly explain Barnes' typology and use it as a platform to add additional analytical layers.

Barnes argues that criminal organisations, like other non-state armed groups, develop various collaborative and competitive arrangements with states that, in turn, determine levels of violence. He distinguishes between four types of crime - state interactions, going from more adversarial to more collaborative: 1) *Confrontation* (high competition between criminal organisations and the state); 2) *Enforcement/Evasion* (low competition); 3) *Alliance* (low collaboration between criminal organisations and the state) and 4) *Integration* (high collaboration). On the collaborative end of the spectrum, Barnes distinguishes *alliance* from *integration*. In an *alliance*, there is no incorporation but rather 'cooperation' between the state and criminal organisations in regions where the state competes with non-state armed groups and uses criminal groups to combat these organisations. Examples of alliances tend to revolve around criminal organisations 'endorsed' by the state and used as paramilitary proxies. Rural vigilantism and *autodefensas* [self-defenders] in contemporary Mexico and Colombia are the main examples used by Barnes to denote how a criminal organisation can be used by the state

⁹⁰ Lessing, Benjamin. "Logics of violence in criminal war." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 59, no. 8, 2015, pp. 1486-1516.

⁹¹ Staniland, Paul. "Militias, ideology, and the state." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 59, no. 5, 2015, pp. 770-793.

⁹² Barnes, Nicholas. "Criminal politics: An integrated approach to the study of organized crime, politics, and violence." *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2017, pp. 967-987.

to advance its interests without actually making it a 'structural' part of itself. A more comprehensive form of collaboration develops, in contrast, under *integration*. Here, differentiating between state actors and criminals becomes much more difficult: political actors of great importance are personally involved in criminal activity. Integration occurs "when [...] [criminal] organizations make more than common cause and become intimately intertwined"⁹³. Under integration, organised crime gains access to "political influence, information and networks", while state actors gain access to "financial, electoral and political resources". Barnes explains that integration is especially common in two areas within the state apparatus: political parties and the public security apparatus. Historical examples of integration pointed out by Barnes include Manuel Noriega's tenure as Panama's president, Peru under Alberto Fujimori, the Cosa Nostra in Sicily, and the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defenders of Colombia). The most notable example of "integration" pointed out by Barnes, however, is Mexico, where the PRI regime "exert[ed] its influence over criminal organizations by controlling and penetrating illicit networks"⁹⁴ for several decades. Importantly, the direction of causality can go both ways: states can integrate criminal structures into their state apparatus, and criminal structures can 'capture' state institutions to advance their criminal interests.

I would like to point to two limitations in Barnes' model that will help underline some of my own ideas with regards to criminal-state collaborative relations and how I think the framework can be enriched. The first limitation in Barnes' approach, one that we can build on, is that it tends to think of the state and organised crime as monolithic structures. First, it is important to make the obvious remark that the alliances that develop between criminals and the state do not involve the entire state apparatus but are limited to certain actors and even certain sectors within institutions. This means that a particular criminal organisation may become integrated into an institutional or political circuit while, at the same time, a rival criminal organisation may develop links with other political actors and institutional circuits. Rather than seeing the 'state' as a block aligning or confronting 'organised crime' as another

⁹³ Idem, p. 976.

⁹⁴ Idem.

block, what sometimes occurs is a more complex dynamic constituted by multiple, and potentially antagonistic, diagonal connections between the two spheres. Looking at state and criminal organisations as ‘blocks’ can lead to incomplete descriptions of how state and organised crime actually interplay. For example, Barnes’ central example for the *confrontational* type of state-criminal interaction (defined as high competition between criminal organisations and the state) is the violent war that developed between drug trafficking organisations and the Mexican government following president Felipe Calderón’s decision to launch an ‘all-out-war’ against the drug ‘cartels’. Although a much more confrontational stand did in fact develop between the state and drug trafficking organisations during this period, it is important to note that competing cartels at this point had already developed pervasive ‘relationships’ with political and institutional actors at both national and regional levels. Neither organised crime nor the state can be understood here as responding to a single coherent directive. The more complex picture behind the ‘all-out war’ and the diversified penetration of criminals of a heterogeneous state underscores how the binary *confrontational* type is more complex in practice than in discourse. The fact that the Mexican state was already so deeply penetrated by criminal organisations is often cited as the reason why Calderón’s strategy was doomed to fail from the beginning, not to mention the recent criminal indictments against the police actors who deployed this war. Alliances between ‘cartels’ and high-level security officials, governors, and national political actors continued to characterise criminal-state relations in Mexico despite Calderón’s ‘all-out war’. This makes it hard to make a case in which ‘state’ and ‘criminal organisations’ are seen as two blocks opposing one another even in the most ‘confrontational’ scenarios.

The second observation, perhaps more important, has to do with the category that Barnes employs to denote the maximum degree of collaboration that develops between states and organised criminals: *integration*. In contrast to an *alliance*, where mutually beneficial agreements between state and organised crime exist but where both parties remain structurally differentiated, *integration* refers to a form of collaboration in which organised crime is directly ‘integrated’ into the state apparatus, gaining access to political influence and in turn being influenced by the state. Barnes’ central example for the full *integration* type of state-

criminal collaboration is the drug market under the PRI state in Mexico. *Integration* in this case, however, seems to be a misleading term because drug cartels never had any say in the decision-making process at the national level nor were they ever ‘integrated’ in the political process. One of the successes of the PRI establishment is that it managed to neutralise the political influence of drug markets in national politics by incorporating the market through its security services. As noted by Snyder, the centralised ‘institution of protection’ embodied by the PRI regime successfully contained the market’s intrinsic potential for violence and, as I suggest, generated key security processes expanding the reach of central actors and institutions.

To suggest that the state in Mexico ‘integrated’ drug traffickers because it was able to control them is not really equivalent and, more importantly, misses what I think is the most interesting aspect in state - criminal ‘integrations’. What makes intense collaboration between states and organised criminals such an interesting topic is the way in which criminal economies help advance the agendas of institutional and political actors at multiple levels. Rather than arguing that drug trafficking in Mexico was ‘integrated’ into the state, more is to be gained by questioning instead how these subsidiary drug markets, as banditry more generally, became an ancillary mechanism for the expansion of the local, national and transnational interests embodied in the PRI state. The same is true about other examples that Barnes uses to represent the *integration* type. Drug traffickers under Manuel Noriega and Alberto Fujimori were not ‘integrated’ into the state apparatus, rather Noriega and Fujimori tapped into the drug economy to fund security activity associated with a national, as well as transnational, political agendas. The state instrumentalised, rather than incorporated, drug trafficking. This points to a relationship between criminals and state actors that has less to do with ‘structures’ and more to do with ‘processes’. What I wish to underline here is that the aim of studying examples of ‘collaboration’ should be to understand the structural, political, and geopolitical ends advanced by these blatant instrumentalisations of the transnational drug economy. Interrogating more centrally the political interests that are served by a specific instance of ‘collaboration’ between state and organised crime allows us, in addition, to incorporate a layer of analysis that Barnes’ model leaves out of the picture: the role of drug markets in structuring

transnational hierarchy and a global capitalist system. Barnes' focus on what he describes as 'subnational' contexts leaves out the ways in which organised crime is instrumentalised as a 'strategy of rule' by political actors above the subnational level. Again, Mexico is a case in point. As I document in this thesis, the PRI regime instrumentalised transnational criminal economies to fund security services and a Cold War agenda that reflected the vital interests of the Mexican and American states. Moreover, as I also demonstrate, the U.S. government covertly endorsed and encouraged the involvement of Mexico's national security agency in organised crime in ways that echo analogous strategies deployed in other latitudes of the Cold War. Mexico echoed patterns transpiring in almost every single country where transnational drug trafficking developed after WW II. From this perspective, drug markets under Manuel Noriega and Alberto Fujimori were part of a larger political landscape where political objectives of supranational stature exploited local drug markets to advance exogenous political and economic interests. Incorporating these dynamics into our analysis is important to transcend a typological description and understand the historical aims served by the 'integration' of banditry and global political processes. Finally, an additional observation with regard to Barnes' model is that the historical examples that he uses to represent the *integration* type of state-criminal collaboration almost always involve the 'integration' of one market in particular: the *transnational* drug business. This is namely because the transnational drug business arguably represents the criminal market with the highest stakes, summoning security apparatuses associated with national security institutions.

Building from Barnes' model, the suggestion here is that the state under the PRI was able to channel the political economies of drug markets by 'integrating' the operation of transnational drug markets to advance the mandates embodied by central security institutions. This does not mean that all transnational drug activity came under the command of national security actors, or that the political economy of drug markets lacked political weight at subnational levels. Rather, what is argued is that the highly articulate and centralised nature of the regime allowed its agencies to exert control over the political economy of drug markets as a whole, channelling the interests of the regime rather than deploying the conflictual and centripetal dynamics of drug markets that characterised these economies before and after the PRI

regime. This instrumentalisation, in which national security agencies played a key part, is particularly evident in the orientation of the security processes generated by drug economies, which not only strengthened the capacity of central actors but empowered the deployment of policies that affected Mexico's society as a whole. The successful 'integration' of transnational drug markets limited enormously the ability of transnational drug markets to function as autonomous forces: the success of the bandit in this period of Mexican history was predicated on its direct and indirect connections with the 'nucleus' of the state (the security agencies attached to the executive). This is important to keep in mind because it underlines that, when it comes to 'collaborative arrangements' between states and the transnational drug market, the analysis of the dynamics at play, actors involved, and political agendas enabled, cannot be restricted, as Barnes suggests, to the 'subnational' level. What I propose to do here is to think less of these connections in terms of structures and see instead in these relationships a *process* that enables, too, the deployment of exogenous agendas.

Transnational drug bandits

Academic endeavours to give the transnational drug trade a more central place in national and global histories are becoming increasingly relevant in political and historical literature. The pioneering work in this regard is Alfred McCoy's 1972 doctoral thesis *The politics of heroin*⁹⁵. In it, McCoy documents how opium and heroin economies, criminalised by global prohibitionist regimes, supported paramilitary and counterinsurgency activity associated with the war on communism and nationalism in South East Asia (1930s to 1970s). The importance of drug markets in the dynamics of the foreign intervention went, as is well known, way back. A key precedent to understand the importance of drug markets in the dynamics of imperialism is the ancillary role of the opium trade in the colonisation of the Far East in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. As underlined in multiple studies⁹⁶, opium monopolies

⁹⁵ McCoy, Alfred W. *The politics of heroin: CIA complicity in the global drug trade, Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Central America*. Lawrence Hill Books, 2003 [1972].

⁹⁶ Brook, Timothy, and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, eds. *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952*. University of California Press, 2000; Wong, John Yue-wo. *Deadly dreams: Opium and the Arrow war (1856-1860) in China*. Cambridge University Press, 2002; Deming, Sarah. "The economic importance of Indian opium and trade with china on Britain's economy, 1843-1890." *Economics Working Papers*, 25, 2011.

under the control of colonial powers played an overlooked but crucial role in generating revenue and balancing intercontinental trade in favour of European powers. According to Wong, opium sales in China made up 25-35% of Britain's global visible trade deficit between 1855 and 1873⁹⁷. More generally, taxes on opium often represented the single most important source of revenue for European colonies in East Asia. By the middle of the 19th century, opium was the second source of tax revenue of the British Empire in India and generated more revenue than all customs taxes combined⁹⁸. Opium was, of course, prohibited in China, but with the backing of the Royal Navy, British smugglers operated with tranquillity and devotion. In the Straits Settlements, the opium monopoly covered about 60% of administrative spending⁹⁹. In British Malaysia, it generated 40% of colonial revenues. Similarly, between 1876 and 1915, opium reduced the potential deficit in Dutch Java by 70%¹⁰⁰. In other words, a monopoly over drug addiction, imposed by coercive means (like it happened very explicitly during the Opium Wars) and a relatively small pool of drug addicts were economically ancillary to the colonial exploitation of these populations and geographies.

The importance of the opium trade was particularly important in French Indochina. McCoy explains how the official dismantlement of colonial opium monopolies after WW II did not abolish the importance of opium in the economy of the French Empire. He documents, instead, how the French security services continued to organise opium markets clandestinely in order to fund counterinsurgency activity directed against paramilitary forces seeking independence from France. The 'integration', to use Barnes' terminology, of clandestine opium markets to the war efforts against the Viet Minh represents the first example of the transnational drug market being 'integrated' (as a criminal economy) into an interventionist political

⁹⁷ Wong, John Yue-wo. *Deadly dreams: Opium and the Arrow war (1856-1860) in China*. Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 409.

⁹⁸ Richards, John F. "Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 36, 2002, p. 401.

⁹⁹ Hinton, Wilfred. *Government of Pacific Dependencies: British Malaya*. Institute of Pacific Relations, 1929, p. 17, cited in: Bailey, Warren, and Lan Truong. "Opium and empire: Some evidence from colonial-era Asian stock and commodity markets." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2001, pp. 173-193.

¹⁰⁰ Bailey, Warren, and Lan Truong. "Opium and empire: Some evidence from colonial-era Asian stock and commodity markets." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2001, pp. 173-193.

agenda. McCoy and others¹⁰¹ note how the practice would be subsequently adopted by U.S. intelligence to support its paramilitary proxy in China, the Kuomintang. McCoy's work was perhaps the first to provide a more complete account of what became a form of banditry associated with a more globalised period in international relations and indirect conflict. From South East Asia to Turkey to South and Central America, the evolution and geographical trajectory of the transnational drug market would in subsequent decades become closely entangled with counterinsurgency and parapolice structures supporting, by large, America's security agenda. As I note in the following chapters of this thesis, this is precisely what transpired in Mexico, where the secret police of the single-party regime tapped into transnational drug and contraband economies in order to fund counterinsurgency and parapolice activity directed against dissent while enjoying the endorsement of the U.S. government to do so.

Building from McCoy, new scholarly perspectives have enriched the literature on criminal activity during the Cold War. A particularly relevant country in this regard is, naturally, Turkey: a country where both legal and illegal opium markets were critical issues in domestic politics. Focused on the Turkish Republic, Ryan Gingeras notes how Turkish criminal syndicates, particularly those that emerged out of the heroin trade in the mid-twentieth century, assumed important positions of political influence "in both opposition to and in collaboration with elements of the Turkish state"¹⁰². The use of opium and heroin economies to fund parapolice and paramilitary activity in Turkey replicated the use of co-opted banditry and *çetes* in the strategies of the late Ottoman empire. In particular, Gingeras points to the entanglements that developed between the drug trade and the formation of paramilitary and parapolice bodies directed against Kurdish and Communist groups and mediated by the national security service. The notable input of criminal markets into the political process in Turkey, in particular the more reactionary sectors of its security apparatus, makes Turkey a particularly important case for a growing body of literature looking at the 'deep' structures of the security

¹⁰¹ Valentine, Douglas. *The strength of the wolf: the secret history of America's war on drugs*. Verso, 2004. See also: Marshall, Jonathan. "Opium, Tungsten, and the Search for National Security, 1940–52." *Journal of Policy History*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1991, pp. 89-116; Herman, Edward S. "Drug Wars": Appearance and Reality." *Social Justice*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1991, pp. 76-84.

¹⁰² Gingeras, Ryan. *Heroin, organized crime, and the making of modern Turkey*. Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 6.

services. Like McCoy's research on South East Asia, Gingeras' work on Turkey sheds light on the political agendas that the 'integration' of the heroin drug trade enabled in Cold War Turkey.

Another work underlining the transnational agendas that the drug economy enabled is Scott's and Marshall's *Cocaine Politics*¹⁰³. Here, the authors underline the way in which Condor operations in South America and death squads in the civil wars of Central America often tapped into the transnational drug market to fund counterinsurgency operations directed against armed and civilian adversaries in the so-called 'Banana-republics' and police states of the region. A well-documented case of how this practice was exploited by U.S. foreign policy is the overlap that developed between anti-communist guerrillas and cocaine networks during Nicaragua's civil war. Looking at the history of the global trade, Scott and Marshall conclude that "[t]he most dramatic increases in drug smuggling since World War II have occurred in the context of, and indeed partly because of, covert operations in [...] [these] regions. [...] Although the CIA did not actually peddle drugs, it did form grey alliances with right-wing gangs deemed helpful against a common enemy"¹⁰⁴. Involvement in drug trafficking was often the very reason why U.S. allies such as Manuel Noriega in Panama and Luis García Meza in Bolivia were able to reach the pinnacle of the country's security establishment. More generally, involvement in transnational drug trafficking, smuggling, and bootlegging has been a prominent 'economy' in U.S.-supported military dictatorships going back to Nicaragua's Anastasio Somoza¹⁰⁵ and Cuba's Fulgencio Batista¹⁰⁶.

The central role that the transnational drug economy can play in national histories has also been highlighted in Lebanon: a country where transnational political interests, reflected in the country's civil war, subverted drug markets to fund paramilitary activity. Marshall notes

¹⁰³ Scott, Peter Dale, and Jonathan Marshall. *Cocaine politics: Drugs, armies, and the CIA in Central America*. University of California Press, 1998.

¹⁰⁴ *Idem*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ *Idem*.

¹⁰⁶ Willis, Benjamin. "Gangsterismo: The United States, Cuba, and the Mafia 1933 to 1966." *The International Journal of Cuban Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2015, p. 118.

how both Israel and Syria took advantage of their enclaves “to privilege traffickers who cooperated with their respective intelligence services”¹⁰⁷. According to Marshall, involvement in the drug trade extended to more than a few presidents, prime ministers, members of parliament, judges, police chiefs, and bankers in Lebanon. In fact, drug production in the Bekka valley was often the prime resource that paid for the arming and equipment of multiple Lebanese militias. A good example of the role that drug trafficking played in financing paramilitary groups in Lebanon is the prominent Falange leader Bachir Gemayel. Marshall notes that “Gemayel’s victorious militias, subsequently consolidated as the Lebanese Forces, today control the bulk of Free Lebanon’s protection rackets and vice trade, parcelling out a percentage of the profits to the smaller Christian militias. Their income comes from the estimated \$1 billion to \$3 billion a year hashish trade”¹⁰⁸. Gemayel not only collaborated with Mossad but was, according to Bob Woodward, a CIA asset¹⁰⁹.

Snyder¹¹⁰ and Meehan¹¹¹ note the importance of the opium market in the political economy supporting Myanmar’s military junta. The opium economy was particularly important when the Myanmar government established in the 1990s what Snyder refers to as “institutions of joint extraction” in the national opium business¹¹². These were joint enterprises in opium and heroin production established by the military junta and former insurgents. According to Meehan, the drug trade provided the Burmese state “with an array of incentives (legal impunity, protection, money laundering) and threats (of prosecution) with which to co-opt and coerce insurgent groups over which it ha[d] otherwise commanded little authority”¹¹³. Snyder notes how revenue from the opium trade “enabled the regime to weather the international embargo imposed after its suppression of pro-democracy activists and students in the late

¹⁰⁷ Marshall, Jonathan. *The Lebanese connection: Corruption, civil war, and the international drug traffic*. Stanford University Press, 2012, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Nation, June 19, 1982, cited in idem, p. 85.

¹⁰⁹ Woodward, Bob. "Alliance with a Lebanese leader". *The Washington Post*, September 29, 1987.

¹¹⁰ Snyder, Richard, and Angelica Duran-Martinez. "Does illegality breed violence? Drug trafficking and state-sponsored protection rackets." *Crime, law and social change*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2009, pp. 253-273.

¹¹¹ Meehan, Patrick. "Drugs, insurgency and state-building in Burma: Why the drugs trade is central to Burma's changing political order." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2011, pp. 376-404.

¹¹² Snyder, Richard. "Does lootable wealth breed disorder? A political economy of extraction framework." *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 39, no. 8, 2006, pp. 943-968, p. 950.

¹¹³ Meehan, Patrick. "Drugs, insurgency and state-building in Burma: Why the drugs trade is central to Burma's changing political order." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2011, pp. 376-404, p. 376.

1980s”¹¹⁴. Profits from the drug trade were thereafter invested in legitimate businesses in Myanmar rather than laundered in Thailand or Hong Kong¹¹⁵. Importantly, by building institutions of joint extraction, the “Burmese military transformed narcotics from a ‘honey pot’ for hinterland rebels into the central pillar of the national economy”¹¹⁶. Using Burma as a notable example, Snyder argues that the intensity of state involvement is a critical factor determining the levels of violence associated with drug economies. He notes that “[i]f rulers are able to build institutions of joint extraction, lootable resources can provide the revenue with which to govern”¹¹⁷. Conversely, if joint extraction breaks down or if rulers fail to achieve it, “then lootable resources increase the risk of civil war by making it easier for insurgents to organize and get the income with which to rebel”¹¹⁸. Using the example of Mexico under the PRI system, Snyder and Duran Martinez further underscore the importance that state-supported rackets in the transnational drug business can have in determining its violent or peaceful nature¹¹⁹.

An even more notable case underlining the importance that the transnational drug economy can have in national histories is the role that the opium and heroin market has played in recent decades in Afghanistan. The accelerated and pervasive expansion of the opium economy in the 1980s played a key role as a war economy during the civil war and the state-making efforts that followed the collapse of Soviet rule. As Felbab-Brown¹²⁰ has noted, poppy cultivation in Afghanistan was triggered in the 1980s by the Soviet policy of crop destruction that sought to weaken support for the rebellious mujahidin. This forced a considerable portion of the population to turn to opium cultivation as a means of subsistence. The expansion of the opium economy was in turn capitalised by the major mujahidin leaders conducting the guerilla warfare against Soviet occupation. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, perhaps the most important

¹¹⁴ Snyder, Richard. "Does lootable wealth breed disorder? A political economy of extraction framework." *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 39, no. 8, 2006, pp. 943-968, p. 960.

¹¹⁵ Idem.

¹¹⁶ Idem, p. 961.

¹¹⁷ Idem, p. 962.

¹¹⁸ Idem, p. 962.

¹¹⁹ Idem.

¹²⁰ Felbab-Brown, Vanda. "Kicking the opium habit?: Afghanistan's drug economy and politics since the 1980s: Analysis." *Conflict, Security & Development*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2006, pp. 127-149.

of these warlords, depended on drug trafficking to support his militia¹²¹. Hekmatyar's connections with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence – the agency in charge of both the anti-Soviet efforts in Afghanistan as well as the heroin markets around Peshawar¹²² - gave him an edge over other mujahidin leaders. Pakistani intelligence was the main conduit for U.S. assistance in arms and resources reaching mujahidin leaders such as Hekmatyar. The opium trade in this respect became an important 'proxy' economy in support of the political agenda of Pakistan (under Zia ul-Haq), Saudi Arabia, and the Reagan administration against the Soviet Union.

When the Soviets were finally toppled in 1988, civil war between different mujahidin factions ensued. Throughout the 1990s, warlords in Afghanistan's civil war relied to a very large extent on income generated by the opium and heroin trade (as well as contraband and gem smuggling) to arm their militias and battle one another¹²³. By 1996, one of these factions, the Taliban, began to tax opium farmers, traffickers, and heroin labs¹²⁴. Felbab-Brown notes that the Islamic-oriented Taliban changed their antagonistic policy towards illicit narcotics and allowed poppy cultivation "to compensate for what its sponsorship of the illicit smuggling of legal goods could not provide: widespread legitimacy"¹²⁵. Following the collapse of the Taliban after the U.S. invasion in 2001, Afghanistan's reliance on the opium economy expanded further. By 2003, the drug trade generated about 40% of the country's GDP¹²⁶. Taxing opium geographies and heroin markets became strongly associated with warlord power in the Balkanisation that followed. As noted by Rubin, the overwhelming importance

¹²¹ Kreutzmann, Hermann. "Afghanistan and the opium world market: poppy production and trade." *Iranian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 5, 2007, pp. 605-621.

¹²² Haq, Ikramul. "Pak-Afghan drug trade in historical perspective." *Asian Survey*, vol. 36, no. 10, 1996, pp. 945-963.

¹²³ Goodhand, Jonathan. "Frontiers and wars: the opium economy in Afghanistan." *Journal of Agrarian Change*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2005, pp. 191-216; Rubin, Barnett R. "The political economy of war and peace in Afghanistan." *World Development*, vol. 28, no. 10, 2000, pp. 1789-1803.

¹²⁴ Felbab-Brown, Vanda. "Kicking the opium habit?: Afghanistan's drug economy and politics since the 1980s: Analysis." *Conflict, Security & Development*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2006, pp. 127-149.

¹²⁵ *Idem*, p. 138.

¹²⁶ *Idem*.

of drug markets should not come as a surprise in a country ranking bottom in all measures of human development¹²⁷.

These examples suggest that the ‘political’ importance of the drug economy, while rooted in local dynamics, transcends ‘subnational’ contexts in two important ways. First, by becoming a key economy financing paramilitary and parapolice apparatuses, the transnational drug economy is often ‘integrated’ to support state-aims in functional ways. The transnational drug economy, which tends to develop in countries with weak fiscal and security apparatuses, becomes a key ‘low-barrier’ economy that states can tap into in direct and indirect ways. The relative importance of the transnational drug economy in places like Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Lebanon should not be underestimated. In contexts of austerity, exerting control over the transnational drug economy becomes a political imperative not only to fund the centre’s security capabilities but to prevent potential adversaries from capitalising on them. Second, drug trafficking affects global hierarchies, particularly by facilitating, as in these examples, security-oriented activity channelling exogenous agendas. In contrast to local drug markets, which operate by virtue of protection provided by local authorities (for example, local police) transnational narcotic flows often operate under the protection of federal-state institutions. A historical review of the transnational drug trade shows that it has often involved a particular kind of institution: national security. In other words, security agencies do not merely ‘regulate’ drug markets, but the ‘racketeering’ of drug markets is rather a process leading to the creation of political economies supporting security activity. Importantly, the illegal character of the transnational drug economy makes state involvement clandestine and purposely obscured. This makes national security agencies adequate institutions to instrumentalise this modern form of *bandit* operating at national and transnational levels to generate security. National security agencies constitute relatively contained and detached institutional environments for the exploitation of these markets.

¹²⁷ Rubin, Barnett R. "The political economy of war and peace in Afghanistan." *World Development*, vol. 28, no. 10, 2000, pp. 1789-1803.

The political input of the transnational drug economy in global history highlights processes that we can safely characterise as ‘interventions’. Imperial penetration in South East Asia, Turkey, Central, and South America, has included in its toolkits a ‘functional’ association with transnational illegal economies. As noted by Colás and Mabee, “expressions of private violence like piracy, banditry and mercenarism have been facilitated by, and often instrumental to the commercial, military and political circuits of imperial power. [...] Empires have in turn benefited economically, politically, and geostrategically from these very private sources of violence”¹²⁸. Whereas the past section noted how state-making strategies involving banditry were particularly important in historical periods marked by the consolidation of new liberal polities, this section stressed, instead, its transnational implications. Situated at the intersection of historical sociology, comparative politics, and international relations, the following chapters will argue that patterns and processes noted in this chapter are also observable in Mexico. The thesis will document, but also reassess, the input of the drug economy in restricting the spectrum of historical possibilities in 20th century Mexico, or the role of the ‘bandit’ in the highly peculiar form of political modernity embodied by the PRI autocracy. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to assessing the historical dynamics and structural drivers leading to the country’s contemporary brutal civil war.

Conclusions

Employing a Tillyian framework, the first section of the chapter noted that *state-making* is a historical process that results at a fundamental level from the interaction between security agents and economic actors. Capital needs a security structure, and any security structure needs capital to support itself. The ‘birth’ of capital in the Neolithic not only generated an object to protect but also enabled a supporting political economy capable of paying for a security apparatus. Protection to farmers, shepherds, and villagers in return for tribute is the kind of dynamic that established the early manifestations of a process invested in generating not only security but political hierarchy. All instances of *racketeering*, whether performed by

¹²⁸ Colás, Alejandro, and Bryan Mabee, eds. *Mercenaries, pirates, bandits and empires: private violence in historical context*. Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 4.

states, gangs, criminals, vigilante groups, or extortionist mafias, are akin to state-making not as an end, but as a historical and political *process*. In this respect, the chapter noted that, in socioeconomic contexts marked by low capital and fiscal austerity, illegal markets often represent a precious, low barrier commodity with enormous political potential for those powerful enough to operate and protect them. The key importance of these markets is observable at multiple levels, and different but complementary scholarly perspectives have addressed the various ways in which these economies affect the political process. Exerting control over illegal commodities allows for the generation of irregular security processes such as paramilitary proxies, para-policing apparatuses, informal governance, and even formal security processes attached to the interests embodied by the state.

Rooted in a primal past, the political input of ‘bandits’ and ‘criminals’ extends to contemporary global history. The chapter argued that the bandit, the outlaw, the criminal, has been a key part in the making of capitalist modernity. On the one hand, the bandit embodies the alienating process implicated by the capitalisation of premodern economies. On the other hand, the bandit is often the instrument that the emergent liberal class employs to contain the social antagonisms created by its own ascendancy. Banditry attached to political and economic elites was often a key vehicle in the consolidation of the much more extensive geographies of power represented by the nation-state. In this respect, the chapter noted the key importance of banditry in the emergence of liberal polities in the 18th and 19th centuries. Rather than antagonistic to the capitalist state, bandits were often their seminal police forces, hired to secure new forms of property, push back on social discontent, and secure the new order emerging from the breakdown of the old one. Banditry was not only used to fight banditry itself, but to target separatism and ethnic nationalism, form early national policing bodies, organise electoral markets, and above all, tackle the collateral antagonisms generated by structural transformation. What made co-opted bandits particularly attractive from the point of view of their state enablers was that, even when incorporated, they continued to function by selectively preying, robbing, kidnapping, and extorting. In other words, they represented a ‘self-financing’ apparatus resembling plundering armies mobilised by the promise of rewards. Although not always a vehicle for state power, banditry nevertheless did play a role

in the consolidation of states, and their input in constructing political modernity merits further reflection from political scientists and historians.

After the end of WW II, the transnational drug business became the most profitable illegal market in the world. This made it a notable, and highly lootable, economy in the impoverished economies concentrating global production and transnational flows. Like banditry before it, transnational drug trafficking, generated by the international prohibitionist regime, was instrumentalised to advance exogenous agendas, economic interests, and foreign interventions. This instrumentalisation would strongly affect its geographical dispersion throughout the second half of the 20th century – a dispersion that reflects its embeddedness in security processes of transnational character. As noted by McCoy and others, the instrumentalisation of drug markets to support ‘security-oriented’ activity was rooted in the historical exploitation of the opium trade to advance imperialistic agendas in the 19th and early 20th centuries. This policy persisted despite prohibition and became an important mechanism to deploy U.S. security interests aimed at pushing back on social actors resisting capitalist penetration. The chapter sought to provide a frame of reference suitable for a discussion that has remained somewhat peripheral to academia: the entanglements between security agencies and the drug trade. The chapter also sought to engage in a theoretical but historically informed discussion about illegal markets that speaks to political scientists, international relations scholars, and historians interested in the historical sociology of policing and organised crime.

Chapter 2 - Protection rackets and state-formation after the Mexican Revolution

This chapter describes the importance of ‘outlaw’ economies in the early centralisation process that followed the Mexican Revolution, noting in particular how protection rackets on illegal economies assisted the establishment of a national security structure in support of an increasingly able and centralised state. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first introduces the PRI regime by discussing the contrasting approaches that historians and social scientists have employed to unpack its history. It builds on the most significant divide in recent historiography on Mexico: social versus political history. ‘Social’ approaches tend to invoke the *down-to-top* permeability of political structures under the PRI state, a view that echoes the notion that states have limited autonomy and rather constitute a ‘reflection’ or ‘crystallisation’ of the social (i.e. systems theory in political science, structural functionalism, behaviouralism, post-structuralism). In contrast to social accounts, perspectives emphasising the ‘political’ adopt a *top-to-down* approach to the political process, established in hierarchy, allowing for domination, enabling internal colonisation, and accounting for the influence of macro structures over lesser social configurations. The section argues that an approach taking into account national elites, federal institutions and transnational geographies seems necessary to make sense of key processes in Mexico’s history, such as the PRI regime’s formidable ability to impose swift, top-down and highly unpopular political agendas (agendas associated with crony capitalism, Mafiosi corporativism, low wages, low social investment, privatisation, radical neoliberal programmes, etc.) and collect an enormous portion of the benefits generated by these processes *despite* the protest and resistance that social histories rightly underscore and investigate. Broader geographies of power are necessary to account, also, for the neglected influence of global processes (and particularly U.S. interests) in political outcomes in Mexico. In this respect, the chapter notes how U.S. interventionism became ‘embedded’ in Mexico’s political system, as in many other Latin American countries, by supporting and influencing the development of its national security capabilities after WW II. Finally, the PRI’s formidable ability to structure coherent and centralised protection rackets on criminal economies (in particular transnational drug trafficking and transborder contra-

band) at a national scale (an ability greatly missed today) requires us to reckon with processes, institutions and markets of national and transnational stature. Building on perspectives that underline national histories, broader geographies of power and global regularities, the second part of the chapter looks at the early history of ‘outlaw’ economies in the PRI period, noting, in particular, the input of the bandit in the construction of the postrevolutionary state.

The PRI regime

The PRI party ran the entire state apparatus in Mexico. It staffed every political and bureaucratic position, both in the state and in the regions, and without any interruption or challenge, from the early 1930s to the late 1980s¹²⁹. The regime was perceived as a ‘softer’ form of dictatorship in the sense that, in contrast to the military dictatorships in Latin America during the Cold War, it was successfully camouflaged as a pluralist, liberal and non-repressive political system, transferring power in a timely and peaceful fashion at the end of every six-year presidential term, giving intellectuals ampler margins to criticise the system, and claiming to embody the aspirations of the working classes through its elaborate corporative system¹³⁰. Unlike all of Latin America, there was never a coup d’état, a mass rebellion, an armed insurgency, a personal dictatorship, nor any kind of irregular alteration of the constitutional order. It was a ‘single-party regime’ in the sense that no real parties were allowed to exist, and in the sense that the party-controlled access to the legislative, the judicial, and the executive branches at all levels¹³¹. Like any other authoritarian state, access to power was not the

¹²⁹ Alternative political parties only began to make small gains at the municipal level in the mid-1980s. The first governor from a different party only won an election in 1989, and the presidency remained under PRI control until the year 2000. The best analysis of this late and very gradual political opening is: Lujambio, Alonso. *El poder compartido: un ensayo sobre la democratización mexicana*. Oceano, 2000.

¹³⁰ “La dictadura perfecta” is a term coined by renowned Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa. See: “Vargas Llosa: “México es la dictadura perfecta”.” *El País*, September 1st, 1990, https://elpais.com/diario/1990/09/01/cultura/652140001_850215.html.

¹³¹ A useful discussion on single party regimes is Smith, Benjamin. “Life of the party: The origins of regime breakdown and persistence under single-party rule.” *World Politics*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2005, pp. 421-451. Smith notes how the fiscal constraints that parties face at their inception generate long-lasting trajectories. Elites, he argues, that “face organized opposition in the form of highly institutionalized social groups such as mass-mobilizing parties or dedicated foreign or colonial armies and that have little or no access to rent sources are likely to respond to these constraints by building party institutions to mobilize their own constituencies. By contrast, rulers who face only scattered opposition and enjoy access to plentiful rents confront no such forced moves. As a result, they tend not to build much in the way of a party organization”.

result of democratic elections and open processes (elections were fully ceremonial, often rigged) but of negotiations conducted *por debajo de la mesa* [under the table] amongst party elites expressing a centralised web of clientelar and patrimonial synapses. The extent to which politics under the PRI took place in inaccessible corridors makes the scholarly task of carving out its highly informal mechanisms a particularly difficult, but ultimately important one, given that the PRI represents the most stable and durable political regime in the third world in all of the 20th century. How did this happen?

The party, established in 1929, was the child of the Mexican Revolution. It originated as a kind of ‘junta’ or assembly of regional *caudillos* [regional military strongmen] rather than a party in the mass, modern sense. It was a political platform meant to group and bridge the interests of revolutionary victors, lay down common rules to stop the civil war, and provide space for a decisively weak central government. Caudillos, in control of local, often disjointed bands of armed men generated by the revolution, traded nominal adherence to the party in return to do as they pleased in their regional domains. This loose ‘compromise’ behind the establishment of the PRI party laid down, however, the basis for a future, national state. The fact that the Mexican state was born from a political process centred around the creation of a party made *party* and *state* equivalent bodies. In any case, the structure created in the 1920s with the objective of preserving regional autonomy, by the mid-1930s began to do just the inverse. Its capacity to transfer power away from regional actors and towards the centre grew, in particular, by deploying an increasingly centralised and able structure allocating patronage and spoils. By driving the allocation of patronage away from caudillos and caciques, and luring the working masses closer to the federation, the centre (and the party elite) became strengthened.

The process of incorporating the masses into a more centrally managed system of social governance began with the demand that mobilised the Mexican Revolution: *reparto agrario* [land distribution]. Landless peasants, representing more than 96% of the rural population,

longed for a piece of an hacienda¹³². The PRI at this early hour (1930s) began to weave the first pillar of a centrally managed corporative system by trading land in return for affiliation to ‘official’ peasant organisations. Eager campesinos in want of *hacendado*’s land could only realistically get it through one of these party organisations¹³³. The first pillar of the PRI regime, the so-called Sector Campesino, was established by means of a transparently populist ‘fishing-net’. This quid-pro-quo with the masses soon expanded into labour, constituting the Sector Obrero, where only PRI-affiliated labour had a realistic chance of securing benefits. In other words, the party began to establish its grip over the masses by becoming what Octavio Paz called a *philanthropic ogre* providing land to peasants and rights to labour in return for incorporation and allegiance¹³⁴. As I explain below, whereas this formidable corporative structure would remain in place for more than seven decades, its ‘populist’ and ‘grass-root’ orientation would only last a few years. By the 1940s, *reparto agrario* was downscaled and labour rights began once again to be curtailed. A much more entrepreneurial mindset took over the PRI party: theirs was to a capitalism of enablers, of *compadres*, with little regard for the masses they claimed to represent. By the time of this popular setback, the general framework for the incorporation of the Mexican masses was already in place.

The centralisation of patronage networks during this early period was enabled, in addition, by a relatively swift transition from a regionalised revenue structure to a largely federal one. Centralising taxation encouraged the centralisation of patronage, mining the autonomous power of actors in municipalities and regions and enhancing the reach of the federal government and the executive branch¹³⁵. As Smith notes, “[f]iscal policies introduced during the 1940s and early 1950s increased the centralisation of revenue collection in the hands of the federal government, stripping states and municipalities of political autonomy”¹³⁶. This shift in tax collection further weakened the ability of regional brokers to directly purchase social

¹³² Cockcroft, James D. "Mexico: Class formation, capital accumulation and the state." *Science and Society*, vol. 49, no. 2, 1985, pp. 232-235.

¹³³ Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, p.6.

¹³⁴ Paz, Octavio. *El ogro filantrópico: historia y política 1971-1978*. Seix Barral, 1979.

¹³⁵ Smith, Benjamin T. "Building the state on the cheap". *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938–1968*, edited by Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith, Duke University Press, 2014.

¹³⁶ *Idem*, p. 256.

adherence by themselves, making them instead intermediaries (at best) or dependents (at worst) of the federation. The centralisation of the revenue system, despite resistance from regional powers, was almost complete by the late-1940s.

Revenue, increasingly centralised, was nevertheless critically insufficient. In fact, as noted by Smith, Mexico ranked lowest in revenue per-capita in Latin America for most of the PRI period¹³⁷. This resulted, as Aboites has argued, from a policy of tax exemptions used both to cement the relationship between the state and the masses (in particular, by not taxing communal land allocations, or *ejidos*) but more importantly, a policy of tax exemptions and privileges used to cement relationships with capital¹³⁸. British economist Nicholas Kaldor, commissioned by the Mexican government in the 1970s to undertake a study of the revenue system, concluded that considering the alleged social aims of the PRI regime, its revenue system had no global parallel in its favouritism for big business¹³⁹. This translated, unsurprisingly, into very low levels of social spending, a category where the ‘philanthropic’ regime ranked amongst the last in Latin America¹⁴⁰. This striking state of austerity enhanced the importance of rent-seeking and extortionist practices in the reproduction and articulation of PRI hegemony. An increasingly centralised allocation of ‘licenses’ to appropriate public authority allowed those at high levels to pocket vast fortunes and those working at the base to make a living¹⁴¹. The officially sanctioned misappropriation of authority for rent-seeking purposes became a crucial, if often unaccounted, political economy in the making of the PRI state. Compensating in important ways for the lack of revenue, abusing the law became an alternative highway to build a political class and operationalise a state bureaucracy perpetually short

¹³⁷ Idem.

¹³⁸ Aboites, Luis. *Excepciones y privilegios: modernización tributaria y centralización en México, 1922-1972*. Colegio De Mexico AC, 2003.

¹³⁹ Cited in: Hansen, Roger D. *The politics of Mexican development*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974. For an analysis of the extremely pro-business orientation of the Mexican revenue system, see also: Cypher, James M. *Estado y capital en México: política de desarrollo desde 1940*. Siglo XXI, 1992, pp. 100-103.

¹⁴⁰ Smith, Benjamin T. “Building the state on the cheap”. *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938–1968*, edited by Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith, Duke University Press, 2014.

¹⁴¹ Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

of resources. As Niblo¹⁴², Morris¹⁴³, Flores Pérez¹⁴⁴, and many others have noted, beginning in the 1940s, extortionist practices became much more than a footnote to the operation of the political system in Mexico and embodied instead the very mechanism articulating power relations at multiple levels and allowing for the regime to perform relatively well despite its ‘formal’ destitution. Importantly, a key area in the centralisation of ‘abuse’ (as Alan Knight has called it¹⁴⁵) was the reorganisation of an overlooked but particularly important economy emerging in the 1940s: transnational criminal activity.

But before discussing trajectories in criminal markets and their role in the making of the early PRI state, I will briefly describe the different frameworks through which political and social scholars have made sense of this longevous, and highly peculiar, system of national governance. The PRI regime has been studied from several perspectives, and a quick overview of the key divides in its historiography will allow me to note the additional layers of analysis that my work seeks to contribute.

Historiographical approaches to the PRI regime

In the 1970s, historiographical approaches to the PRI regime tended to emphasise its seemingly centralised, hegemonic, and authoritarian character. These *top-to-down* views of political agency in Mexico, thinking ‘state’ as a relatively independent actor in the historical process, underlined the regime’s surprising capacity to cling on to power and impose social agendas. The presence of a ‘strong’ and ‘centralised’ state in Mexico was a given, noted by underlying qualities such as its particularly robust form of presidentialism, its highly efficient corporative grip over the working classes, its extensive bureaucratic capabilities, the absence of political options and democratic processes, as well as the extreme polarisation in wealth

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Morris, Stephen D. *Corruption & politics in contemporary Mexico*. University of Alabama, 1991.

¹⁴⁴ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *El estado en crisis: crimen organizado y política: desafíos para la consolidación democrática*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2009.

¹⁴⁵ Alan Knight notes that, after the Mexican revolution, the state in Mexico grew in three respects: “it expanded its income and payroll (in a limited way), it acquired a mass base, and it deployed greater regulatory powers (over land, labour, property, education, the church, drug enforcement, etc.) *that could be easily abused*” (own emphasis). See Knight, Alan. “Narco-Violence and the State in Modern Mexico.” *Violence, coercion, and state-making in twentieth-century Mexico: The other half of the centaur*, edited by Wil G. Pansters, Stanford University Press, 2012, p. 307.

and power characterising its society. The ‘social’ capacity to affect the ‘political’ was perceived as highly limited; the state apparatus was much more responsive to the interests of the party elite and its social intermediaries than to any social bases. The passive masses were exploited by a hierarchy established for the benefit of capital and the corrupt appetites of the political elite. Centralised PRI rule was all-pervasive, uncontested, homogenous, and elitist. Categories like asymmetry and hierarchy were the kind of voices used to describe a landscape fitted for ‘national’ historical accounts, attentive to macro structures, condensable in general processes.

Proponents of this *top-to-down* approach were called the *revisionist* school. They were ‘revisionist’ in the sense that they were challenging the allegedly pluralistic, paternalistic, democratic, and generally benevolent nature of the PRI regime held by previous historians of the *oficialismo*. Key works included Pablo Gonzalez Casanova’s “La democracia en Mexico” (1965), which analysed socioeconomic indicators under the PRI regime and characterised the political process as one invested on ‘internal colonisation’; Arnaldo Cordova’s “La ideología de la Revolución Mexicana” (1973) and “La política de masas del Cardenismo” (1974), which underlined the *top-to-down* orientation of the political process made possible by Mexican corporativism; “Authoritarianism in Mexico”, by Jose Luis Reyna and Richard S. Weinert (1974)¹⁴⁶, which underscored how corporativism ‘restrained’ the kind of social action that one would expect in situations of extreme inequality like PRI’s Mexico; Judith Adler Hellman’s “Social Control in Mexico and the Mexican political system” (1986), highlighting the much more extensive use of repression used to contain social demands, as well as Roger Bartra’s “Campesinado y poder político en México” (1982), which framed the whole issue in strong Marxian terms.

¹⁴⁶ Two particularly useful reviews of Mexican historiography underlining the transition from state-centric to localist and culturalist views are: Knight, Alan. "Patterns and prescriptions in Mexican historiography." *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2006, pp. 340-366; and Rubin, Jeffrey W. "Decentering the regime: culture and regional politics in Mexico." *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1996, pp. 85-126. These reviews were very useful in pointing to me key references of the post-revisionist school in Mexican historiography and underlining key contrasts between structural and post structural apprehensions of Mexico’s past. Additional historiographical reviews also include: Benjamin, Thomas. “Recent Historiography of the Origins of the Mexican War.” *New Mexico Historical Review*, vol. 54, no. 3, 1979, p. 169; and Vaughan, Mary K. “Cultural approaches to peasant politics in the Mexican revolution.” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 79, no. 2, 1999, pp. 269-305.

After the 1980s, however, *post-revisionist* accounts of the nature of politics under the single-party regime began to challenge these ideas. From a state-centred approach emphasising PRI's political hegemony and a preference for 'national' histories, the interest shifted to more regionally focused, culturalist accounts challenging the idea of even and unidirectional domination covering the whole geography of Mexico. 'Social' historians began to note that PRI power was not all that 'unilateral', 'uniform' and 'top-down', but the result of 'negotiations', 'resistances', 'compromises' and 'interactions' between the powerful and the subaltern. The criticism in these works was inspired by Foucault's ideas on 'governmentality', which gave weight to notions like the 'decentred administration of life', the '*how* rather than the *why*' of power and 'micro' disciplinary technologies¹⁴⁷. Rather than a coherent and uniform political process, the diversity of *muchos Mexicos* seemed to cancel the viability of a 'national' history, opening the door instead for a more narrow but detailed description of the multiple realities contained in *micro-historias* [micro histories]. The task of the *new* historian was understood more as a lookout for variation rather than generalisation, regularities, or historical synthesis. *Post-revisionist* accounts, therefore, documented the multicultural, multifocal, multidirectional trajectories of power relations in Mexico. Peasants, ranchers, industrial workers, social movements, households, women, social groups, and many other *subalterns* ignored by traditional accounts became the focus of a new breed of social scientists.

The pioneering work in this regard was Luis González' "Pueblo en Vilo"¹⁴⁸, a 1972 ethnographic account of rural Mexico which showed how local communities could exist in total isolation to the alleged national torrent. The book focused on the present, inspired a regional and cultural *re-visiting* of Mexico's past aimed at bringing down the state-centric 'myths' of revisionist history. In this respect, Alan Knight's examination of the Mexican Revolution was perhaps the most important work reassessing the heterogeneity of the social in the revolution. His assertion that *many Mexicos* (classes, ethnicities, regional interests, social groups, demands) produced *many Revolutions* (rather than a uniform and generalisable conflict of

¹⁴⁷ A powerful criticism of the more 'micro'-focused interpretation of Foucault's work is: Jessop, Bob. "Constituting another Foucault effect: Foucault on states and statecraft." *Governmentality*, Routledge, 2010, pp. 64-81.

¹⁴⁸ González, Luis. *Pueblo en Vilo. Microhistoria de San José de Gracia*. Colegio de México, 1968.

explotados versus *explotadores*) captures his attempt to problematise national history by looking closer and digging deeper¹⁴⁹.

In 1994, Nugent and Joseph coordinated the key book on Mexican culturalism, “Everyday Forms of State Formation”¹⁵⁰. It underlined the way in which local popular cultures affected the revolutionary process and the early decades of the PRI, stressing in particular how local agency led to negotiated, rather than imposed, political outcomes of heterogeneous character. Other historians became interested in dissecting the alleged all-powerful character of the PRI corporative system by noting how ‘incorporation’ to its mass organisations did not necessarily translate into ‘top-down’ control: the corporate system in which the regime rested was less about control and more about compromise¹⁵¹. Gillingham and Smith used the term “dictablanda” to underscore the limits that “salient popular bargaining and veto power” imposed on the party elite¹⁵². Research on regional *caciques* (most notably Ankerson¹⁵³ and Pansters¹⁵⁴) was extremely influential for noting the persistence of patrimonial governance and pockets with high degrees of autonomy (especially) in the early PRI period. The work on Mexican *caciques* represented a major contribution to Mexican studies not only because it problematised the ‘national’ by noting the autonomy of the ‘regional’, but also because these works noted for the first time that violence and coercion played important roles in the construction of hegemony. Regional accounts began to uncover the input of violence in a country cast as an exception in a continent where state repression had played a heavy hand.

¹⁴⁹ Knight, Alan. *The Mexican Revolution*. University of Nebraska Press, vol. 2, 1986.

¹⁵⁰ Nugent, Daniel, and Gilbert M. Joseph. *Everyday Forms of State Formation. Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*. Duke University Press, 1994.

¹⁵¹ Rubin, Jeffrey W. "Decentering the regime: culture and regional politics in Mexico." *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1996, pp. 85-126.

¹⁵² Gillingham, Paul, and Benjamin T. Smith. *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938–1968*. Duke University Press, 1993.

¹⁵³ Ankerson, Dudley. *Saturnino Cedillo and the Mexican Revolution in San Luis Potosí*. Northern Illinois University, 1984.

¹⁵⁴ Pansters, Wil G. *Política y poder en Puebla: formación y ocaso del cacicazgo avilacamachista, 1937-1987*. Benemérita Univ. Autónoma de Puebla, 1998.

As Pansters notes, “much scholarly work on Mexico [...] tended to focus on “ballots” but has had troubles accommodating the “bullets” in a comprehensive interpretation”¹⁵⁵.

The regional accounts and historiographical critiques of Jeffrey W. Rubin articulated perhaps the most extreme attack on hegemonic views of the PRI by arguing that no single system of politics operated in the country¹⁵⁶. Smith’s analysis of the history of revenue underscored the extreme fiscal limitations of a supposedly strong *centro*¹⁵⁷. Hernández Rodríguez questioned the alleged hegemony of the federal executive by documenting the autonomy of state governors and municipal presidents¹⁵⁸. Building from social anthropology, subsequent studies looked at informal economies (such as street vendors) to describe the complex synapses of informal constellations structuring everyday governance in urban peripheries¹⁵⁹. What informed these views was an idea of the state, not as the embodiment of “institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of [...] citizens”, but a reflection of compromises and negotiations taking place “in multiple local sites of contestation such as workplaces, families, associational groups, and institutions”¹⁶⁰. By de-emphasising ‘elite history’, social histories provided a much more realistic understanding of the limitations of PRI governance, the input of social agency and the unnoticed input of state violence lacking in previous literature.

While social historians did not seek to ‘de-politicise’ history, the strong impulse given to social accounts and micro-narratives inevitably drove interest away from structures, elite

¹⁵⁵ Pansters, Wil G., ed. *Violence, coercion, and State-making in twentieth-century Mexico: The other half of the Centaur*. Stanford University Press, 2012, p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ Rubin, Jeffrey W. "Decentering the regime: culture and regional politics in Mexico." *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1996, pp. 85-126.

¹⁵⁷ Smith, Benjamin T. "Building the state on the cheap". *Dictablenda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938–1968*, edited by Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith, Duke University Press, 2014.

¹⁵⁸ Rodríguez, Rogelio Hernández. *El centro dividido: la nueva autonomía de los gobernadores*. El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Internacionales, 2008.

¹⁵⁹ For example: Cross, John C. "Debilitando al clientelismo: la formalización del ambulante en la ciudad de México." *Revista mexicana de sociología*, vol. 59, no. 4, 1997, pp. 93-115. Also: Esquivel, Edgar, et al. *La República informal: el ambulante en la Ciudad de México*. Tecnológico de Monterrey/MA Porrúa, 2008.

¹⁶⁰ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*. New York: Vintage, 1990, pp. 92-94, cited in Rubin, Jeffrey W. "Decentering the regime: culture and regional politics in Mexico." *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1996, pp. 85-126, p. 89.

power, and broader geographies of power. Atomising power rendered the historical and social sciences more exact, but also narrower and, in some occasions, sterile¹⁶¹. As da Costa notes, what began as a healthy criticism of the artificial separation between the infrastructure and the superstructure ended up in its complete inversion¹⁶². Paradoxically, the impetus of microhistories and its criticism of ideas like hierarchies and power differentials, corresponded to a historical period (the 1980s and 1990s) in which transformative ‘macro’ economic and political processes directed from ‘above’ (neoliberalism) were taking place with very little input (and resistance) from ‘below’. In other words, in its efforts to bring forth the demands of the subaltern, the more orthodox versions of culturalism and social history unwittingly obscured the very asymmetrical processes deployed by a period of ‘polarising’ global subalternity.

The challenge against the most extreme claims of social history originated in the political sciences with the influential movement *Bring-the-State Back-In* (BSBI) associated with Evans, Rueschemeyer, Skocpol, Levi, and of course, Tilly. Vu notes that BSBI was originally composed of four core groups of scholars who repositioned the state as a central (although no longer perceived as fully autonomous) agent in the historical process. *Historical institutionalists* focused more narrowly on the evolution of concrete institutions of the welfare state; *rational-choice institutionalists* saw the state from a revenue-centred perspective and as a rational, rent-seeking maximiser; supporters of the *state in society* emphasised antagonism between the state and society (focusing namely on revolution) whereas finally, a group of political scientists began to study *state formation* in a comparative and historical light¹⁶³. What characterised this last group (to which Tilly belonged) was that it approached state

¹⁶¹ A general critique of culturalist hegemony in social sciences is: Hall, Peter A. “The dilemmas of contemporary social science.” *Boundary 2*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2007, pp. 121-141.

¹⁶² da Costa, Emilia Viotti. “New Publics, New Politics, New Histories: From Economic Reductionism to Cultural Reductionism – in Search of Dialectics.” *Reclaiming the Political in Latin American History: Essays from the North*, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph, Duke University Press, 2001, pp. 17-31.

¹⁶³ Vu, Tuong. “Studying the state through state formation.” *World politics*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2010, pp. 148-175.

formation from a macro-sociological perspective rather than “the mesolevel and the microlevel of causal mechanisms”¹⁶⁴. As Vu notes, states in this last group were again treated “as institutional configurations whose formative processes are the focus of analysis”¹⁶⁵.

Attempts at historical reinterpretation and synthesis, and the inclusion of broader categories to understand the global connections of political processes, made their way back to the literature. Gilbert M. Joseph’s “Reclaiming the Political in Latin American History”¹⁶⁶ as well as “Close Encounters of Empire”¹⁶⁷ incorporated asymmetry as much as negotiation in the reassessment of political outcomes in the region. Joseph criticised the most extreme versions of social history in South America by noting how “much of the “newer” social and cultural history [...] defangs or expunges the political [...] diluting political analysis to the point of irrelevance”¹⁶⁸. These new approaches proposed instead broader “arenas of power”¹⁶⁹, the possibility of “historiographical synthesis”¹⁷⁰ and “world systems”. A key idea was that “political discourses, symbols, and identities are intimately related to social relations, economic processes, and power”¹⁷¹. Echoing critiques posed more harshly by authors like Vivek Chibber¹⁷², da Costa noted how the processes that generate subalternity cannot be explained exclusively through a narrow approach.

The life of a peasant in some lost village in the backland, the labor conditions of a worker in a factory, a woman’s status in a society, the opportunities denied or opened to a black person - all depend not only on their own struggle or on the cold logic of the market, but also on decisions taken by those in power.

¹⁶⁴ Idem, p. 149.

¹⁶⁵ Idem, p. 171.

¹⁶⁶ Joseph, Gilbert M., ed. *Reclaiming the Political in Latin American History: Essays from the North*. Duke University Press, 2001.

¹⁶⁷ Joseph, Gilbert M., Catherine LeGrand, and Ricardo Donato Salvatore, eds. *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*. Duke University Press, 1998.

¹⁶⁸ Joseph, Gilbert M. “Reclaiming “the Political” at the Turn of the Millennium.” *Reclaiming the Political in Latin American History: Essays from the North*, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph, Duke University Press, 2001, pp. 3-16, p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ Idem, p. 4.

¹⁷⁰ Idem, p. 13.

¹⁷¹ Idem, p. 7.

¹⁷² Chibber, Vivek. *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*. Verso Books, 2014.

... It is impossible to understand the history of the powerless without understanding the powerful. History from the bottom up can be as meaningless as history from the top down¹⁷³.

I would like to note three processes that, in contrast to some postulates in social histories, expose the power of the PRI state as authoritarian, elitist, and socially unresponsive. The first is the relative but notorious degree of autonomy that the party elite enjoyed from social bases, an autonomy that translated into an explicit capacity to impose highly unpopular agendas leading to structural and transformative change. As Davis¹⁷⁴, Centeno¹⁷⁵, Flores Pérez¹⁷⁶ and others have noted, the steep social transformations implemented by PRI elites in the key periods of Alemanismo (1940s) and Salinismo (1990s) underline the PRI's protracted ability to advance elite interests *despite* widespread opposition and with zero input from the 'bases'. This capacity to affect the social was rooted, in particular, in the regime's grip over the workers' movement and its striking capability to lay down a durable corporative system reflecting less the interests of peasants and workers and more the aims of party brokers, agrobusiness and industrialists. The second process signalling PRI's ability to concentrate power at its summit was the party's ability to successfully consolidate protection rackets in illicit economies in extended geographies and for remarkable periods of time. As I note in the following chapters, protection rackets under the PRI involved criminal and conspiratorial pacts operated from the pinnacle of state power. As many have noted, the drug market owed its remarkably low levels of violence to what Synder and Duran describe as a model of centralised institutional protection ('one protector, one criminal organisation') where federal institutions were key players in enabling selected drug traffickers. The extent to which the central state was able to regulate high-stake criminal activities is a capability that, reliant on a notoriously centralised political system, is greatly missed today.

¹⁷³ da Costa, Emilia Viotti. *The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories*. University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. xvii, cited in Idem, p. 4.

¹⁷⁴ Davis, Diane E. "Mexico's new politics: Changing perspectives on free trade." *World Policy Journal*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1992, pp. 655-671.

¹⁷⁵ Centeno, Miguel Angel. *Democracy within reason: technocratic revolution in Mexico*. Penn State Press, 2010.

¹⁷⁶ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *El estado en crisis: crimen organizado y política: desafíos para la consolidación democrática*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2009.

Finally, the third process highlighting power *above* is the ability of the U.S. government to affect political outcomes in its regional sphere of influence. The interest to look at the PRI system from a more global (or U.S.) perspective has been surprisingly scant in Mexican historiography despite the notorious place of Mexico in the history of America's global expansion. In contrast to national histories in Central America, the Caribbean, and other latitudes in which U.S. influence is noted as unambiguously central, isolationist approaches have characterised the history of 20th century Mexico. A 'global' approach to Mexican history could, nevertheless, enable two fruitful analytical possibilities: first, being able to *compare* Mexico to international political experiences and, second, being able to grasp how Mexico is *connected* to this global experience as well¹⁷⁷. With respect to the former, global comparisons "provide the spatial and chronological perspectives required for the appreciation of [...] histories [...] that the majority of scholars study in greater depth [...] but alas too often detached from potentially illuminating contexts with universal appeal"¹⁷⁸. The possibility to look for clues and signs in other places is particularly useful when trying to make sense of a phenomenon of transnational nature (in this case, transnational drug trafficking) with comparable and enlightening political repercussions taking place in multiple national arenas.

On the other hand, a global approach evokes connectivity within an international system and shows insightful connections between developments in Mexico and hierarchies and processes originating elsewhere. Looking for global connections "elucidates how history is made through the interactions of geographically (or temporally) separate historical communities"¹⁷⁹. A global perspective sensitive to transnational hierarchy shows that political and social outcomes are not only the 'synthesis' or 'reflection' of localised social processes, but the expression, too, of exogenous interests and external interventions. The military dictatorships and national security states in Central America and the Caribbean during the Cold War are examples of the weight that external, rather than internal factors, can have as pillars of

¹⁷⁷ O'Brien, Patrick. "Historical traditions and modern imperatives for the restoration of global history." *Journal of Global History*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2006, pp. 3-39.

¹⁷⁸ *Idem*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ Drayton, Richard, and David Motadel. "Discussion: the futures of global history." *Journal of Global History*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2018, pp. 1-21, p. 3.

sovereignty¹⁸⁰. Looking for global connections and comparisons in the history of transnational drug trafficking is particularly important to grasp regularities and patterns that, taking place in heterogeneous social landscapes, help us make sense of their input in state-making, global capitalism, extra-territorial expansion, colonialism and empire.

A useful exercise to grasp the divergent views on the input of the global in Mexican history is to briefly assess the contrasting views contained in the landmark contributions of Alan Knight and John Mason Hart on the history of the revolution and their views on the input of ‘America’ in the revolutionary process¹⁸¹. Focused on social forces, Knight argues that the causes of the revolution were multiple, heterogeneous, and diverse and that the outcome of the process had little to do with U.S. intervention. The causes of the revolution are to be found in the heterogeneous social mosaics generating *muchas revoluciones* –peasants, ranchers, miners, artisans, an emergent bourgeoisie, women, urban workers, cut across by strong regional variation and embodying a wide spectrum of mobilising grievances. Knight does note, however, the key importance of capitalist penetration of the Mexican countryside (the end of the commons and the commercialisation of agriculture) in laying the ground for the key antagonisms driving the revolutionary process. Admitting that U.S. interests played a key role in the deployment of this capitalism, Knight is critical, however, of ‘gringo-bashing’ accounts that focus on U.S. interests to make sense of political and socioeconomic outcomes in Mexico. Knight notes, for example, how key ‘revolutionary’ regions in the country were, paradoxically, those less penetrated by U.S. capital, a fact that points to domestic causes, rooted in local and variable interactions between multiple social groups, driving the eruption

¹⁸⁰ See: Coatsworth, John H. *Central America and the United States: the clients and the colossus*. Macmillan Reference USA, 1994; Holden, Robert H. “Securing Central America against communism: The United States and the modernization of surveillance in the cold war.” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1999, pp. 1-30.

¹⁸¹ Foran, John. "Reinventing the Mexican Revolution: The competing paradigms of Alan Knight and John Mason Hart." *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1996, pp. 115-131.

of Mexico's 'many revolutions'¹⁸². The actions of the U.S. government in Mexico, according to Knight, ought to be seen as a *careless driver* rather than a *willful homicide*¹⁸³.

In contrast, Hart adopts a more 'voluntarist' perspective to understand the causes and outcomes of the revolution, the role of capitalism in the countryside and the cities, and the strong relationship between this capitalism and empire. In his landmark work on late 19th century Mexico, Hart documents the extent to which the power of the Porfirio Diaz liberal dictatorship (one the longest dictatorships in the 19th century, which preceded the Mexican revolution) was contingent on the interests of "Texas landholders, New York bankers, railroad tycoons, the state and national print media, U.S. congressmen and senators, officers of the Texas state government, and U.S. Army officers"¹⁸⁴. Hart notes that Diaz did not rise to power out of social support alone, but owing also to the weapons, fighters and \$534,000 sent by U.S. financiers to pay for his Tuxtepec rebellion¹⁸⁵. The extent to which U.S. capital penetrated Mexico under Diaz is daunting: by 1900, more than half of U.S. foreign investment was located in Mexico, the U.S. controlled 80% of the country's mines, 80% of the rolling stock, most of the country's oil and the largest share of productive agriculture¹⁸⁶. According to Hart, and in opposition to Knight, the Revolution was not only caused by the extreme, U.S.-led capitalisation of rural Mexico (which led to enormous grievances amongst the peasants) but also by America's decision to remove its support for Diaz after the dictator opened Mexican markets to European competitors. Going further, Hart documents the extent to which U.S. support was crucial in determining *which* faction won the revolution. The leaders of the winning factions (the early core of the post-revolutionary regime) would reciprocate this support with oil, mines, railroads, and other concessions to U.S. capital. Echoing Hart's views on the revolutionary process, Friedrich Katz also notes how "every victorious faction

¹⁸² Knight, Alan. *The Mexican Revolution*. University of Nebraska Press, vol. 2, 1986, p. 227 (quoted in Foran, John. "Re-inventing the Mexican Revolution: The competing paradigms of Alan Knight and John Mason Hart." *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1996, pp. 115-131.)

¹⁸³ Knight, Alan. "The Business of Revolution." *London Review of Books*, 10 November 1988 (Knight's review of: Hart, John Mason. *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution*. University of California Press, 1987.)

¹⁸⁴ Hart, John Mason. *Revolutionary Mexico. The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution*. University of California Press, 1997, pp. 106f.

¹⁸⁵ *Idem*.

¹⁸⁶ *Idem*.

in Mexico's long revolution enjoyed the sympathy and in most cases the direct support of U.S. authorities"¹⁸⁷. Hart (and Katz) do not venture to explain the nature of U.S. involvement in building and supporting the subsequent PRI structure, but their findings and sensitivity to global processes offer a useful background to address this pending discussion.

Despite the little attention given by scholars to the input of the global and U.S. interventionism in Mexico, it is important to keep in mind that the history of the PRI regime, like the Diaz dictatorship and the revolution before it, was closely entangled with the global trajectory of American global interests. If the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz unlocked Mexico to America's initial imperial adventures, the consolidation of the PRI regime is organically connected with the end of WW II and the beginning of the Cold War in Latin America. Half a century later, the transition to the U.S.-led neoliberal order and the collapse of the Soviet Union was a global shift that, in Mexico, turned the PRI regime redundant and transformed Mexico's economy in accordance with U.S. interests. In every step of the way, key transformations in the global projection of U.S. power altered dramatically the political and social configuration of Mexico. In this respect, Hart's framework seems more suitable to incorporate transnational processes and geographies of power that Knight seems less inclined to account for.

To summarise this section: the PRI state is characterised here as an actor of importance, concentrating considerable power in the hands of the executive, with relative but considerable capabilities to impose agendas *despite* the resistance and negotiation highlighted by social histories, capable of neutralising social activism through co-optation and violence, and invested in a domestic agenda reflecting U.S. directives for the region. This capacity to force agendas was associated with its formidable ability to co-opt social intermediaries with patronage and racketeering opportunities, driving social representation away from the interests of the bases and closer to the interests of a political and economic elite in control of the party. Just as labour markets under the control of racketeering mafias tend to benefit the racketeering *mafiosi* themselves and the capitalists who resort to them to discipline workers, Mexican

¹⁸⁷ Katz, Friedrich, and Loren Goldner. *The secret war in Mexico: Europe, the United States and the Mexican revolution*. The University of Chicago Press, 1981, p. 564.

corporativism, although a two-way street, was much more suited to advance the interests of PRI brokers and their capitalist sponsors than to effectively represent the demands of social bases (who unsurprisingly saw their living conditions decline once the corporativist system was put into place¹⁸⁸). Framed by a context of austerity, extortion played a key role in articulating governance under the PRI regime at all levels, but those ‘above’, rather than those ‘below’, were the key beneficiaries. Finally, the section argued that *comparing* and *connecting* Mexico to global trajectories is of key importance to better grasp how developments ‘outside’ compare and affect configurations within. Building on this expanded analytical framework, the rest of this chapter lays down the core subject of the thesis: the role of criminal economies in the making of the PRI state. This will involve, at this hour, looking at the political instrumentalisation of illegal markets in the early efforts to centralise political agency and promote capitalist modernity in postrevolutionary Mexico.

The making of the PRI regime: *Alemanista* centralisation

The PRI’s ability to foster economic growth, develop a middle class, provide public services, amongst other achievements, provided the regime with more than a ‘modicum’ of social legitimacy. By noting the input of coercion in the making of Mexican modernity, this thesis does not suggest that the long decades of PRI hegemony rested on coercive means alone. Pondering the respective weight of violence and consent in the key processes generating social compliance under the PRI regime is a complex discussion informing some of the tensions in Mexican historiography noted above. For example, while some scholars characterise the corporative system as a vehicle that allowed the masses to affect social policy, others underline the extent to which covert and overt coercion restricted the system’s potential to reflect

¹⁸⁸ Navarrete shows that, by 1950, the bottom 20% of the population received 6% of the national income, while 50% shared less than 20% of the pie. The top 10% enjoyed almost 50% of the national income. Inequality grew in subsequent decades. Similarly, Bortz shows that industrial workers lost more than half in real wages from 1939 to 1947. Wages would not recover their 1939 level until the 1970s, and only for a brief period. See: De Navarrete, Ifigenia M. *La distribución del ingreso y el desarrollo económico de México*. Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas, Escuela Nacional de Economía, 1960; and Bortz, Jeffrey. "Wages and Economic Crisis in Mexico." *The Mexican Left, Popular Movements and the Politics of Austerity*, edited by Barry Carr and Ricardo Anzaldúa Montoya, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, 1986.

social demands. Legitimacy and violence, of course, are not exclusionary processes but constitute rather a “knot of power relations”¹⁸⁹ symptomatic of the messiness and complexities characterising governance under the PRI.

Pansters provides a useful analytical framework to situate the role of legitimacy and different forms of violence in historiographical perspectives seeking to unpack PRI rule¹⁹⁰. Building on Gramsci, Pansters employs the categories ‘zones of hegemony’ and ‘zones of coercion’ to flesh out the input of consent and violence in the construction of Mexican modernity. The distinction between these categories is, of course, a matter of degree. Briefly stated, a zone of coercion enables a particular assemblage of state institutions, political actors, economic interests, and elite social groups to maintain/advance sectarian interests by deploying different forms of violence. This includes, for example, extrajudicial killings perpetrated by security agencies, the killing of activists or rival politicians, the creation of paramilitary forces to promote political and economic interests, and the violence implicated in everyday policing¹⁹¹. A zone of coercion is not merely inhabited by the possibility to deploy violence, but by the possibility to do so with impunity. In close association with the use of violence to secure political and economic interests under the PRI party, Pansters also notes the existence of ‘grey zones’ in which non-state actors, organically connected to the state, embody forms of para-institutional violence, and provide ‘plausible deniability’ to enablers. Echoing Robert Holden’s concepts of “public violence” and “field of the state”¹⁹², the notion of a ‘grey’ zone is particularly useful to situate the entanglements between state actors/institutions and organised crime noted in this work. Looking at the grey zones where “discretionary spaces [...] permit the evasion and/or selective application of the law” is particularly important because, as Pansters argues, “what goes on here deeply affects people’s daily lives, the workings of

¹⁸⁹ Vaughan, Mary K. *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940*. University of Arizona Press, 1997, pp. 19-20.

¹⁹⁰ Pansters, Wil G. "Zones of state-making: violence, coercion, and hegemony in twentieth-century Mexico." *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Other Half of the Centaur*, edited by Wil G. Pansters, Stanford University Press, 2012, pp. 3-42. See also: Pansters, Wil G. "Drug trafficking, the informal order, and caciques. Reflections on the crime-governance nexus in Mexico." *Global Crime*, vol. 19, no. 3-4, 2018, pp. 315-338.

¹⁹¹ While the emphasis lies on violence originating from state actors and institutions, this does not exclude the possibility of violence deployed against the state (as transpired, for example, during the implementation of land reform).

¹⁹² Holden, Robert H. *Armies without Nations: Public Violence and State Formation in Central America, 1821-1960*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

criminal organizations, political parties, and state-making in general”¹⁹³. The limited attention in Mexican historiography to coercive processes in the making of the PRI regime makes this category timely and useful to note what kind of social demands were coerced, as opposed to which were ‘incorporated’. As I note below, coercion and grey zones are particularly useful categories to make sense of key political outcomes that transpired under the transformative period of Miguel Alemán’s presidency.

The importance of coercion in the state-making process should not mean losing sight of the state’s capacity to meet, rather than repress, social demands. In contrast to coercion, processes involving ‘zones of hegemony’ bring social actors to the negotiating table and articulate governance through consent. As Jessop notes, “the long-term success of a hegemonic project will depend on a flow of material concessions to the subordinate social forces”¹⁹⁴. Put differently, an analysis of the zone of hegemony prioritises processes “oriented towards establishing a common moral and social project between rulers and ruled, consensus-based mechanisms, rules, networks, and ideologies of identification and consent”¹⁹⁵. In the Mexican context, the ability of social forces to affect social policy resulted, in particular, from popular mobilisation. The prominent record in social mobilisation (‘*marchas*’)¹⁹⁶ is important to note the input of popular agency in the political process and the extent to which popular demands were able to mobilise support “and increase the state’s costs for disregarding their demands”¹⁹⁷. Paradoxically, when mobilisations led to policy changes, they tended to reinforce authoritarian tendencies. As I note below, this was precisely what transpired under the presidency of Lázaro Cardenas. What I mean to underline here is that, while this

¹⁹³ Pansters, Wil G. "Zones of state-making: violence, coercion, and hegemony in twentieth-century Mexico." *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Other Half of the Centaur*, edited by Wil G. Pansters, Stanford University Press, 2012, p. 211.

¹⁹⁴ Jessop, Bob. "Gramsci as a spatial theorist." *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2005, pp. 421-437.

¹⁹⁵ Baitenmann, Helga. "Counting on State Subjects: State Formation and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Mexico." *State Formation: Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Christian Krohn-Hansen and Knut G. Nustad, Pluto Press, 2005, p. 171; cited in: Pansters, Wil G. ed. *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Other Half of the Centaur*. Stanford University Press, 2012.

¹⁹⁶ Favela, Gavia Diana Margarita. *Popular Protest and Political Reform in Mexico, 1946-1994: The dynamics of State and Society in an Authoritarian Regime*. PhD dissertation, Tulante University; cited in Pansters, Wil G. ed. *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Other Half of the Centaur*. Stanford University Press, 2012.

¹⁹⁷ Idem.

thesis focuses on making sense of the input of coercion in the making of Mexican modernity, this does not mean to suggest that stability under the PRI did not result from the state's ability to incorporate and meet social demands.

In the mid-1930s, the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) established the foundations of the corporative system in Mexico by setting in motion the early stages of mass-incorporation. *Cardenismo* laid down the PRI regime's popular foundations by exploiting the most salient demand of the Mexican masses who took part in the revolution: *reparto agrario* [land reform]. Land redistribution under Cardenismo reached, by far, its historical high, and peasants enjoyed concessions and benefits from the state that would surpass anything that followed thereafter. The alliance between the state and the masses extended, likewise, to the urban proletariat, which benefiting from constitutional reforms saw its living standards reach its highest level in the entire 20th century. These notoriously populist and nationalistic policies earned Cardenismo the highest place in the pantheon of the Mexican left, but these policies ultimately laid down, as well, the mechanisms that would allow the PRI regime to orient the working and peasant movements in a very different direction. As Tzivi Medin notes, Cárdenas laid down the corporative system "as an instrument of centralisation, control and manipulation to conduct a class struggle in the countryside and the city, as well as to resist the influence of the U.S. government". However, "this political apparatus could also be put in the service of a very different national project [seeking] to curtail agrarian redistribution, discipline workers and peasants"¹⁹⁸. Tanalís Padillas points to similar ideas: "[I]f Cárdenas had opened the door to campesino leadership, he also reinforced the wielding of presidential power and the consolidation of an official party that would hold office for seventy-one years. Cárdenas encouraged the mobilization of popular sectors, but only within separate state-sponsored unions and federations. Moreover, Cárdenas used this populist structure towards fortifying executive power. State-sponsored reforms would thus continue to depend on the goodwill of whoever held the presidential office".¹⁹⁹ In effect, the populist orientation of

¹⁹⁸ Medin, Tzvi. "El sexenio alemanista: ideología y praxis política de Miguel Alemán." *Ediciones Era*, vol. 60, no. 1, 1990, p. 60.

¹⁹⁹ Padilla, Tanalís. *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax-Priista, 1940-1962*. Duke University Press, 2008, p. 6.

Cardenismo, instrumental in laying down the early blocks of Mexican presidentialism and establishing the corporative pillars of social governance under the single-party system, began to relent and change its course even before Cárdenas left office. Economic crisis, problems with the industrialists, widespread land-related conflict, and U.S. pressure forced down the hand of the only 'leftist' government in the entire history of modern Mexico²⁰⁰. As Arnaldo Cordova correctly argues, the pillars laid down by this 'populist moment' become the vehicles allowing for the notoriously unequal capitalist orientation subsequently adopted by the regime²⁰¹.

In spite of earning a more visible place in the national geography, the Cárdenas presidency and that of his successor, Manuel Ávila Camacho (1940-1946), belonged still to a national landscape less characterised by a strong central government and more contingent on the regional intermediation of regional *caudillos*. As Alvarado puts it, "the relationship between national authority and regional leaderships, rather than embodying a relationship between a nucleus and a periphery, was instead a complex of alliances and coalitions between multiple territorial elites (...). The constitution of a national authority was a regionalised process exercised within specific spaces and times"²⁰². This exogenous orientation of the PRI system began to change course, however, under the subsequent, path-determining presidency of Miguel Alemán Valdés (1946-1952). It is at this hour when a landscape composed of the autonomous pull of regional powers began to give way to inertia concentrating power in an increasingly capable national government.

Alemanismo represented the 'charismatic' moment in which, finally, an unprecedented concentration of power in the hands of a relatively small, coalesced and ideologically coherent elite reached the Weberian threshold to impose a set of routines that framed the subsequent socioeconomic development of an extended, national geography. Perhaps more importantly, *Alemanismo* also represented the moment in which the footing of PRI power traded the post-

²⁰⁰ Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

²⁰¹ See: Córdoba, Arnaldo. "La política de masas del cardenismo." *Ediciones Era*, vol. 26, 1974.

²⁰² Mendoza, Arturo Alvarado. *El portesgilismo en Tamaulipas: estudio sobre la constitución de la autoridad pública en el México posrevolucionario*. El Colegio de México, 1992, p. 320.

revolutionary social embeddedness that laid down the basis of its corporative system for an embeddedness with capital. The corporative system, originally deployed to tame capitalism, became the vehicle that allowed the state to deploy, beginning in the 1940s, a particularly bold capitalist agenda with remarkably little popular resistance²⁰³. The alliance between the Alemanista elite and big business resumed the process of capitalist accumulation that the Mexican revolution had halted. The resulting ‘Mexican miracle’, covering the two following decades, embodied a process whereby economic development was tantamount “to growth without a correlative distribution of national income [...] therefore sharpening economic and social polarization both in the countryside and in the city”²⁰⁴. From Alemanismo onwards, the corporative system would play a crucial role in taming social mobilisation and empowering an agenda framed by the reactivation of a (crony) form of capitalism with little regard for the working classes. The consolidation of an agrarian bourgeoisie, well-connected with the party elite, would go hand in hand with an attack on collective rural property (‘egido’) and the transfer of public resources to benefit a nascent agroindustry²⁰⁵. Agricultural workers would lose about 40% of their income in the following three decades²⁰⁶. In the cities, workers would lose about half of their income²⁰⁷. As Stephen Niblo points out, “the drive for industrialization in Mexico in the decade of the forties consists of a transfer of resources from the rural population to private and public investors”²⁰⁸.

In the ideological plane, the ‘socialist’ and ‘redistributive’ discourse of Cardenismo was supplanted by a homily of carefully curated nationalism deployed to eliminate notions of class and redistribution from the public conversation. Leftist ideologies were labelled as ‘unpatriotic’, ‘foreign’ and ‘exotic’. Social progress was cast, from Alemanismo onwards, in strict technical-economist terms. A representative illustration of the official ideological line towed

²⁰³ Medin, Tzvi. “El sexenio alemanista: ideología y praxis política de Miguel Alemán.” *Ediciones Era*, vol. 60, no. 1, 1990, p. 57.

²⁰⁴ Idem, p. 174.

²⁰⁵ Idem, p. 57.

²⁰⁶ Gillingham, Paul, and Benjamin T. Smith, eds. *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in México, 1938–1968*. Duke University Press, 2014, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ Medin, Tzvi. “El sexenio alemanista: ideología y praxis política de Miguel Alemán.” *Ediciones Era*, vol. 60, no. 1, 1990, p. 45.

²⁰⁸ Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999, p. 5.

from Alemanismo onwards was enunciated in the speech that inaugurated Alemán's presidential campaign. As the chairman of the PRI party noted, "[s]ocialist politics and Creolle Marxism [...] are strangers in our homeland [...]. Communist and leftists are people without a country, orphans without a nation [...]. Faced with theories imported from foreign countries, we affirm the creed of 'Mexicanness', since far from conforming to the dictates of others, we believe in Mexico"²⁰⁹. The socialisation of this blatantly opportunistic ideology would be, however, relatively easy and straightforward given that the national government and its político-impresario elite directly controlled the greatest share of the media, all television channels, and the content of the entire public education programme in Mexico.

The combination of material and immaterial capabilities to inoculate social directives in a much more general sense ran parallel with a growing capacity to affect the political process at local levels. The power of intermediaries and brokering figures would no longer rest solely on their autonomy or social representativeness but became dependent on being functional to a political group increasingly in control of patronage flows. As noted above, the power of the presidency rested thereafter not only in its enormous ability to affect the legislative and judicial branches but in its capacity to unilaterally intervene in the politics of the states. Signs of the growing power in the hands of the central government and the president were already visible in the early days of Alemán's administration. In contrast to his predecessors (including Cárdenas and Ávila Camacho), Alemán was able to assemble his cabinet without incorporating members from other PRI groups²¹⁰. These cabinet officials were members of the very industrial bourgeoisie backing the president's efforts to give a new orientation to the PRI system. Likewise, Alemán renovated a state apparatus that had formerly exhibited a more 'plural' composition, becoming the administration with the lowest rate of continuity in public office since the end of the revolution. The ability of Alemán to align regional politics to his agenda was, similarly, unprecedented: twelve governors were unilaterally removed from office by presidential orders (the highest number in the entire PRI period), demonstrating the

²⁰⁹ Medin, Tzvi. "El sexenio alemanista: ideología y praxis política de Miguel Alemán." *Ediciones Era*, vol. 60, no. 1, 1990, p. 175.

²¹⁰ *Idem*, p. 48.

growing ability of the executive to intervene in the politics of the regions²¹¹. Political survival involved, more than at any time before, being on good terms with the occupant of Los Pinos and his political group. According to Medin, a ‘plural’ form of Mexican authoritarianism was giving way at this hour to a much more ‘unilateral’ form of autocracy embodied by the president²¹². However, rather than the source of this new power, Alemán and subsequent presidents were rather the expression of an elite consensus composed by interests of an emergent rural and industrial bourgeoisie, crony politicians invested in exploiting business opportunities, and the interests of the U.S. government with regards to its southern neighbour. In contrast to the social ‘consent’ supporting the ‘hegemony’ of Cardenismo –resulting from the state’s commitment to meet social demands– the pro-business agenda of Alemanismo addressed these social demands, instead, with mechanisms gravitating closer to coercion.

The empowerment of the executive branch under Alemanismo was the result of multiple processes. Here I would like to note three developments that gave Mexican presidentialism its distinct authoritarian stamp and that allowed for a relative but significant centralisation of political authority in the decades that followed the Alemán administration. The first was that ability of the PRI regime to establish a relative monopoly of violence²¹³. The subordination

²¹¹ Idem.

²¹² Idem, p. 45.

²¹³ The use of the term ‘monopoly of violence’ is meant here to denote an ideal type. Ideal types are heuristic devices employed to measure the extent to which a researcher’s observations conform or diverge from an ‘analytical construct’ aimed at highlighting both continuities and discontinuities in historical trajectories. In this case, Weber’s construct seeks to highlight (and thus contrast) the degree to which the ability to exercise violence is (ideally) concentrated or diluted within a particular geography and historical period. Weber’s emphasis on ‘centralisation’ and ‘monopolisation’ in his definition of ‘state’ was inspired by the teachings of his mentor, Rudolph Sohm – the original creator of term of “monopoly of violence” – who, like Weber, tied the emergence of modern political orders to the incorporation of local powers into a ‘national’ project. Weber’s emphasis on ‘centralisation’ and ‘monopolisation’ as requisites for the formation of modern states inspired a multiplicity of ‘neo-Weberian’ frameworks (Skocpol, Mann, Levi) casting the state as an actor non-reducible to social forces and thus enjoying important margins of autonomy. It was Charles Tilly who, more than anyone else, tied state-formation to the ‘centralisation’ of coercive capabilities, both in an external and internal sense. In Mexico, the ability of the state to ‘monopolise’ or ‘centralise’ the means of violence has been historically fluid. According to Alan Knight, the PRI regime successfully established a Weberian (i.e. ideal) monopoly of violence at the national level between 1930 to 1950, a period that shifted the axis of Mexican politics from regional autonomy to national governance. This, however, did not involve the entire elimination of violent ‘entrepreneurialism’, but rather the centrifugal pull that had formerly characterised it. Violent entrepreneurs, in other words, became part of a national project. Knight periodises the degree of political centralisation in 20th century Mexico in four phases. The first phase (1917-29) is characterised as a “Darwinian period of internal conflict” punctuated by “revolts from within the ranks of the revolutionary army” and “recurrent victories of the central government”. Dissidents “were thinned and the penalties of insurgency rammed home”. (Knight, 1999) The following period (1929 to 1952) marks a time where revolts became increasingly feeble, and the state’s violent capabilities to suppress them much more pronounced. By the end of Alemanismo, the national composition of the means of violence edged closer to the Weberian ideal, according to Knight. This new period (1952-1987) was possible because the

of the army to civilian rule and the co-optation or elimination of the last recalcitrant *caudillos* eliminated the potential for an insurrection that had plagued the country's entire history. Rather than a threat to the regime, violence thereafter empowered, rather than challenged, the authoritarian synapses supporting PRI hegemony. An important process in constructing the PRI's 'monopoly' of violence was the subordination of the army to civilian rule, which set Mexico apart in a continent plagued by military dictatorships and coups d'état²¹⁴. Sevin notes that it was the Alemanista presidency where the 'subordination' of the army to civilian rule was finally completed: "[t]he absolute supremacy of the presidency over the army was not a given at the beginning of Alemán's six-year term, but it would be so by the end of his administration"²¹⁵. Sevin, however, goes a bit too far in characterising civilian preponderance over the army as an 'absolute' relationship of subordination. While the subordination of the army to civilian rule is an undeniable 'triumph' of the PRI regime, it is important to note that this 'subordination' did not eliminate certain margins of autonomy available to the armed forces. The army's role in policing the countryside and conducting brutal campaigns against social groups was, in fact, the foundation of this relative autonomy. As Rath notes, "as long as army officers agreed to do the PRI's dirty work, they were free to engage in land specula-

party machine "possessed enormous powers of patronage, maintained party cohesion, avoided schisms and defeated the genuine opposition parties with relative ease" (Knight, 1999). Key to this (ideal) centralisation of power and "monopoly of violence" was, in my view, the expansion of the state's policing capabilities embodied, in particular, by the DFS. Positioning itself above the rule of law, the DFS became an important vehicle to deploy the violence intrinsic to the deployment of the modern, capitalist order embodied by the PRI party. In summary, the use of terms such as "monopoly of violence" and "political centralisation" is employed here in a strictly relative sense. It seeks to denote the Mexican state's changing capabilities to articulate the violence of actors and institutions who, often reliant on extortion rackets enabled by the state, were ancillary in the construction of the national political project embodied by the PRI party. The collapse of this (relative) ability to monopolise in the 1990s gave much more power to non-state violent actors and regional powermen. Violent entrepreneurialism recovered its former centrifugal pull, leading the much more diluted, protracted, and incoherent organisation of the means of violence characterising Mexico today. See: Knight, Alan. "Political Violence in Post-revolutionary Mexico." In *Societies of Fear: The Legacy of Civil War, Violence and Terror in Latin America*, edited by Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt, Zed Books, 1999, pp. 105-124; Holden, Robert H. *Armies without Nations: Public Violence and State Formation in Central America, 1821-1960*. Oxford University Press, 2004; Lottholz, Philipp, and Nicolas Lemay-Hébert. "Re-reading Weber, re-conceptualizing state-building: from neo-Weberian to post-Weberian approaches to state, legitimacy and state-building." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2016, pp. 1467-1485; Anter, Andreas. "The Modern State and its Monopoly on Violence." In *The Oxford Handbook of Max Weber*, Oxford University Press, 2019; Lerch, Alejandro. *Charisma and bureaucracy in the late political writings of Max Weber*. Tesis de Licenciatura, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2010.

²¹⁴ Rodríguez, Rogelio Hernández. "Inestabilidad política y presidencialismo en México." *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1994, pp. 187-216.

²¹⁵ Medin, Tzvi. "El sexenio alemanista: ideología y praxis política de Miguel Alemán." *Ediciones Era*, vol. 60, no. 1, 1990, p. 172.

tion and logging, create private monopolies that supplied military equipment, smuggle contraband goods, protect alcohol monopolies, and possibly participate in the drug trade”²¹⁶. From Alemanismo onwards, “officers could still expect to wield political influence in the provinces, to graft, to resist central policies of rotation and retirement, and to enjoy autonomy in operational matters”, provided that they deployed the necessary violence to contain the social, political and economic antagonisms attached to PRI rule²¹⁷. Akin to other PRI actors, the army’s margin of autonomy was contingent on and conditioned to its functional role in ‘pacifying’ the country on behalf of its key beneficiaries. As I will note below, the intelligence services operated under a similar logic²¹⁸.

Second, a more centralised structure of power advanced through the concentration of revenue power, which took the country’s fiscal apparatus from orbiting the regions to orbiting the centre. The quick consolidation of a fiscal monopoly gave the executive and his allies a much greater say in the allocation of discretionary patronage, expanding their ability to affect local politics when necessary. Federal expenditures grew from 631 million pesos in 1942 to 4.5 billion pesos in 1950²¹⁹. In the countryside, regional *caciques* continued to dominate the Mexican landscape, but unlike *caciquismo* in the past, their power originated less from their bases and became more reliant on the party providing them with patronage to dispense to

²¹⁶ Rath, Thomas. *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960*. UNC Press Books, 2013.

²¹⁷ *Idem*, p. 168.

²¹⁸ Navarro notes how the election of 1952 signified the extent to which the Alemanista regime had consolidated control over the army. General Miguel Henriquez Guzman, a general with ample social, political, and military support advocating a partial return to the policies of the Lazaro Cárdenas, broke with the party and ran as an independent candidate against Alemán’s appointed successor, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines. The election was mired with fraud, leading to mass riots and opening the prospect of an armed rebellion. Despite manifestations of support, Henriquez stopped short of challenging the regime through a military revolt, especially because of the extent to which Alemanismo had been able to co-opt the armed forces. Henriquez electoral defeat signified the extent to which Mexican presidentialism had become consolidated. Ruiz Cortines, a loyal of Alemán, became his successor, perpetuating the socioeconomic and ideological orientation championed by Alemanismo. See: Navarro, Aaron W. *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938-1954*. Penn State Press, 2010, p. 253.

²¹⁹ This group of Alemanista tycoons were to become the leading business dynasties of the PRI regime. They included the Garza, Sada, Rocha and Azcarraga families, among others. See Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

their clients. As Pansters has noted, by this time, caciques “understood that serving as intermediaries within the new state and party structures would enable them to maintain local control. Those who were unwilling to adjust [...] suffered repression”²²⁰.

Third, the centralisation of power under Alemanismo was enabled by the state’s alliance with big business. The use of *reparto agrario* and support for militant unionism that allowed the Cárdenas presidency to challenge business and lay down the basis of the corporative system came to an end, making the party elite less dependent on the satisfaction of social demands and more reliant on its links (and actual partnerships) with capital. This translated into a policy of restricting the labour movement, a process that involved the systematic purge of Cardenista elements in the political and corporative system. As a former Supreme Court justice told U.S. diplomats, under Alemán “all of the experienced leftist leaders [...] [were] being ousted from their former positions”²²¹. Their places, in turn, were occupied by a highly corrupt and *mafiosi* breed of party racketeers known as *charros* imposed by the state to the labour and peasant movements. In this respect, Morris notes how ‘corruption’ helped to undermine the potential of social organisation by providing channels of upward mobility to key actors²²². According to Middlebrook, financial support for compliant *charros* helped defeat independent labour by matching declining contributions from membership with state funds²²³. Key to the alliance between the Alemanista state and big business was sheltering selected industrial tycoons from foreign competition through protectionist schemes, as well as providing them with enormous tax breaks with huge fiscal consequences for the country’s future²²⁴. For the following decades, these policies geared the interests of the country’s industrial class to the endurance of the PRI regime and vice-versa. The presidency of Miguel

²²⁰ Pansters, Wil G. *Política y poder en Puebla: formación y ocaso del cacicazgo avilacamachista, 1937-1987*. Benemérita Univ. Autónoma de Puebla, 1998, as cited in Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, p. 8.

²²¹ Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, p. 190.

²²² Morris, Stephen D. *Corruption & politics in contemporary Mexico*. University of Alabama Press, 1991.

²²³ Middlebrook, Kevin. *The paradox of revolution: Labor, the state, and authoritarianism in Mexico*. JHU Press, 1995.

²²⁴ Smith, Benjamin T. “Building the state on the cheap”. *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, edited by Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith, Duke University Press, 2014.

Alemán represents perhaps the most profound reconfiguration and effective centralisation of power in the history of Mexico.

Centralisation under *Alemanismo* also had a lot to do with the growing practice of allocating racketeering ‘licenses’ to allies, party members, social intermediaries, and bureaucrats. Knight notes how the systematic ‘abuse’ of expansive regulatory powers was a key mechanism to structure the PRI state²²⁵. From Alemán himself to his close political allies, to legislators, tax collectors, regulators, inspectors, prosecutors, union leaders, police officers, bureaucrats, garbage-collectors, etc., the PRI at this stage began to provide its brokers with a license to use public office to extort rents from the public. Doing so built an ‘invisible’ but ancillary political economy in a very material sense. In contrast to what is argued by Smith, who reasons that the federal state was weak because low taxation severely reduced both its coercive and co-optive powers²²⁶, here I underline the key importance of officially sanctioned rackets as a compensatory mechanism in support, precisely, of PRI’s coercive and co-optive capabilities. In other words, the centralised, authoritarian system that became established did not result only from the growing pool of fiscal resources in the PRI’s hands (which was quite limited, as Smith notes) but also from the ‘dark’ but very important economies generated by systematic public abuse and enabled by the party leadership. Niblo notes how corruption and centralisation overlapped under *Alemanismo* and thereafter:

This extraordinary public record of corruption begs the question of how the corruption could have happened. The Mexican system of extreme political centralism was at the heart of the problem. Absolute power is vested in the hands of the president for six years. The president is unrestrained by law, by the audit of public funds, or by the kind of political reality that flows from an independent legislature or judiciary. The lack of

²²⁵ Knight, Alan. “Narco-Violence and the State in Modern Mexico.” *Violence, coercion, and state-making in twentieth-century Mexico: The other half of the centaur*, edited by Wil G. Pansters, Stanford University Press, 2012, p. 307.

²²⁶ Smith, Benjamin T. “Building the state on the cheap”. *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, edited by Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith, Duke University Press, 2014.

presidential accountability is aided immeasurably by an extremely high level of secrecy. Finally, there is the phenomenon that Carlos Fuentes has described in “The Death of Artemio Cruz” as *la chingada*. This tradition of abusing the weak without a trace of conscience is also central to the process²²⁷.

In line with this increasingly articulate structure of state capabilities and party patronage, centralisation of power under Alemánismo advanced through a less visible but important domain: the criminal economy. Major criminal markets like contraband and drug trafficking had operated until this moment as political economies in some of the country’s most notable cacicazgos. Alemán’s coming to power and the establishment of a national security agency (the DFS) encouraged a process where the central state set to partly ‘capture’ these rackets by displacing autonomous actors and ‘reconfiguring’ protection rackets through allies and friends²²⁸. In Mexico, as in other authoritarian states, the creation of a national security apparatus after WW II had a lot to do with instrumentalising these economies to suppress political dissent. Alemán’s involvement in what had formerly constituted regional protection rackets (in contraband and drug trafficking) would have important long-term institutional consequences for the country’s future.

Reconfiguration of criminal markets under Alemánismo

Contraband in Mexico went back a long time. It became established during Spanish times, was rampant during the liberal period, and became a *cacique* economy in the years that followed the Revolution. For early post-revolutionary caciques in the North, controlling the transnational trafficking of goods, arms and drugs meant tapping into critical, low-barrier economies of key importance in a context of post-revolutionary austerity. Prohibition in the U.S. during the 1920s and early 1930s expanded the value of these rackets by introducing bootlegging to the political economy of border states. Bootlegging in Mexico, as in the

²²⁷ Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, p. 302.

²²⁸ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

U.S.²²⁹, became closely entangled with local politics and gave way to a more delinquent social type of smugglers linked to transnational mafias. Brothels and gambling at the border, luring U.S. clientele, operated under the protection (or direct ownership) of border caciques. Legality and illegality continued to blend.

As I note in detail in chapter five, the largest share of illicit trade at the Mexican-U.S. border concentrated in the eastern state of Tamaulipas. There, border cities like Matamoros, Tampico and Nuevo Laredo developed largely as the result of contraband activity²³⁰. Tamaulipas constituted the nearest point connecting Mexico's interior with the American East Coast, giving it a strategic place in the contraband of goods. Political heavyweight Emilio Portes Gil, who had served as Mexico's first president after the revolution, was Tamaulipas's decades-old cacique. Contraband rackets were a key political economy in support of his *cacicazgo*²³¹. When Alemán came to power, displacing regional caciques like Portes Gil was the primary route to consolidate central power and penetrate the regions. In practice, this not only meant displacing the caciques and their allies from formal positions of authority but subverting their control of illicit economies.

To vanquish *portesgilismo* from the Northeast, Alemán recruited a former governor of Tamaulipas, Francisco Castellanos, to bring down the *portesgilista* governor, Hugo Pedrero²³². The successful political manoeuvre led to the appointment of an Alemanista ally, Raul Gárate, as governor of the state, as well as the empowerment in the northeast region of Alemanista brokers Bonifacio Salinas and Tiburcio Garza. All these actors (Castellanos, Gárate, Salinas and Garza) not only became key political brokers in the Northeast but also became heavily involved in protecting contraband activity, enabling the early phases of a smuggling network that would control contraband operations in the Mexican Northeast for the following

²²⁹ Andreas, Peter. *Smuggler nation: how illicit trade made America*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

²³⁰ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

²³¹ Idem. See also : Lemus, J. Jesús. *El último infierno (Los Malditos 2): Más historias negras desde Puente Grande*. Grijalbo, 2016.

²³² Idem.

decades: the (PRI-supported) contraband organisation of Juan Nepomuceno Guerra (described in chapter 5). The displacement of *portegilismo* involved appointing direct representatives and friends of Alemán to head customs in the border cities to tap into the clandestine flows. Flores Pérez documents some concrete examples of what he describes as a seminal *institutional reconfiguration for illicit purposes* operated by Alemán at the northeastern border: Jesús Vidales Marroquin, who had been a representative of Alemán in Veracruz, was directly appointed by him through a presidential decree in 1947 as administrator of Nuevo Laredo customs. Juan Gómez Sariol, Alemán's personal friend, became administrator of customs in Tampico, while Miguel Solís Alemán, a relative of the president, was appointed head of customs in Matamoros²³³. Flores Pérez summarizes: "Control of customs, through persons linked to Alemán and his clique, provided systematic protection to organised smuggling of contraband goods and illicit drugs"²³⁴. Under the political protection of the Alemanista regime, the operation of contraband rackets in the Northeast shifted control from *cacique* dynamics and helped consolidate the Alemanista brand in northeastern Mexico.

Alemán's tightening grip over criminal rackets was replicated in the Northwest. There, the key figure protecting contraband and drug trafficking until Alemanismo was the regional cacique, Abelardo Rodríguez. Rodríguez was, like Portes Gil, one of the initial post-revolutionary presidents of Mexico., Rodríguez, an anti-communist politico-impresario, amassed as president one of the country's biggest fortunes²³⁵, only surpassed by Alemán years later²³⁶. Rodríguez's involvement in contraband, bootlegging and drug trafficking rackets dated to his tenure as governor of the Federal Territory of Baja California Norte (1923–1930)²³⁷. In this capacity, Rodríguez had taken over rackets formerly operated by a previous governor,

²³³ Idem.

²³⁴ Idem, p. 138 [own translation].

²³⁵ Vanderwood, Paul J. *Satan's playground: mobsters and movie stars at America's greatest gaming resort*. Duke University Press, 2010.

²³⁶ For accounts about the unprecedented level of personal graft in which Miguel Alemán indulged, see: Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999; Servín, Elisa. "Miguel Alemán o la desmesura del poder." *Revista de la Universidad de México*, vol. 618, 2002, pp. 11-14.

²³⁷ Vanderwood, Paul J. *Satan's playground: mobsters and movie stars at America's greatest gaming resort*. Duke University Press, 2010.

Esteban Cantu, who also consolidated power in this isolated region by tapping into drug trafficking and contraband²³⁸. In addition, as governor of Baja California, Rodríguez established the country's most notorious casino, Agua Caliente, in association with the Italoamerican mafia²³⁹. When president Cárdenas took office, a mechanism to eradicate the influence of Rodríguez was to issue a decree that prohibited the operation of casinos²⁴⁰. In the early 1940s, Rodríguez consolidated a major cacicazgo in the neighbouring state of Sonora, where he became one of the state's most prominent landowners²⁴¹. From there he continued to play a central role in contraband and drug trafficking in the Northwest. Like in Tamaulipas, the ascension of Alemán curtailed the power of Rodríguez by asserting Alemanista control over regional criminal activities. In this regard, a Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) cable reported that, after the ascension of Alemán, Rodríguez's place in the national drug trafficking business was drastically reduced in favour of Alemanista allies. These allies included, according to the report, Jorge Pasquel (a frontman of Alemán who became one of the country's most notorious drug traffickers) and Carlos I. Serrano (Alemán's appointee to establish Mexico's secret police, the DFS, also heavily involved in drug trafficking)²⁴².

The 'state-supported reconfiguration' of illegal markets under Alemanismo extended to the opium-producing regions in the state of Sinaloa. This state hosted a different kind of 'racket': one focused on the racketeering of drug production rather than the smuggling of illegal goods. Opium harvesting was introduced to Sinaloa by Chinese settlers in the late 19th century²⁴³. During WW II, the pharmaceutical needs of the U.S. Army led to the temporal legalisation of opium production. After the war, when production became illegal again, opium geogra-

²³⁸ Serrano, Mónica. "Narcotráfico y gobernabilidad en México." *Pensamiento iberoamericano*, vol. 1, 2007, pp. 251-278.

²³⁹ Vanderwood, Paul J. *Satan's playground: mobsters and movie stars at America's greatest gaming resort*. Duke University Press, 2010.

²⁴⁰ Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

²⁴¹ Idem.

²⁴² FBN Memo DJCTE2646987, 26 January 1948, NARA, DEA, SFBNDD RG 170, Box 23. Cited in: Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Negocios de Sombras*. CIESAS, upcoming.

²⁴³ Astorga, Luis. *El siglo de las drogas: el narcotráfico, del Porfiriato al nuevo milenio*. Mexico City, Plaza y Janés, 2005.

phies did not disappear but became rackets brokered clandestinely by Sinaloa's leading politicians²⁴⁴. Opium and heroin production in Sinaloa became rampant, however, only after the 1944 assassination of Governor Rodolfo Tostado, a politician close to Cardenismo, promoter of reparto agrario, and antagonistic to Alemán. Military records cited by Hector Aguilar note that the order to kill governor Loaiza had come from Pablo Macías, a politician who represented the interests of the state's landed elite, close to Alemán, and who became the new governor after the killing of Tostado²⁴⁵. The assassin was a man called Rodolfo Valdés, a.k.a. El Gitano, a full-time criminal close to opium producers in Sinaloa and leader of anti-agrarista paramilitary brigades supported by landowners close to Alemanismo. The arrival of Macías to the governorship of Sinaloa led to a massive increase in opium production²⁴⁶. According to newspaper reports, Macías became implicated in drugs to the extent of owning planes to transport them to the border²⁴⁷. According to a U.S. intelligence cable, Alemanista associates Carlos Serrano and Jorge Pasquel became influential actors in Sinaloa's drug business after the arrival of Macías²⁴⁸.

The encroachment of the central government did not eliminate the importance of criminal markets in regional politics. As Pansters²⁴⁹, Smith²⁵⁰, Maldonado²⁵¹, Flores Pérez²⁵² and others have argued, contraband and the drug economy (especially drug production) continued to be exploited by local institutions (such as local police) and local political actors (such as governors and caciques) to advance local agendas. Notwithstanding the embeddedness of

²⁴⁴ Smith, Benjamin T. "The Rise and Fall of Narcopopulism: Drugs, Politics, and Society in Sinaloa, 1930–1980." *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2013, pp. 125-165.

²⁴⁵ Aguilar, Hector. "Narco Historias extraordinarias." *Nexos*, May 1st, 2007.

²⁴⁶ Smith, Benjamin T. "The Rise and Fall of Narcopopulism: Drugs, Politics, and Society in Sinaloa, 1930–1980." *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2013, pp. 125-165.

²⁴⁷ "El gobernador de Sinaloa complicado en el tráfico de drogas. Los aviones para llevar narcóticos son del Gral. Macías Valenzuela". *El Mañana de Nuevo Laredo*, November 14, 1947.

²⁴⁸ FBN Memo DJCTE2646987, 26 January 1948, NARA, DEA, SFBNDD RG 170, Box 23, cited in: Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Negocios de Sombras*. CIESAS, upcoming.

²⁴⁹ Pansters, Wil G. "Drug trafficking, the informal order, and caciques. Reflections on the crime-governance nexus in Mexico." *Global Crime*, vol. 19, no. 3-4, 2018, pp. 315-338.

²⁵⁰ Smith, Benjamin T. "Public Drug Policy and Grey Zone Pacts in Mexico, 1920–1980." *Drug Policies and the Politics of Drugs in the Americas*, edited by Beatriz Caiuby Labate, Clancy Cavnar, and Thiago Rodrigues, Springer, 2016, pp. 33-51.

²⁵¹ Maldonado Aranda, Salvador. "Drogas, violencia y militarización en el México rural: el caso de Michoacán." *Revista mexicana de sociología*, vol. 74, no. 1, 2012, pp. 5-39.

²⁵² Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

criminal markets in local political dynamics, Alemanismo represented the beginning of a period in which the Mexican state would increasingly involve itself in the organisation and racketeering of contraband and transnational drug trafficking activity. It signified a point of inflexion in which the importance of illegal economies began to transcend the politics of a cacique-dominated Mexico and became embedded, instead, in a broader process of state-formation proper. Far from suggesting that the centre thereafter ‘controlled’ transnational criminal markets, the point is to underline the relative but growing capacity of central political actors and institutions to intervene in them. This development, in fact, corresponded to a global pattern after WW II whereby the racketeering of transnational drug markets (in general) outdid its exclusive local or domestic orientation to enter a larger stadium of national and international political processes. These processes often involved the creation of state-supported rackets brokered by central security agencies. In the case of Mexico, the extent to which central security institutions were able to establish a relative monopoly over the racketeering of the drug business in the following decades (integration) cannot be explained without referencing this path-determining precedent established under Alemanismo. This is the moment in which the political economy of crime transcends its largely local dimension and connects with security processes of much grander scale and managed by the intelligence and security bodies attached to the PRI regime.

Mexican intelligence: criminal embeddedness in transnational context

National security apparatuses began to play a notable role in Latin America by the end of WW II and the beginning of the Cold War. The creation of a national security agency in Mexico in 1947, the Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS), echoed the importance that increasingly bureaucratic and centralised security sectors operating under the purview of the U.S. government began to have in Latin American countries. Overseeing these apparatuses became, in Mexico and elsewhere, an important step for politicians aspiring to occupy the pinnacle of national power. The vast majority of Mexican presidents under the PRI state would first serve as interior ministers (including Alemán) before becoming executives, a pattern that underlines the importance of controlling these apparatuses in the construction of

presidential careers. Akin to dynamics in Central America, heading the security services not only involved assuming control of an increasingly able apparatus for infiltration and surveillance but enjoying crucial access and key support from the U.S. security establishment. The relationship between Mexican interior ministers and the U.S. intelligence services during the first decades of the Cold War was, as in neighbouring countries, remarkably close²⁵³. Three of the first five presidents in post-WW II Mexico worked as paid informants of the U.S. government *while* serving as interior ministers under CIA programmes²⁵⁴.

When Alemán assumed office, Mexico already had an intelligence bureau, the Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (DGIPS), which operated under the purview of the interior minister. The DGIPS was the successor of the Departamento Confidencial (1924), the Oficina de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (1925), and the Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (1938), which in contrast to the DGIPS were attached to the army. Throughout this intelligence continuum, the backbone of analysis and strategy was the creation of political profiles of all officeholders and candidates. Reflecting the political configuration of the early post-revolutionary Mexico, a key responsibility for those heading the intelligence services was to directly report on potential insurrections to the president²⁵⁵. The DGIPS exhibited a limited but growing institutional tendency characterised by longer tenures of service among agents “who no longer resigned en masse when the head of the department was replaced”²⁵⁶. According to Navarro, “a new sense of politicisation permeated DGIPS reports as agents developed loyalty to the system that provided them with a living”. By the 1930s, “agents chose to align themselves with the ever more powerful political project of the PRI and became tools of political control for the party”²⁵⁷. However, prior to WW II, the intelligence-gathering capabilities of this bureaucratic continuum remained extremely

²⁵³ The best account of the political leverage of U.S. intelligence agencies in Mexico in the 1950s and 1960s is Morley, Jefferson. *Our Man in Mexico: Winston Scott and the Hidden History of the CIA*. University Press of Kansas, 2013. See also: Bartley, Russell H., and Sylvia Erickson Bartley. *Eclipse of the Assassins: The CIA, Imperial Politics, and the Slaying of Mexican Journalist Manuel Buendía*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.

²⁵⁴ “CIA Spy Operations in Mexico.” National Security Archive, Electronic Briefing Book, No. 204, October 18, 2006, available at <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB204/index.htm> [last accessed 25 January 2020].

²⁵⁵ Navarro, Aaron W. *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938-1954*. Penn State Press, 2010, p. 159.

²⁵⁶ *Idem*, p. 153.

²⁵⁷ *Idem*, p. 166.

limited, with “intelligence reports often containing nothing more than hastily typed, random data gathered in the course of the day.” The element of “analysis, crucial to the production of useful intelligence, was sorely lacking”²⁵⁸. Like its predecessors, the DGIPS continued to embody a “poorly organised and underfunded amalgamation of local police, regional informants and federal agents”²⁵⁹.

As interior minister, Alemán was able to gain control of the existing intelligence services of Mexico and began to shape them into a tool for the political elite²⁶⁰. As noted by Navarro, “Alemán’s efforts to expand and professionalise the secret police forces must be considered alongside his role in the process of “civilising” politics”. Alemán, Navarro notes, “had been a popular and powerful governor in Veracruz before agreeing to serve as campaign manager for Avila Camacho. As [secretary of interior], he was able to solidify his connections to traditional power centres and mastermind a strategy for consolidating [PRI] influence while simultaneously reducing military authority in political matters”²⁶¹.

Shortly after becoming president, Alemán ordered the creation of an alternative and more proactive agency committed to the agenda of the president, the PRI, and the U.S. security establishment. The Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS) embodied, thereafter, the consolidated security directives of the PRI elite (amalgamated under *Alemanismo*) and the U.S. security sector (established during WW II). As Navarro notes, “this newly trained intelligence bureaucracy became one of the PRI’s crucial tools for political control throughout the 20th century as the political elite used it to close avenues of dissent to reformist politicians and citizens alike”²⁶². The creation of the DFS, established with U.S. financial and logistical support, was in line with the U.S. tradition of sponsoring, arming, training, and supporting pendant Latin American national police forces, constabulary bodies, national guards and intelligence services stretching back to the late 19th century²⁶³. These programmes opened

²⁵⁸ *Idem*, p. 164.

²⁵⁹ *Idem*, p. 150.

²⁶⁰ *Idem*.

²⁶¹ *Idem*, p. 183.

²⁶² *Idem*.

²⁶³ Huggins, Martha Knisely. *Political Policing: The United States and Latin America*. Duke University Press, 1998.

channels for intervention to U.S. security actors, ‘embedding’ interventionism into the host’s security processes. As Martha Huggins notes: “[w]hen one country trains another’s police forces, some key issues are raised. When domestic police forces become a tool in international relations, the presumed monopoly becomes permeable”²⁶⁴. After WW II, the U.S. defined its intelligence objectives as aimed against “any activism which may interfere with American interests”²⁶⁵. Mexico in this respect was part of a broader effort seeking “to furnish arms and equipment to Latin American countries in order to standardise the hemispheric military and its training under American lines”²⁶⁶. Supporting, funding, and equipping these local forces made U.S. *intervention* an embedded, institutional process occurring from within, rather than an ‘event’ coming sporadically from outside²⁶⁷. During the first four decades of the 20th century, U.S. military interventions in the region were usually followed by the creation of constabularies and national guards supporting U.S. clients. This mechanism secured U.S. interests in Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Panama, and the Philippines. Unsurprisingly, regional dictators like Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Francois ‘Papa Doc’ Duvalier in Haiti, among others, rose to power via the bureaucratic ladder of these U.S.-supported institutions²⁶⁸. The role of constabulary forces and national guards as breeding-nests for future leaders gave the U.S. important leverage to effect, ultimately, who came to power in its sphere of influence. The result was the empowerment of local dictators and security bodies more responsive to U.S. directives than to the local population. Incidentally, McCoy notes that the establishment of the world’s first modern system to surveil a population took place during the U.S. occupation of the Philippines. Fingerprinting, classifying and systematizing information about the population –techniques later to be imported into the U.S. – made it much easier for the U.S. to affect the political process of its host. Surveillance also produced

²⁶⁴ Idem.

²⁶⁵ Navarro, Aaron W. *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938-1954*. Penn State Press, 2010, p. 170.

²⁶⁶ Idem.

²⁶⁷ Huggins, Martha Knisely. *Political Policing: The United States and Latin America*. Duke University Press, 1998.

²⁶⁸ Idem.

intelligence on the Filipino elite, documenting its involvement in corruption, crimes, and indiscretions, making it permeable to U.S. demands²⁶⁹.

After WW II, with military rule firmly established in the region, U.S. interventionism became less invested in supporting regional strong-men and more oriented to developing impersonal, long-term security bureaucracies²⁷⁰. In particular, interventionism in Latin America took the form of growing FBI (and later CIA) assistance for establishing intelligence organisations in host countries²⁷¹. Security bureaucracies developed “a capacity to penetrate more deeply than ever before into civil society and thereby stifle citizen participation”²⁷². As Leslie Gill notes in her study on the School of the Americas, this process entailed the consolidation of national armed forces into a single, overreaching system of U.S. military might guided by U.S. interests²⁷³. For Huggins, “[w]hat had been absent during the twentieth century’s first four decades was an ideology justifying Latin American governments’ giving over some internal security autonomy in exchange for protection by the United States”²⁷⁴. The Cold War and its ‘internal enemy’ enabled this transfer. Governments were offered technology and assistance to contain, at a price, social movements and resistance transpiring from grass-root levels. Often seen as a predominantly domestic affair, the establishment of the DFS replicated, however, historical patterns associated with U.S. security. As Higgins also notes,

[In] pushing its training of Latin American police to combat Communism, [...] [the U.S. advanced] an ideology that legitimised their loss of some autonomy over internal control in exchange for increased technical professionalism. [...] This belief [...] made foreign technical specialists relatively autonomous within the host country’s internal security system. [...]

²⁶⁹ McCoy, Alfred W. *Policing America’s empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the rise of the surveillance state*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2009.

²⁷⁰ Huggins, Martha Knisely. *Political Policing: The United States and Latin America*. Duke University Press, 1998.

²⁷¹ Idem.

²⁷² Idem, p. 117.

²⁷³ Gill, Lesley. *The school of the Americas: military training and political violence in the Americas*. Duke University Press, 2004.

²⁷⁴ Huggins, Martha Knisely. *Political Policing: The United States and Latin America*. Duke University Press, 1998, p. 199.

[D]oing so required new linkages between U.S. and recipient government security agencies, [...] [a process that ended up] expanding and fortifying powerful elites in both protector and recipient nation states²⁷⁵.

Like in other Latin American countries, U.S. leverage entered the Mexican security bloodstream after WW II through collaborative agreements, information sharing, technological assistance, training of agents, allocation of aid, covert operational support, and a considerable degree of political protection – all provided in particular to the new security agency, the DFS. From the beginning to the end of the Cold War, the DFS was the most important conduit linking the operation of the political process in Mexico to American interests. Like in other Latin American countries, U.S. hemispheric security became invested in supporting an authoritarian state by assisting its ability to curbe, police and repress political and social opposition. The creation of the DFS assisted the ‘centralisation’ process undertaken under Alemánismo by consolidating the state’s capabilities to penetrating, as I explain below, the social. These capabilities included, for example, a much greater capacity to generate intelligence on social forces, to manipulate political outcomes (for example, elections), to surveil and infiltrate labour, peasants and students movements, to conduct targeted and mass killings, to deploy counterinsurgency and to enforce overall a ‘state of exception’ seldom associated with Mexico but crucial in the historiography of every other Latin American state. All these operations enjoyed the support of a U.S. government which, at the same time, was providing key support to authoritarian political structures from Guatemala to Argentina. In the following decades, the importance of the DFS in the PRI system of governance grew in accordance with the regime’s decreasing popularity and the growing need to use coercion to suppress social discontent.

The construction in Mexico of a security structure with national ambitions and capabilities took place, nevertheless, in a context of austerity. As noted in Chapter One, austerity contexts

²⁷⁵ *Idem*, p. 200.

tend to push security actors to establish rackets over low-barrier commodities, such as contraband and drugs. Likewise, the PRI regime's need to invest in expanding its internal security capabilities at the beginning of the Cold War drove the 'securitisation' process towards alternative sources of funding. Akin to the distinctive 'racketeering' dynamics that assisted the reproduction of the PRI regime more generally, the creation of security structures (at all levels) under the PRI involved to an important extent capturing the 'low-barrier' economies represented by illegal markets. In Mexico, putting in place a national intelligence network able to consolidate a much more centralised form of control and ability to shape social outcomes involved an 'understanding' that rackets over criminal activities were to provide a substantial part of its income. The involvement of the DFS in criminal markets not only *compared* to other early Cold War experiences but also *connected* to the Cold War as a whole. As noted by Aguayo,

[t]he general indifference allowed the intelligence services to confirm their belief that they were part of an elite that had no controls or limits²⁷⁶.

As the budget was insufficient to finance the activities entrusted to them and as agents received very low salaries, commanders, delegates and agents were forced to obtain extra income. This constituted a practice accepted by the higher ranks as part of the rules of the game. Letting them "search" for income through extortion, spoils, protection rackets, and drug trafficking was part of those rules. This lack of institutionalism would nevertheless have a tremendous cost for the country²⁷⁷.

²⁷⁶ Quezada, Sergio Aguayo. *La charola: una historia de los servicios de inteligencia en México*. Editorial Ink, 2014, p. 93.

²⁷⁷ *Idem*, pp. 87f.

Carlos I. Serrano established and operated the DFS under Miguel Alemán²⁷⁸. Serrano embodied the extent to which the construction of national security ran parallel to structuring protection rackets over criminal economies. Serrano was Alemán's most trusted subordinate for decades. Throughout his career, he was an established *pistolero*, criminal and racketeer, operating always under the shadow of Alemán. According to Cedillo, his relationship to Alemán dated back to the early 1930s, a time when Alemán's rising star in the state of Veracruz demanded the services of 'violent entrepreneurs' like Serrano. Also according to Cedillo, Serrano's involvement in organised crime dated back to the trafficking of Cuban rum during Prohibition²⁷⁹. Alemán gave Serrano protection to run criminal rackets and Serrano assisted in clearing Alemán's way in state and national politics. According to the FBI, Alemán's political rise in the state of Veracruz reported a toll of no less than 50 assassinations, mostly ordered by Alemán (and most likely involving Serrano)²⁸⁰. The 1930s were particularly violent times in Mexico, often the result of disputes between organised peasants invading haciendas and paramilitary bodies funded by *hacendados* to dissuade them. Alemán's political rise in Veracruz was strongly associated with the interests of these land-owning elites seeking to vanquish revolutionary leftovers. In fact, Alemán became governor of Veracruz only after the elected governor, Manlio Fabio Altamirano (a Cardenista politician with communist inclinations and a staunch promoter of land reform) was assassinated at a public rally. Altamirano's murder and the appointment of Alemán in his place represented, in Veracruz, the liquidation of *reparto agrario*²⁸¹. Alemán appointed Serrano as the head of Veracruz police²⁸². A pattern of abuse and criminality followed, involving land grabbing, criminal rackets (gambling, drugs, prostitution) and systematic graft²⁸³. Flores Pérez²⁸⁴ cites multiple letters sent

²⁷⁸ See: Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, p. 259.

²⁷⁹ Cedillo, Juan Alberto. *La cosa nostra en México (1938-1950): Los negocios de Lucky Luciano y la mujer que corrompió al gobierno mexicano*. Grijalbo, 2011.

²⁸⁰ Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

²⁸¹ Idem.

²⁸² National Archives and Records Administration (nara), Record Group (rg) 84, 350, cited in: Servín, Elisa. *El delator, una figura cotidiana del alemanismo priista*, *Antropología*. Boletín oficial del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2016.

²⁸³ Cedillo, Juan Alberto. *La cosa nostra en México (1938-1950): Los negocios de Lucky Luciano y la mujer que corrompió al gobierno mexicano*. Grijalbo, 2011

²⁸⁴ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *El estado en crisis: crimen organizado y política: desafíos para la consolidación democrática*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2009, p. 109.

to present Ávila Camacho describing how Serrano used his position to evict peasants and grab their lands in regions like Mocambo and Boca del Río (unsurprisingly, the U.S. ambassador would report to the State Department: “[i]t seems that [Alemán] was the owner of ‘Mocambo’, an extremely valuable property consisting of a large part of waterfront land extending from Veracruz south to Boca del Río, including the resort Hotel Mocambo”²⁸⁵. Serrano sold nominations to public office, ran gambling operations, and was accused of killing prominent leftist politicians, such as the state prosecutor, Adolfo Moreno²⁸⁶. According to Aguayo, when Alemán was nominated presidential candidate of the PRI in 1945, Serrano was appointed head of his security routine²⁸⁷. As president, Alemán made Serrano chair of the Mexican senate (making him the most important powerbroker in Mexican politics) and gave him the rank of colonel despite lacking military credentials. More importantly, Alemán tasked Serrano with establishing and running the new national intelligence agency, the DFS. By this time, the FBI began to refer to Serrano as the second most powerful politician in Mexico²⁸⁸.

Serrano’s unofficial appointment to establish and oversee the DFS provided him with covert channels and credentials to intervene and reorganise criminal markets at the national level and in line with the interests embodied by Alemanismo. The reconfiguration of drug and contraband economies at the U.S. border noted above had a lot to do with Serrano’s and DFS’s penetration of illicit activities. According to FBI cables, Serrano became during this period the country’s leading protector of the transnational heroin network in Mexico²⁸⁹. He estab-

²⁸⁵ Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, p. 290.

²⁸⁶ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *El estado en crisis: crimen organizado y política: desafíos para la consolidación democrática*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2009, p. 109.

²⁸⁷ National Archives and Records Administration (nara), Record Group (rg) 84, 350, cited in: Servín, Elisa. *El delator, una figura cotidiana del alemanismo priista*, *Antropología*. Boletín oficial del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2016.

²⁸⁸ Cedillo, Juan Alberto. *La cosa nostra en México (1938-1950): Los negocios de Lucky Luciano y la mujer que corrompió al gobierno mexicano*. Grijalbo, 2011.

²⁸⁹ Smith, Benjamin T. "Public Drug Policy and Grey Zone Pacts in Mexico, 1920–1980." *Drug Policies and the Politics of Drugs in the Americas*, edited by Beatriz Caiuby Labate, Clancy Cavnar, and Thiago Rodrigues, Springer, 2016, pp. 33-51.

lished contacts with Sinaloan producers and participated in heroin smuggling at the U.S. border²⁹⁰. U.S. intelligence reports note that Serrano partnered with notable and intimate associates of president Alemán (for example, Jorge Pasquel and Enrique Parra²⁹¹) in the transnational drug business. He personally operated multiple houses of prostitution as well²⁹². CIA memos described him as “an unscrupulous man, [...] actively engaged in various illegal enterprises such as the narcotics traffic. He is considered astute, intelligent and personable, although his methods violate every principle of established government administration”²⁹³. In 1951, a car owned by Serrano was seized at the U.S. border containing 64 cans of opium in hidden compartments²⁹⁴. The person driving the vehicle was a nephew of Juan Ramon Gurolla, second-in-command at DFS.²⁹⁵ A U.S. Treasury cable reported to Washington that Serrano was the most important politician in Mexico involved in drug trafficking²⁹⁶. Likewise, according to a 1947 U.S. embassy memo, the deputy director of the DFS, Manuel Mayoral Garda, controlled the marijuana market in Mexico City²⁹⁷. Both Serrano and the director of the DFS, Marcelino Iñurreta, are noted in U.S. embassy cables as “persons of questionable character”, noted for “their involvement in dope-smuggling activities”²⁹⁸. The cable adds: “[i]t appears that they are using the organisation as a front for illegal operations to amass personal fortunes”²⁹⁹. The memo also added that Serrano “has unlimited power over National Security Police and is fully cognizant of its ‘side-line’ operations”³⁰⁰. Importantly, as I document in the following chapters, DFS involvement in criminal activity was not only known by U.S. government circles but endorsed and encouraged by U.S. intelligence as part

²⁹⁰ Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

²⁹¹ Idem; National Archives and Records Administration, Drug Enforcement Administration, SFBNDD, RG 170 Box 22; National Archives and Records Administration, Drug Enforcement Administration, SFBNDD, RG 170 Box 23.

²⁹² Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

²⁹³ As cited in idem, p. 178.

²⁹⁴ Idem.

²⁹⁵ Idem.

²⁹⁶ Idem.

²⁹⁷ Cited in: Astorga, Luis. "Organized Crime and the Organization of Crime." *Organized Crime and Democratic Governability*, edited by John Bailey and Roy Goodson, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011.

²⁹⁸ Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, p. 259.

²⁹⁹ Idem, p. 259.

³⁰⁰ Idem, p. 259.

of what I describe as a transnational strategy resorting, in Mexico as elsewhere, to more contemporary forms of ‘banditry’ to promote U.S. interests.

Articulating national security and tying its actions to the executive, the DFS was established to enable, perhaps even more importantly, the distinct ‘capitalist’ orientation set in motion by Alemanismo. This meant, in practice, empowering a much more centralised and coordinated system of informants and operatives that could infiltrate, tame, and purge the party’s left flank (especially those organisations responsive to grass-root militancy) and carve out a corporatist regime much more accountable to the business and landowning interests. At the time of its establishment, the DFS agenda included, in particular, two goals: on the one hand, breaking the independent labour movement, represented above all by the formidable Railroad Workers Movement (*Movimiento ferrocarrilero*) and its leader, the communist Valentin Campa. On the other, suppressing collective demands for land reform, particularly those associated with the militant *Henriquista* peasant movement. The operational debut of the DFS took place in October 1948 when its agents launched a successful assault on the headquarters of the *Movimiento ferrocarrilero* and broke a crucial, national strike³⁰¹. The attack was headed and coordinated by Serrano³⁰². The DFS subsequently planted propaganda in the press falsely accusing the union of acts of sabotage and linking its leaders to communist plots³⁰³. The DFS campaign of violence, intimidation and co-optation led to the downfall of Campa and his replacement by the pliant Jesus Diaz de Leon, a.k.a. *El Charro*. ‘*Charrismo*’ became a synonym for the characteristically PRI practice of violently imposing extremely corrupted leaders through violence in peasant organisations and labour unions, a practice that allowed the state to exert control over the corporative system. The campaign against Campa, the *ferrocarrileros* and the communist party were coordinated by Serrano and the DFS director, Iñurreta³⁰⁴.

³⁰¹ Servín, Elisa. *El delator, una figura cotidiana del alemanismo priista*, *Antropología*. Boletín oficial del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2016.

³⁰² Carr, Barry, and Paloma Villegas. *La izquierda mexicana a través del siglo XX*. Ediciones Era, 1996.

³⁰³ Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

³⁰⁴ Idem.

In the countryside, the social movement of *Henriquismo* orbited around the *Cardenista* politician Miguel Henríquez. It represented the most important movement demanding land for campesinos after the revolution, as well as the greatest challenge for the type of landowning, conservative interests backing Alemán. Elisa Servín notes how, shortly after its creation, a key task for the DFS involved generating intelligence on *henriquistas* and delivering it on a regular basis to the president³⁰⁵. The effort, taking place in 1950 and 1951, constituted the most important covert effort to put the brakes on *reparto agrario*. Intelligence was gathered through the infiltration and surveillance of all local and state committees, local federations, groups of professionals as well as members of the military who sympathised with the movement³⁰⁶. Rex Applegate, a U.S. advisor at the DFS and one of its main arms procurers, was hired to train and arm 26 recruits to infiltrate *henriquista* ranks³⁰⁷. The DFS assault on the movement reached its climax in 1952 with the violent repression of a massive rally in downtown Mexico City³⁰⁸. The importance of *Henriquismo* thereafter declined, and so did the independence of the peasant movement, which became strongly and widely incorporated into the PRI's Sector Campesino and its notable Confederación Nacional Campesina.

To recapitulate: the DFS played a particularly important role in putting down the remaining fires of a dying revolution. These had included, centrally, demands for land, rights for labour, and opposition to a particularly harsh form of crony capitalism enabled by foreign powers. The DFS consolidated the Alemanista grip by purging the system of its leftist elements, bringing labour and peasant bodies closer to business and landed interests, and providing a platform for the party elite to deploy covert violence when required and with impunity. The direction given to the single party by Alemanismo defined, like no other, the lasting orientation of the PRI state. At the same time, the DFS also represented an 'embedded' form of U.S. interventionism, in line with the American tradition of developing appendant security apparatuses in host nations. Crucially, DFS agents established notable racketeering networks in

³⁰⁵ Servín, Elisa. *El delator, una figura cotidiana del alemanismo priista*, *Antropología*. Boletín oficial del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2016.

³⁰⁶ Idem.

³⁰⁷ Idem.

³⁰⁸ Idem.

contraband and drug trafficking with the endorsement of the PRI regime and the implicit validation of the U.S. government. These seemingly trivial mechanisms were key, however, to compensate for the austerity under which these new security apparatuses were being built, allowing them to nevertheless address the growing social and political antagonisms generated by the reactivation of capitalist accumulation in Mexico. The involvement of the DFS in the transnational drug trade would expand, as I note in the following chapter, in accordance to the market's value and in close relation to rising social discontent.

Conclusions

The chapter provided a brief overview of the peculiar form of political modernity embodied by the PRI party. It built, in particular, from key debates and scholarly divisions in recent Mexican historiography. State-centred views highlighting the PRI as a homogenous, centralised, *top-to-down* authoritarian system of governance gave way, after the 1980s, to 'post revisionist' perspectives underscoring pluralism, limitation and social permeability. The interest thus shifted from describing 'national' landscapes (elites, domination, hierarchy) to emphasising discontinuities emanating from 'below' and from the 'periphery'. These academic inertias also drove interest away from what da Costa calls 'broader arenas of power and the possibility of historical synthesis'³⁰⁹. An emphasis on processes involving 'negotiation' ignored the extent to which violence, embodied by the DFS and other actors, was ancillary in the making of the PRI regime.

The chapter underlined three key processes in the making of the PRI regime that call for a 'macro' approach. First, the chapter argued that the PRI was not the mere reflection of social forces. The state in Mexico had a huge capacity to implement transformative and swift agendas contrary to the interests, and despite the resistance, of the masses it claimed to embody. This capacity for relative but significant autonomy is demonstrated more explicitly in moments like *Alemanismo* (and later *Salinismo*) whereby political and business elites (rather

³⁰⁹ da Costa, Emilia Viotti. "New Publics, New Politics, New Histories: From Economic Reductionism to Cultural Reductionism – in Search of Dialectics." *Reclaiming the Political in Latin American History: Essays from the North*, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph, 2001, pp. 17-31.

than input from the *sectores*) account for profound historical transformations. The chapter noted that this relative autonomy had a lot to do with the PRI's tremendous (perhaps unmatched) ability to block social action by co-opting intermediating bodies. This not only involved centralising the allocation of patronage and licensing discretionary 'rackets' as a state-making strategy but deploying considerable institutional violence to forcefully produce social consent (*charrismo, caciquismo*).

Second, the chapter underlined the importance of weighing in external factors and U.S. influence in historical outcomes in Mexico, PRI included. The chapter argued that, like other countries in the region, the state in Mexico has never been the verbatim reflection of internal and social processes but also the result of actual and embedded external interventions. In this regard, the most important mechanism employed by the U.S. to affect political outcomes in its sphere of influence (including Mexico) consisted of embedding 'intervention' as an institutional process radiating from 'within' its security apparatus (by means of funding, arming, training, and participating in the construction of national guards, constabularies and intelligence agencies) rather than an 'event' coming from outside. Underlining this external influence – surprisingly absent in the historiography of Mexico – is an important driver in this thesis. By the end of Alemanismo, the U.S. government had embedded its influence enough to confidently assert that: “[i]n Mexico as in other countries in Latin America, approval of an administration by the U.S. is essential to stability, and by the same token, revolutionary groups would have little chance of success without the tacit or explicit approval of the U.S.”³¹⁰.

Finally, the chapter noted that the ability of the PRI regime to affect social outcomes advanced through the expansion of the regime's security capabilities: a national security apparatus attached to an executive branch, itself guided by notably elite interests and a crony, rent-seeking spirit. In this regard, state-formation in Mexico (a process that accelerated con-

³¹⁰ CIA Report SR_18, "Mexico.", Jan 24, 1951, p- 16. NARA, Washington DC. Record Group 84, Box 130; cited in Navarro, Aaron W. *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938-1954*. Penn State Press, 2010, p. 258.

siderably under Alemanismo) involved the expansion of a modern, post-WW II type of security apparatus with much broader capabilities not only to shape political outcomes but to penetrate society and generate a social order fitted to capitalist requirements. The context of austerity in which Alemanismo operated (which extends to almost the entire PRI period) reproduced state power by virtue of systematic abuse of an expanding pool of regulatory activities. For the security apparatus, this abuse centred in the enablement and extortion of crime. Alemanismo hence also involved a process whereby criminal *rackets* became attached to a national programme supported by national security. It signified a point of inflexion in which the importance of illegal economies began to transcend the politics of a *cacique*-dominated landscape. Without this path-determining precedent, the extremely peculiar ‘integration’ of state and drug markets occurring in Mexico cannot be explained, and much less so its ancillary functionality to advance interests that transcend Mexico. The following chapter will look at the persisting overlap between transnational criminal market and DFS activity, noting, in particular, the role of protection rackets as political economies associated with Mexico’s dirty wars.

Chapter 3 - Criminal rackets, political mandates

Inspired by a Tillyian framework, a key idea in this thesis is that the relationship between the political and the criminal in Mexico is best captured if we think of the latter as an invisible political economy supporting security-oriented activity, a process leading to securitisation. More than any other illegal commodity, security actors at every level have shown a tendency to ‘tax’ most conspicuously the low-barrier commodity represented by drugs. Tapping into the flow of drugs and other criminal commodities and putting in place a protection racket is relatively easy if you are a security official. Andreas notes that “[perhaps] more than any other state regulatory activity, drug enforcement provides extraordinary incentives to use public authority for private gain. And these incentives only increase under conditions of fiscal austerity, economic uncertainty, and low wages”³¹¹. But by establishing protection rackets in drug markets, security officials not only generate a personal gain; they establish a political economy that supports the reproduction of the state’s security apparatus in contexts where the underlining capital is deficient. From gangs in the ghettos to paramilitaries in proxy conflicts to secret parapolice in authoritarian states, no other illegal activity has provided more ‘support’ for the security capabilities of ‘rulers’ in recent decades than rackets over drug peddling.

Behind the contemporary violent explosion of transnational drug markets in Mexico lies a history in which the state-making process (and especially the bureaucratisation of its security and policing services) became embedded in rackets on criminal activity. The following two chapters document how the security apparatus of the PRI regime continued to rely on political economies generated by *bandits*. This chapter documents how the DFS, chief guarantor of the regime’s security, instrumentalised these markets to support counterinsurgency operations and the repressive agenda of an increasingly authoritarian state. The ‘instrumentalisation’ of drug rackets as low-barrier economies to fund national security operations in Mexico was covertly endorsed by the U.S. government. It was part of a secret mechanism, employed

³¹¹ Andreas, Peter. “The Political Economy of Narco-Corruption in Mexico.” *Current History*, vol. 97, no. 618, pp. 160-165, p. 162.

in other theatres of the Cold War, to neutralise the ‘internal enemy’ at a bargain price. The input of banditry into the logistics of empire, of course, was far from new.

Local and supralocal criminal governance

Throughout its 70-plus-year-old history, the drug market in Mexico has attracted racketeering actors and institutions of protection at multiple state levels. Recent scholarly literature has focused on the political economies that the production of drugs (cannabis and opium) generated at subnational political geographies in the early decades of the PRI regime. In contrast to the *transnational* trafficking of drugs, which often involves larger geographies, multiple borders, powerful political protectors, connections to transnational mafias, international banks, and a much greater pool of earnings, local drug *production* is a potential racket more accessible to immediate powerbrokers. A good example of the local dimensions of drug politics has been documented by Benjamin Smith’s work on the history of opium production in the state of Sinaloa. Smith notes how unofficial ‘licenses’ to exploit opium and cannabis harvesting during the 1940s, 50s and 60s were instrumentalised by Sinaloan leading political authorities (caciques and governors) in order to appease discontented right-wing ranchers and co-opt leftist agrarian groups. Toleration to cultivate opium in Sinaloa, which represented until the 1970s a small part of global output, operated as a political escape-valve that helped governors navigate the complexities of agrarian and anti-agrarian politics. Smith notes how, “[i]n basic terms, from the 1930s to the 1970s, state governors, not traffickers, controlled the Sinaloa drug industry - regulating the trade, manipulating its economic and political benefits, and (when necessary) using state police to protect their investments”³¹². By virtue of controlling protection to local production, political actors in Sinaloa were able to generate networks of support for their *cacicazgos*. Smith refers to these early entanglements in the political economy of drug production in Sinaloa as forms of *narco-populismo*: control over limited opium production became a crucial populist tool to pragmatically balance off the agendas

³¹² Smith, Benjamin T. “The Rise and Fall of Narcopopulism: Drugs, Politics, and Society in Sinaloa, 1930–1980.” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2013, pp. 125-165, p. 128.

and demands of different social groups³¹³. In contrast, the *trafficking* and transborder smuggling of opium and heroin, which was very limited until the mid-1970s, involved state institutions like the DFS and the PJJ, becoming entangled with supralocal political processes from the very beginning.

Similar to Smith, Pansters³¹⁴ employs the concept of *narco-caciques* to describe the informal networks of friendship and/or extended kinship in which the non-application of drug enforcement was transformed into a political commodity in local politics. The ‘informal order’ in which local drug production thrived was all about ‘interrupting’ the universal application of the law to advance the political agenda of a power figure. A good example of the embedded nature of drug production and *caciquismo* in Sinaloa during these early times is the figure of Héctor Melesio Cuén Ojeda. Cuén, Pansters notes, was municipal president of Badiguarato (the epicentre of opium production in Sinaloa) during the 1940s and early 1950s. He had influence over the appointment of judges, police and civil servants, and became involved in poppy cultivation by selling protection (*disímulo*) to local producers. Cuén represents an example of a *narco-cacique* “whose local power was based on a mixture of licit and illicit businesses, formal authority and informal political networks”³¹⁵. The endogenous focus of Smith and Pansters help us understand the extent to which drug production or a local *bandit* became embedded in the informal governance systems of opium-producing regions in Mexico at a time when the drug output of the country was globally limited, but locally crucial.

More *macro*-focused accounts of the drug economy by Luis Astorga³¹⁶, Carlos Flores Pérez³¹⁷ and Oswaldo Zavala³¹⁸ underline the extent to which protection of transborder drug *trafficking* (as opposed to raw-commodity production) involved supralocal political pro-

³¹³ Idem.

³¹⁴ Pansters, Wil G. “Drug trafficking, the informal order, and caciques. Reflections on the crime-governance nexus in Mexico.” *Global Crime*, vol. 19, no. 3-4, 2018, pp. 315-338.

³¹⁵ Idem, pp. 321f.

³¹⁶ Astorga, Luis. *El siglo de las drogas: el narcotráfico, del Porfiriato al nuevo milenio*. Plaza y Janés, 2005.

³¹⁷ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

³¹⁸ Zavala, Oswaldo. *Los cárteles no existen: Narcotráfico y cultura en México*. Malpaso Ediciones SL, 2018.

cesses from the beginning. This is a permeable divide in the literature that echoes the boundaries between regional/culturalist accounts and more state-centric, macro approaches to Mexican history. Whereas works by Smith and Pansters note how *narco-caciques* afforded protection to the *production* of narcotics (cannabis and opioids in Sinaloa and adjacent states) and therefore enabled a political economy closer to regional politics, more state-centric approaches like those of Flores Pérez, Zavala and Astorga underline how the *transborder trafficking* of drugs involved protection networks embedded in national and international political processes. Flores Pérez notes how, as described in the previous chapter, prominent members of the national elite under Alemanismo imposed themselves as leading brokers in the national market of drugs and *fayuca* (contraband)³¹⁹. In turn, Zavala notes the role of these criminal rackets as political economies supporting the opening of Mexico to capitalism, neoliberalism, and foreign influence. Building from Astorga's criticisms to the '*mitología del narcotraficante*', Zavala challenges the 'depoliticised' interpretations of the history of drug markets in Mexico. For him, the picturesque narratives of *narcos* are depoliticised images that divert attention away from its political embeddedness in national and transnational political processes. Zavala's analysis underlines how manufactured narratives engineered by the PRI regime (mis)informed until very recently public and scholarly notions of how the drug trafficking market operated, the extent to which the federal government and political parties were involved in it, and the instrumental role of these criminal economies in supporting broader political processes in Mexico³²⁰. Zavala's work draws from the seminal critique of Luis Astorga, who noted more than two decades ago the 'mythological' character of an official 'narco' narrative aimed at disguising official involvement at the highest levels.

Capturing famous traffickers is also an act of symbolic power.
The 'evil' is fought, the "society" is protected, some "plebeian" heads fall, the enemy is created, and the conceptual and

³¹⁹ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

³²⁰ Zavala, Oswaldo. *Los cárteles no existen: Narcotráfico y cultura en México*. Malpaso Ediciones SL, 2018.

social limits that must be taken into consideration to cognize drug trafficking become established³²¹.

Although this work underlines the embedded character of drug trafficking in transnational political processes affecting Mexico as a whole, local and supralocal perspectives on the drug racket ought to be seen as complementary. If local drug-peddling and the production of raw narcotics represented a crucial source of economic or political capital supporting governance in fiscally deprived local contexts, something similar can be said about the transnational level, where the racketeering of transborder trafficking in contraband and drugs enabled political economies advancing exogenous interests through global *security* processes operating under fiscal constraints. Because stable drug markets are unlikely to escape the need of protection, the whole spectrum of the drug commodity-chain (production, refinement, transportation, transnational smuggling, money laundering, retail markets, etc.) involves a large collection of enablers operating in distinct but interconnected political geographies. From our perspective, these enablers constitute political and security synapses of a broader process capitalising on the multiple stages of the drug economy to enforce the divides of the world system. The aim here is to understand the aggregated effects of drug rackets in enabling market-based modes of accumulation and exploitation of the global periphery. What is important to note here is that macro and micro approaches focus on distinct but necessarily complementary dimensions of the political economies generated by the political economy of narcotics as a whole. In this work, the aim is to provide an account of the aggregated effects implicated by the drug economy from the perspective of global hierarchies and structural processes seeking to advance economic and political agendas through the instrumentalisation of this contemporary form of ‘banditry’. In the rest of this chapter, I put forward a set of key findings that shed light on the relationship between protection rackets in transnational criminal activity and political processes in Mexico. The chapter documents several cases that show how drug trafficking and contraband markets became further incorporated in the 1970s

³²¹ Astorga, Luis. *Mitología del “narcotraficante” en México*. Plaza y Valdés, 1995, pp. 76f. [own translation].

and 1980s at the highest levels of state security. The first section documents the embeddedness of contraband rackets and national security. The second turns the attention to the drug market, underlines its proximity to state-supported paramilitarism, and documents its close relationship to counterinsurgency operations undertaken by the DFS. It notes how the very DFS leaders conducting the *Guerra Sucia* [dirty war] were also leading racketeers of drug and contraband economies. The section focuses on the landmark operation that led to the incorporation of a more centralised DFS drug racket in Mexico in the 1970s, Operación *Trizo/Condor*. Both sections shed light onto crucial but often neglected aspects in the history of national and international security in Mexico. This and the following two chapters employ archival material reviewed at the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City, the National Security Archive at George Washington University, the National Archives and Records Administration in Maryland, and the Charles Bowden Archive at the University of Texas in San Marcos. They also include the testimonies of three former Drug Enforcement Administration agents (DEA-1³²², DEA-2³²³, DEA-3³²⁴) as well as the testimonies of two former high-ranking PJF officers with knowledge of DFS operations (PJF-1³²⁵ and PJF-2³²⁶).

Contraband rackets and the DFS

In 1980, an FBI investigation into an established and vast car-theft syndicate at the U.S/Mexican border found that the DFS was behind it. U.S. authorities estimated that the agency, in

³²² DEA-1 refers to Phil Jordan, former Special Agent in Charge of DEA operations in Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas, Senior Inspector, Deputy Chief of Cocaine Operations and Deputy Regional Director for DEA's European Operations in Washington, D.C. Jordan was the Director of the DEA Intelligence Centre (EPIC), located in Ft. Bliss, Texas. EPIC is the premier intelligence centre for monitoring worldwide drug intelligence and drug trends in a multi-agency co-operative effort.

³²³ DEA-2 refers to former DEA agent, Salvador Martinez, who operated in the late 1980s and early 1990s as an undercover agent in Tamaulipas and Chihuahua, attached to the PJF.

³²⁴ DEA-3 refers to former DEA agent Donald Ferrarone, in charge of the first investigation on the assassination of DEA agent Enrique Camarena in Mexico, as well as multiple high-profile investigations into political involvement in drug markets in South East Asia.

³²⁵ PJF-1, who will remain anonymous for security reasons, refers to a former high-ranking PJF agent active from the early 1980s to the late 1990s. He was particularly acquainted with DFS operations.

³²⁶ PJF-2, who will remain anonymous for security reasons, was to a former high-ranking PJF agent active from the late 1980s to the early 2000s. He operated as part of the personal team of at least two attorney generals.

this racket alone, had stolen four thousand luxury vehicles (Mercedes Benzes, Porches, Victorias, Maseratis, Ferraris) since at least 1975³²⁷. The network extended to cities like San Francisco and San Antonio. As many as twelve new vehicles were stolen on a daily basis³²⁸. Cars were taken to Mexico by DFS agents and sold at various locations³²⁹. Some cars were also presented as gifts “to political people in Mexico so that other contraband destined for the DFS could be passed into Mexico unimpeded”³³⁰. The FBI investigation, led by federal prosecutor William H. Kennedy, pointed to the active DFS director, Miguel Nazar Haro, as the head of the criminal operation. The charges against Nazar were based on the testimonies of 15 defendants apprehended in the U.S., most of them members of the Mexican government³³¹. The DFS was extensively involved not only in the smuggling of stolen cars but the smuggling of contraband and its distribution across Mexico more generally. As PJF-2 notes, the economies generated by these and other rackets provided a considerable income for DFS agents (far above their salary) as well as for the undertaking of clandestine operations³³². Even the very vehicles used by the DFS in remote regions to hunt down the guerrilla were often stolen cars introduced by agents through these criminal methods³³³. Crime thus provided to national security what an impoverished fiscal apparatus could not.

As the FBI sought to press charges against DFS director Nazar, agent Kennedy was summoned to Washington to discuss the potential ramifications of the indictment. Representatives of the U.S. embassy in Mexico City conveyed to Kennedy in the “strongest terms possible the serious political and security ramifications that such a step would generate for U.S. interests in Mexico”³³⁴. Moving against director Nazar would lead to his resignation, a “disaster” for U.S. interests. It was the embassy’s view that the chances of prosecuting Nazar in either the U.S. or in Mexico were in any case nil because of the high-level political protection

³²⁷ From Assistant US Attorney to Assistant Attorney General, Memorandum, November 4, 1981, The National Security Archive.

³²⁸ From SAC San Diego to FBI. Memorandum, 1981, The National Security Archive.

³²⁹ From Assistant US Attorney to Assistant Attorney General, Memorandum, November 4, 1981, The National Security Archive.

³³⁰ *Idem*.

³³¹ *Idem*.

³³² Interview with PJF-2.

³³³ *Idem*.

³³⁴ From US Embassy Mexico City to Director FBI. Memorandum, November 1981, The National Security Archive.

that Nazar enjoyed in both countries³³⁵. According to the U.S. embassy, Nazar had afforded “the only true positive assistance in terrorism and foreign counter-intelligence areas” in Mexico for years³³⁶. He was the CIA’s most valued asset operating in Mexico, according to the CIA. His removal from the political scene, especially under ‘ignominious’ circumstances, would cause damage to “U.S. coverage of hostile intelligence agencies and persons which would take years to rebuild, if they could be rebuilt at all”³³⁷. Press coverage of the FBI’s purported indictment against Nazar generated a national security ‘emergency’ in both countries. The indictment against Nazar and other top-ranking members of the DFS exposed a common understanding underlining crucial but often overlooked mechanisms associated with U.S. involvement in Mexico. These transnational mechanisms involved the indirect use of criminal economies for national security purposes, providing collaborators at the highest levels of the security apparatus in host nations with protection and logistical support to undertake these activities.

Commanders at the DFS reacted strongly against what they perceived as the U.S. government’s incapacity to contain the secrets of what was ultimately a political economy serving the interests of both³³⁸. A CIA memo points to the level of irritation that the indictment against Nazar generated in DFS circles: “There are many in the DFS who are refusing to work for us because of this incident”. Nazar “demanded that the Department of Justice issue a press release clarifying that there are no formal charges pending against [him]”. Nazar is also cited as saying that “Kennedy should be fired for irresponsibility”³³⁹. Another cable conveyed the extent to which the U.S. government risked its ability to conduct covert operations in Mexico: “There are some in the DFS who are ready to go to the press and reveal all

³³⁵ In a similar case, earlier that year, a group of DFS agents convoyed a collection of stolen vehicles from Tijuana to Sonora. Upon arriving to Sonora, custom and federal car registry officials denied passage of the DFS convoy into Mexico. Cables indicate that DFS agents opened fire with automatic weapons and were able to escape. The DFS group was later arrested by soldiers in Hermosillo and subsequently freed. The DFS agent in charge of escorting the vehicles was Juventino Romero. Romero was part of Nazar Haro’s close circle at the DFS and a leading figure in Mexico’s guerra sucia, for which he was convicted for crimes against humanity in 2002. Infamously, Romero was responsible, among other crimes, for the disappearance of Jesus Piedra Ibarra (a member of Mexico’s guerrilla movement Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre) in what constituted one of the most (if not the most) renowned case of desaparecidos during the mid-1970s.

³³⁶ From US Embassy Mexico City to Director FBI. Memorandum, March 1982, The National Security Archive.

³³⁷ *Idem*.

³³⁸ From US Embassy Mexico City to Director FBI. Memorandum, November 1981, The National Security Archive.

³³⁹ From US Embassy Mexico City to Director FBI. Memorandum, March 1982, The National Security Archive.

the FBI's [...] sensitive investigations, wiretapping, surveillance, etc., [undertaken] in Mexico throughout the years". The cable adds: "Needless to say, such a revelation here should absolutely terminate both our agencies operations"³⁴⁰. Mexican President José López Portillo (1976-1982) wanted to be reassured of the U.S. government's ability and willingness to avoid such sensitive disclosures in the future. The U.S. ambassador concluded that "the concern of the Mexican president should be brought to the personal attention of the U.S. Secretary of State, the Attorney General, and President Ronald Reagan"³⁴¹. The memo added that disciplinary action against Kennedy would provide assurances to the DFS. Kennedy was, in effect, subsequently fired for compromising national security operations³⁴². The case is thus also representative of the tensions generated by the clash of national security and law enforcement.

From the early 1970s, Nazar had become the CIA's most important collaborator in Mexico and Central America³⁴³. Nazar was arguably the most valuable agent in the historical LI-TEMPO spy network: a complex of CIA-paid informants recruited from the highest levels of the Mexican security establishment dating back to at least 1960³⁴⁴. LITEMPO collected information on matters associated with the behind-the-scene politics in Mexico and the status of actors associated with the Mexican left (including foreigners in Mexico)³⁴⁵. Top LI-TEMPO informants included at least three Mexican interior ministers who subsequently became presidents: Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964), Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970) and Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970-1976)³⁴⁶, as well as two DFS directors: Francisco Gutierrez

³⁴⁰ Idem.

³⁴¹ From Criminal Investigative Division San Diego. Informative note, April 1, 1982, The National Security Archive.

³⁴² Pound, Edward T. "U.S. attorney in San Diego Dismissed". *New York Times*, April 6, 1982. Also: "Reagan Fires Kennedy After He Refuses to Quit as US Attorney." *San Diego Union*, April 6, 1982.

³⁴³ A collection of declassified cables underlining the relationship of Nazar and the U.S. can be accessed online at: Mary Ferrell Foundation, *LITEMPO-12*, <https://www.maryferrell.org/php/cryptdb.php?id=LITEMPO-12>.

³⁴⁴ For LITEMPO declassified material, files from the National Security Archive are available online at: The National Security Archive. *LITEMPO: The CIA's Eyes on Tlatelolco*, available at <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB204/#doc1> [last accessed 15 January 2020].

³⁴⁵ See also: Morley, Jefferson. *Our Man in Mexico: Winston Scott and the Hidden History of the CIA*. University Press of Kansas, 2013.

³⁴⁶ CIA Memo. Redacted. April 11, 1964, The National Security Archives, available at <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB204/index.htm#documents> [last accessed 22 January 2020]. See also: To: Chief WH Division. From: Chief of Station. "LITEMPO/Operational Report. Tasks assigned to LITEMPO". Memorandum, October 24, 1963, The National Security Archives, available at <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB204/3.pdf> [last accessed 25 January 2020].

Barrios (1965-1970) and Miguel Nazar Haro (1978-1982)³⁴⁷. Nazar's (Litempo-12) relationship with U.S. intelligence went back to the 1950s and his training at the School of the Americas at Fort Gulick, Panama (the training and indoctrination centre for the U.S.-supported security establishment in Latin America)³⁴⁸. Before directing the DFS in the early 1980s, he became the agency's leading actor in counterinsurgency operations, representing for decades the most important interlocutor and ally of the U.S. government in operations in Mexico and Central America. In this respect, Nazar's key involvement in running the national security apparatus *and* managing the criminal rackets supporting its operation made of him an explicit embodiment of what the Cold War security literature refers to as the 'dual' or 'deep' state in Mexico. Coined by Ola Tunander³⁴⁹, the 'deep state' refers to security structures operating under what Carl Schmitt referred to as a 'state of exception' that provides its members with the ability to violate the rule of law on grounds of national security³⁵⁰. From our perspective, what makes the concept of 'dual' states of particular interest for historians and political scientists is not the alleged 'ultra-secretive', 'conspiratorial' and 'all-powerful' qualities commonly associated with it, but rather the extent to which, in the countries where these structures have been noted to exist by historians, national security apparatuses establish functional relationship with criminals (much like the CIA and the DFS) to advance concrete political agendas in a territorial and extraterritorial direction³⁵¹. Morgenthau discussed the existence of a "dual state" in the U.S. which is able to "exert an effective veto over the decisions" of

³⁴⁷ Idem. According to documents cited in Aguayo, Nazar joined the DFS under director Francisco Gutierrez Barrios (LITEMPO 4) in the mid-1960s. According to Pável Urganga, whose parents were both tortured by Nazar himself at Campo Militar N1, Nazar began his intelligence career in 1952, debuting in a failed plot to kill the leftist Cardenista campesino leader Miguel Enriquez Guzmán, orchestrated by the DFS.

³⁴⁸ Castellanos, Laura. *México Armado*. Ediciones Era, 2014. Similarly, an excellent monograph on the School of the Americas can be found in: Gill, Lesley. *The school of the Americas: military training and political violence in the Americas*. Duke University Press, 2004. Gill explains how recruitment and training at the School of the Americas consolidated a coordinate, unified command of several national armies in Latin America advancing a reactionary agenda during the Cold War. Graduates of the school of the Americas include leaders in the military establishments of most Latin American countries. They were very often associated with Operación Condor.

³⁴⁹ Tunander, Ola. "Democratic State vs Deep State: approaching the Dual State of the West." *Presented at Government of the Shadows: Global Governance, Para-Politics and Organized Crime*, August 10-12, 2006.

³⁵⁰ Schmitt, Carl. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. University of Chicago Press, 2005 [1922].

³⁵¹ In line with this, Gingeras notes that "Although military officers are often seen as ringleaders [...], the participation of narcotics traffickers, paramilitaries, terrorists and other criminals is also deemed essential in constructing the deep state." (Gingeras, Ryan. "Last rites for a 'Pure Bandit': Clandestine service, historiography and the origins of the Turkish 'deep state'." *Past and Present*, vol. 206, no. 1, 2010, pp. 151-174, pp. 152-154.)

the regular state hierarchy when deemed necessary. This, according to him, limits the range of democratic options available to the public in the name of national emergencies³⁵². Barry Buzan argues that “the urgency of an existential threat” permits the state to resort to consistent violations of rules that would otherwise have to be obeyed”³⁵³. Before them, Marx attempted to capture the logic of the state of exception by noting that when the manipulation of the political process to engineer the rule of law in favour of capitalist interests is not sufficient, extra-legal political violence is likely to follow³⁵⁴. For Eric Wilson, the politics of the ‘dual’ state are inexplicable without understanding its commitment to the capitalisation of the global economy through new forms of ‘enclosures’. He notes that “the 80-plus military operations conducted in the South in the post-war period [...] were deployed to forcibly open markets and establish national political-institutional architectures conducive to labor dispossession and Western capitalist penetration”³⁵⁵. In spite of its centrality to the success of capitalist expansion, these ‘exceptional’ mechanisms “have been concealed from the public’s understanding not only through liberal ideologies that naturalise globalisation as an inevitable techno-economic process, but also through political propaganda [to justify] the adoption of draconian emergency powers along with the institutionalisation of anti-left policies”³⁵⁶.

In other words, what authors have often referred to as ‘dual’ or ‘deep’ structures is in practice a process whereby, among other activities, (trans)national security apparatuses co-opt ‘bandit’ economies as a strategy of rule. This process, whose illegitimate nature forces liberal states to conceal it, is nevertheless an integral mechanism in the construction of the capitalist structures that support liberal states. In this respect, Nazar Haro signified the ‘deep’ or ‘dual’ state in Mexico during the 1970s and 1980s in the sense that he embodied the covert importance that criminal economies had in the construction of a (trans)national security apparatus committed to a capitalist agenda. According to witnesses at two different trials, Nazar

³⁵² Morgenthau, H. J. *Politics in the Twentieth Century, Vol. 1: The Decline of Democratic Politics*. University of Chicago Press, 1962.

³⁵³ Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Lynne Reiner, 1998, p. 23.

³⁵⁴ Wilson, Eric, ed. *The Dual State: Parapolitics, Carl Schmitt and the National Security Complex*. Routledge, 2016, p. 71.

³⁵⁵ *Idem.*

³⁵⁶ *Idem.*

was not only heavily involved in contraband, but his illegal activities included transnational narcotics at the very time that the CIA was trying to defuse the FBI indictment against him³⁵⁷. Lawrence Victor Harrison, a government-paid witness who had extensive dealings with both Mexican intelligence and leading drug traffickers, testified that Nazar was deeply involved in drug trafficking³⁵⁸. Witnesses at two different trials confirmed this, along with PJF-2³⁵⁹. The CIA's indirect use of criminal rackets (and transnational drug trafficking in particular) to support the operation of satellites was not an 'omission' but a deliberate and more widely reproduced mechanism to generate funds and enable proxies employed in clandestine operations. The DFS embodied a double mandate shared by other intelligence agencies in the Cold War: a mandate to enforce political agendas by clandestine means, and a mandate to support their implementation by racketeering criminal economies. Nazar embodied this more general process in the reproduction of security systems during the Cold War and the PRI period.

A political economy for counterinsurgency

In 1943, Ruben Jaramillo, a peasant activist, fled to the mountains in the state of Morelos to avoid arrest after organising an illegal worker's strike at a sugar mill. Under Jaramillo's guidance, a group composed by subsistence farmers, seasonal labourers, migrants, sugar-mill workers, and a few rural schoolteachers began a limited form of irregular warfare aimed at taking intermittent control of local populations and pushing back on commercial estates expanding on the commons and collective *ejidos*. Rather than seeking to bring down the government, the first guerrilla movement in Mexico demanded the return of credit, technical assistance and basic government services provided by Cardenismo but withdrawn shortly after³⁶⁰. According to Tanalís Padilla, "Jaramillo confronted the limitations of a system increasingly designed to suit the needs of an export economy, corrupt public officials, and a

³⁵⁷ Branigin, William. "New corruption charges emerge in Mexican case." *The Washington Post*, June 26, 1989.

³⁵⁸ Weinstein, Henry. "Judge Overrules Bid to Link CIA, Drug Lords in Camarena Trial." *Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 1990.

³⁵⁹ Branigin, William. "Trial in Camarena case shows DEA anger at CIA." *The Washington Post*, July 16, 1990.

³⁶⁰ Padilla, Tanalís. *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax-Priista, 1940-1962*. Duke University Press, 2008, p. 4.

new group of latifundistas (large landholders)³⁶¹. The army's inability to eliminate the guerrilla drove the government of Ávila Camacho to offer amnesty to Jaramillo's movement, a tactic subsequently deployed to co-opt subversive leaders before deploying full military force. The PRI regime's commitment to agribusiness led, ten years later, to a second Jaramillista insurrection. After a short struggle where the government was again incapable of suppressing his movement, Jaramillo was again pardoned in 1958. The Cuban revolution and growing antagonisms in the Mexican countryside drove the DFS to keep a close watch on Jaramillista members. When in 1962 Jaramillo and his followers invaded agro-industrial lands expanding on ejidos, this time the state's response was the brutal killing of Jaramillo and his family, which effectively ended his movement. The assassination of Jaramillo was a massive setback for the peasant struggle in Morelos, but soon other guerrilla movements, generated by similar class antagonisms, began to transpire in the country's north, setting in motion the early phases of the *dirty wars* in Mexico.

To address these growing class antagonisms, Nazar established in 1964 the country's top counterinsurgency squad, a group called C-047, later renamed Brigada Especial Antiguerrillas, or BEA, operating under the umbrella of DFS³⁶². BEA was a multi-agency task force composed of around 200 members from the DFS, the armed forces (military police and judicial military police), the Attorney General and Mexico City police³⁶³. BEA represented the vanguard for the elimination of guerrilla activity during the early years of what became known as the 'Guerra Sucia', a period lasting from the mid-1960s to the late-1970s. BEA's first success was neutralising the guerrilla movement in Mexico that followed Jaramillismo, the *Movimiento 23 de Septiembre*³⁶⁴. Methods used by BEA included infiltration, interrogation, disappearances, torture, rape and executions not only of guerrilla men and women but

³⁶¹ Idem, p. 2.

³⁶² Castellanos, Laura. *México Armado*. Ediciones Era, 2014.

³⁶³ Idem.

³⁶⁴ Idem.

union leaders, social activists, relatives, supporters, etc. Nazar not only directed these operations himself but often directly partook in them, as ample testimonies, court records and reports associated with the Truth Commission have shown³⁶⁵.

Trained, in many cases, by U.S. instructors, BEA's commanders were notorious not only for the brutality employed to neutralise the *enemigo interno* [internal enemy] but also for their involvement in major criminal rackets. The leading members of BEA, as well as those of subsequent anti-guerrilla task forces, were all established racketeers with one hand in the most profitable illegal markets and another in counterinsurgency operations. Under Nazar's tight command, the core of BEA was integrated by Arturo Durazo Moreno, Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro, Arturo Izquierdo Hebrard, Ricardo Quiroz Hermosillo, Francisco Sahagun Baca, Jesus Miyasawa Álvarez, Javier Barquin Alonso, Guillermo Álvarez Nahara, among others. All of these actors, who represented the very core of an anti-insurgency effort taking place during the most repressive period of the PRI period, have documented links with drug trafficking in multiple periods of their careers.

To provide an account of the racketeering activities of all of these security actors goes beyond the scope of this work. Looking briefly at some key examples, however, will underline the more general entanglements between those heading the national security apparatus and the extent to which their careers and activities were supported by major criminal economies. One such example is BEA member Arturo Durazo Moreno. Durazo became a DFS commander in the late 1950s and joined BEA in the late 1960s³⁶⁶. His counterinsurgency credentials made him the most powerful member of the secret police in Mexico City. His efficiency in dismantling the local branch of the *Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre*, Mexico's most prominent urban guerrilla force, elevated him in the mid-1970s to the position of director of police of Mexico City and arguably the country's most powerful police chief³⁶⁷. On the guerrilla, chief Durazo declared: "The police is prepared to fight the guerrillas regardless of whether judges

³⁶⁵ López de la Torre, Carlos. *Miguel Nazar Haro y la guerra sucia en México*. UNAM, 2013.

³⁶⁶ Castellanos, Laura. *México Armado*. Ediciones Era, 2014.

³⁶⁷ See: Oikon, Veronica, and Marta Eugenia Garcia. "Movimientos armados en México, siglo XX: La guerrilla en la segunda mitad del siglo." *El Colegio de Michoacan*, 2006.

absolve them or not”³⁶⁸. “We will hunt them down like dogs until not one is left, and by that achieve their extermination”³⁶⁹. Systematic torture and *desapariciones* committed against guerrilla suspects were undertaken by Durazo and his subordinates during his rise as BEA’s top official in the capital³⁷⁰. Paired to the task of dismantling the guerrilla, however, laid the duty of establishing rackets and ‘regulating’ the full spectrum of criminal activity in Mexico City. As *Proceso Magazine* noted, Durazo “turned the Dirección General de Policía y Tránsito in Mexico City into an instrument of terror and drug trafficking. He protected prostitution, fraud, smuggling, extortion, theft, violence, nepotism, vendettas, tortures and executions”³⁷¹. As head of Mexico City Police, Durazo established a confidential branch, the División de Investigaciones para la Prevención de la Delincuencia (DIPD) which operated as the DFS’s counterinsurgency vanguard in Mexico City³⁷². DIPD provided valuable information to U.S. intelligence and exchanged information with the CIA while running extensive criminal rackets³⁷³. In fact, Durazo was, according to his own testimony, involved in CIA operations running drugs for guns for the Nicaraguan Contra in the late 1970s³⁷⁴. When, following his appointment as head of Mexico City’s police, a U.S. ambassador noted to President José López Portillo the extent to which Durazo was involved in drug trafficking, the president defended his choice by pointing out that “law enforcement and illegal activities frequently intertwine, not only in Mexico but in other countries as well”³⁷⁵. President López Portillo was, in effect, pointing to a fundamental characteristic of the security bureaucracy in Mexico: its inevitable and structural reliance on the criminal element to generate a particular social order. As head of Mexico City’s police, Durazo institutionalised a system of obligatory ‘quotas’ whereby each policeman had to collect and channel levies on criminal activities on

³⁶⁸ Castellanos, Laura. *México Armado*. Ediciones Era, 2014, p. 283.

³⁶⁹ “...los seguiremos como perros hasta que no quede uno y así lograr su exterminio” (Cabildo, Miguel. “Durazo perseguirá como perros a los guerrilleros.” *Proceso*, no. 25, April 23, 1977, p. 19; cited in Escamilla Rodríguez, José Ángel. “Terrorismo, prensa clandestina y comunismo consejista en la Liga Comunista 23 de septiembre: 1973 - 1981.” Tesis de Maestría, UAM Iztapalapa, 2016, p. 324 [own translation]).

³⁷⁰ “Detenido en Puerto Rico el general Arturo Durazo Moreno, ex jefe de la policía de México.” *El País*, July 1, 1984.

³⁷¹ “Ningún delito quedó sin cometerse.” *Proceso*, September 24, 1983.

³⁷² Tarrés, María Luisa, and Roberto Blancarte. “El reto de la cultura policial en la democratización de las policías mexicanas.” *Cultura e identidades en el México del siglo XXI*, 2010, p. 153.

³⁷³ Wagner, Dennis, and Arturo Durazo Moreno. “The story of ‘El Negro’s’ secret, corrupt life dug up by Prescott man”. *The Arizona Republic*, February 15, 2018.

³⁷⁴ *Idem*.

³⁷⁵ “From U.S. Embassy to Secretariat.” Department of State, Memorandum, August 25, 1976.

a monthly basis to the very top. He is quoted by his right-hand man as saying to new police recruits: “If you want a police vehicle to ‘work’ a street - read extort - you will have to pay all your expenses yourself”³⁷⁶. Durazo’s rewards included a Swiss-style chalet equipped with a greyhound racing-track, horse-stables, tennis courts, a parking lot for his collection of luxury cars, and a replica of the Studio 54 nightclub³⁷⁷. Another one of his mansions, near Acapulco, was aptly called ‘El Parthenon’³⁷⁸. He was accused of cocaine-trafficking in courts in California and Florida, was apprehended by the FBI during a short visit to the U.S. in the early 1980s, but immediately released and allowed to return to Mexico³⁷⁹. Durazo’s long career as one of the key actors behind the counterinsurgency and political-policing efforts of an authoritarian state, while running rackets in criminal activities, underlines the dynamics supporting the so-called ‘deep’ security structures operating in Mexico and other theatres of the Cold War.

The involvement of BEA’s leading officials in organised crime is overwhelming. Apart from Nazar and Durazo, BEA’s top-ranking comandantes included agent Arturo Izquierdo Hebrard (brother-in-law to Durazo³⁸⁰, also involved in cocaine and heroin trafficking³⁸¹, convicted for the assassination of the leftist Veracruz senator, Mario Angulo³⁸²); agent Francisco Sahagun Baca (head of the infamous Mexico City police department *División de Investigaciones para la Prevención de la Delincuencia*, which represented BEA’s core group in the capital³⁸³, arrested on drug trafficking charges in 1989³⁸⁴); agent Javier Barquin Alonso (who in parallel coordinated the little-known *Grupo Sangre* – a state-supported, secret paramilitary death-squad operating in the country’s hotspot of guerrilla activity, the state of Guerrero,

³⁷⁶ González G., José. *Lo negro del negro Durazo*. Editorial Esfuerzo, 1983.

³⁷⁷ “Twenty-sixth Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Conference. Background Materials for U.S. Delegation Use Only.” U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986.

³⁷⁸ Images of the ‘Parthenon’ are available at: Messynessy. “What’s Left of a Cartel Cop’s Palace Playground.” September 15, 2016, <https://www.messynessychic.com/2016/09/15/whats-left-of-a-corrupt-cartel-cops-replica-parthenon-palace/>.

³⁷⁹ Riding, Alan. “Corruption, Mexican Style”. *The New York Times*, December 16, 1984.

³⁸⁰ Castellanos, Laura. *México Armado*. Ediciones Era, 2014, p. 283.

³⁸¹ Ravelo, Ricardo. *Ejecuciones de periodistas: los expedientes*. Grijalbo, 2016.

³⁸² Monsiváis, Carlos. *Los mil y un velorios: Crónica de la nota roja en México*. Debate, 2016. Also : Astorga Almanza, Luis A. *Drogas sin fronteras*. Grijalbo, 2003.

³⁸³ “Current developments in Mexico.” Hearing before the Subcommittees on Human Rights and International Organizations, and on Western Hemisphere Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. House of Representatives, One Hundred First Congress, Second session, September 12, 1990.

³⁸⁴ *Idem*, vol. 4, p. 81.

celebrating at the same time *arreglos* [arrangements] with poppy and marijuana traffickers³⁸⁵); agent Guillermo Álvarez Nahara (linked in FBI reports to drug traffickers³⁸⁶); agent Jorge Carranza Peniche (convicted in the U.S. of introducing Bolivian cocaine³⁸⁷); agent Javier Garcia Paniagua (DFS director and national president of the PRI party, close to Nazar, and father to Javier Garcia Morales, executed in drug trafficking disputes years later³⁸⁸); among others. These individuals did not constitute isolated cases but represented the very core of a U.S.-supported counterinsurgency effort in Mexico.

Another example of the close relationship between the racketeering of criminal markets and the operationalisation of national security during the country's counterinsurgency plateau is the career of General Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro. Acosta received counterinsurgency training at Fort Brag and Fort Benning. He joined BEA in the early 1970s³⁸⁹. In that capacity, he directed operations in the country's guerrilla hotspot, the state of Guerrero. He became known for using brutal tactics against suspected guerrilla fighters and those allegedly supporting them. He was pointed out by the *Frente Nacional Contra la Represión* for being directly or indirectly responsible for the killing of 355 people in Guerrero³⁹⁰. He pioneered the infamous 'death flights' whereby guerrilla suspects were dropped from flying planes into the Pacific Ocean after brutal interrogations³⁹¹. Acosta headed the paramilitary organisation *Grupo Sangre*, described in DFS memos as a vehicle to eliminate *guerrilleros* and generate agreements with drug traffickers³⁹². Acosta Chaparro operated what DFS files describe as

³⁸⁵ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Francisco Javier Barquin Alonso, legajo único; Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro Escapite, legajo único.

³⁸⁶ Torres, Ruben. "Militares, en las redes de Nacho Coronel." *El Economista*, August 1, 2010.

³⁸⁷ United States of America, Plaintiff-appellee, v. Hector Manuel Brumel-alvarez, Defendant-appellant. United States of America, Plaintiff-appellee, v. Efrén Mendez-duenas, Defendant-appellant. United States of America, Plaintiff-appellee, v. Mario Vargas-bruun, Defendant-appellant. United States of America, Plaintiff-appellee, v. Jorge Carranza-peniche, Defendant-appellant. United States of America, Plaintiff-appellee, v. Rolando Antonio Ayala-justiniano, Defendant-appellant. United States of America, Plaintiff-appellee, v. Jorge Roman-salas, Defendant-appellant. United States of America, Plaintiff-appellee, v. Pablo Giron-ortiz, Defendant-appellant, 991 F.2d 1452 (9th Cir. 1993). US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

³⁸⁸ Osorio, Alberto. "Ejecutan en Guadalajara a hijo de Javier García Paniagua". *Proceso*, September 6, 2011.

³⁸⁹ Castellanos, Laura. *México Armado*. Ediciones Era, 2014.

³⁹⁰ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro Escapite, legajo único.

³⁹¹ Castellanos, Laura. *México Armado*. Ediciones Era, 2014.

³⁹² Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro Escapite, legajo único.

“*manejos turbios*” [murky business] “that pocket him a strong sum of monthly rent” from protection rackets in the drug business³⁹³. He coordinated drug trafficking operations with local police in Guerrero, which according to intelligence memos was also involved in gun-running³⁹⁴. Acosta appears in the DEA database as an official who associated with and provided protection to narcotics traffickers³⁹⁵. According to PJF-1, military planes in Guerrero were not only used for ‘death flights’ but also to ship drugs to the U.S. border³⁹⁶. After heading repression efforts in Guerrero for the federal and local governments, Acosta relocated to Baja California as commander of the 68th Battalion and was later appointed head of security in Veracruz. In the late 1970s, Acosta was mentioned in DFS cables as a likely successor of Miguel Nazar as head of the DFS (a position that went, however, to Antonio Zorrilla, who was subsequently charged in both Mexico and the United States for drug trafficking). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Acosta spent seven years in prison in Mexico under drug trafficking charges, was released on appeal in 2007, and was assassinated in 2013. Men like Acosta, Durazo, Nazar and other leading members of Mexico’s intelligence services *personify* the embedded character of the transnational criminal market and the security complex of a regime reaching its authoritarian and repressive plateau. As Aguayo Quezada concludes, to address a potential and unconfirmed threat to national security [i.e. insurgency and guerrilla], the regime created the conditions that would favour drug trafficking, which became in subsequent years the main threat to national security³⁹⁷. As PJF-1 told me:

What do you think is going to happen if, just like that, you close the tap to the heroin and crack-addicted population in the U.S.? The only thing that you would get is total chaos. No. You manage the system. The drug system is managed by security institutions. This does not mean that the Mexican government has total "control" of the drug trafficking business,

³⁹³ Idem.

³⁹⁴ Idem.

³⁹⁵ Cited in: Bartley, Russell H., and Sylvia E. Bartley. *Eclipse of the Assassins: The CIA, Imperial Politics, and the Slaying of Mexican Journalist Manuel Buendía*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.

³⁹⁶ Interview with PJF-1.

³⁹⁷ Quezada, Sergio Aguayo. *La charola: una historia de los servicios de inteligencia en México*. Editorial Ink, 2014.

but that it “administers” the drug trade in a clandestine fashion. By doing so, the Mexican government generated profits often employed in clandestine operations³⁹⁸.

Focused on Guerrero, Aviña notes how “the origins of Mexico’s drug wars can be found in the Mexican state’s decades-long attack on popular movements advocating for social and economic justice”³⁹⁹. The ‘War on Drugs’ provided from its very inception a vehicle for “state-sanctioned violence and terror against poor people whose political and economic decisions and/or actions symptomatically reflected deeper structural and historical maladies”⁴⁰⁰. In some regions, the war on drugs generated a form of militarised governance in which networks of military, caciques, politicians, police and narcotraffickers constituted obscure bodies identifying and eliminating rural teachers and professors, university students, peasant communities, indigenous movements, and guerrilla cells⁴⁰¹. By the early and mid-1970s, the accumulated social antagonisms generated by the ‘structural maladies’ attached to PRI governance began to translate into increasingly assertive pockets of insurrection. Taking place amidst the plateau of guerrilla activity in Latin America, the PRI state was ill-equipped to address an expansive threat to its crony authoritarianism. Confidential memos by U.S. security agencies note that the growing threat of guerrilla “suggested the possibility that impoverished Mexicans were beginning to wake up against the one-party system”⁴⁰². Memos also underline “that the capacity of the Mexican state to address these challenges was very limited despite ever-increasing commitments of manpower and resources”⁴⁰³. In 1971, for example, a much more forceful military assault on guerrillas in the West dubbed “Operación Telaraña” failed to achieve its ends because of the limited security capabilities available to the Mexican state, as well as the ample social support enjoyed by the insurrection.

³⁹⁸ Interview with PJF-2.

³⁹⁹ Aviña, Alexander. “Mexico’s Long Dirty War: The origins of Mexico’s drug wars can be found in the Mexican state’s decades-long attack on popular movements advocating for social and economic justice.” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2016, pp. 144-149.

⁴⁰⁰ Aviña, Alexander. “A War Against Poor People.” *Specters of Revolution: Peasant Guerrillas in the Cold War Mexican Countryside*, edited by Alexander Aviña, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 141.

⁴⁰¹ *Idem*, p. 148.

⁴⁰² Cited in Doyle, Kate. “The Dawn of Mexico’s Dirty War.” National Security Archive. Posted - December 5, 2003.

⁴⁰³ *Idem*.

As in concurrent U.S. theatres in South East Asia and Latin America, the war against the guerrilla called for a war against its social bases. A U.S. embassy cable notes, for example, that “the terrain (in the sierras) inhibits the manoeuvres of the security forces, and on the most recent occasions the guerrillas have been able to engage army inflicting heavy casualties”⁴⁰⁴. Another cable noted that: “It is apparent that Cabañas [the leader of guerrilla activity in Guerrero, assassinated by the army in 1974] and his group operate freely in Guerrero. Implications are that local populace, for whatever reasons, continues to afford Cabañas cover. It therefore is problematical whether announced new [military] campaign will be any more successful than were previous efforts to capture Cabañas”⁴⁰⁵. As declassified memos show, it was becoming clear for the U.S. government that its Mexican counterpart lacked the coercive infrastructure to address the more assertive by-products of its political and socio-economic model.

As I note below, a much more determined (and successful) effort to neutralise this growing threat was the U.S.-supported drug-eradication campaign *Operación Condor*. Deployed between 1977 and 1979 to hamper a surge in opium production in the Western sierras, the campaign set in motion two key dynamics in the subsequent evolution of drug enforcement in Mexico that again, challenge normalised perceptions of the aims and methods of the war on drugs. First, Condor was conceived from its inception as an instrument to increase the limited policing infrastructure available to the Mexican state to deploy counterinsurgency technologies and dirty wars on surging rural and urban mobilisation. Led by U.S. agencies, Condor shifted for the first time the ‘securitisation’ narrative from an alleged communist threat to the peril posed by drug trafficking. Second, Condor represented a highly successful attempt by the Mexican state to assert control over, rather than to dismantle, the narcotics market.

⁴⁰⁴ “Mexico: Terrorism still on the rise”. National Archives, RG 59 1970-73 Pol 23-8 Mex, Box 2476.

⁴⁰⁵ Cited in Doyle, Kate. “The Dawn of Mexico’s Dirty War.” National Security Archive. Posted - December 5, 2003.

Operación Condor/Trizo: national security via selective drug enforcement

Taking place amidst this counterinsurgency highpoint, the Mexican government launched in January 1977 a massive drug enforcement operation whose most important outcome, besides pushing back on peasant insurrectionary activity, would be an even tighter form of ‘integration’ of its security services and the drug market. *Operación Condor/Trizo* was a groundbreaking, multi-year, U.S.-overviewed and U.S.-financed expansion of Mexico’s internal security capabilities aimed officially at suppressing poppy cultivation in the sierras⁴⁰⁶. Thirty helicopters, remote sensing devices, high-aerial reconnaissance equipment, computer terminals, telecommunication kits, training programmes, intelligence, among other items, were allocated by the U.S. to the Mexican Army and the federal police under this new platform for binational cooperation⁴⁰⁷. According to Watt and Zepeda, the total number of aircraft supplied by the U.S. to Mexico under Condor was 76, with a total investment of \$150 million, or about \$700 million today⁴⁰⁸. Condor/Trizo involved the Mexican Army, the DFS and the PJJ, as well as the DEA, the CIA and the State Department⁴⁰⁹. A key aspect to the operation was that it opened drug enforcement operations in Mexico to the direct participation of U.S. agencies for the first time⁴¹⁰. Anticipating the kind of rationale behind the U.S.-supported

⁴⁰⁶ Whereas Condor marked a landmark transition in the expansion of the U.S. involvement in Mexico, collaboration between Mexican and American drug enforcement went back, in particular to Operation Intercept, whereby the Nixon administration foreclosed in 1969 the border in Mexico to pressure the Mexican government to accept U.S. involvement in drug enforcement operations. The massive expansion in opium production in the western sierras, which led to the escalation of eradication efforts embodied by *Operación Condor* in 1976 and, more importantly, *Operación Condor* in 1977, marked however a new period for drug enforcement in Mexico. A more detailed description of pre-Condor eradication efforts can be found in: Pérez Ricart, Carlos A. "Taking the War on Drugs Down South: The Drug Enforcement Administration in Mexico (1973–1980)." *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2020, pp. 82-113.

⁴⁰⁷ Pyes, Craig. "Legal Murders." *The Village Voice*, June 4, 1979. According to Pérez Ricart, it is however difficult to quantify with certainty the scope of military transfers from the U.S. to Mexico under Condor.

⁴⁰⁸ Watt, Peter, and Roberto Zepeda. *Drug war Mexico: Politics, neoliberalism and violence in the new narcoeconomy*. Zed Books Ltd., 2012, p. 48.

⁴⁰⁹ Pyes, Craig. "Legal Murders." *The Village Voice*, June 4, 1979. See also: CIA. "Mexico: Increases in Military Antinarcotics Unit." Memorandum. Redacted. MD00404 MEX-USA_C.P_DNSA, 1983. For connections between the CIA and Condor, see: Valentine, Douglas. *Strength of the Pack: The Personalities, Politics and Espionage Intrigues that Shaped the DEA*. Trine Day, 2010. Another analysis on CIA participation in Condor is: Marshall, Jonathan. "CIA Assets and the Rise of the Guadalajara Connection." *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1991, pp. 85-96.

⁴¹⁰ Reuter points to three factors that made this operation different from previous U.S.-led drug campaigns, as well as a model for subsequent operations in South America. First, Mexico allowed aerial spraying of herbicides –the first time toxic compounds were used for drug eradication purposes. Second, it involved vast contingents of the military in a drug-eradication effort (Reuter estimates that a third of Mexico’s army became involved in the effort). Third, Mexico had no domestic consumption of opioids: in contrast to other drug producing nations, it was a producing country, not a consumer. See Reuter, Peter, and David Ronfeldt. "Quest for integrity: The Mexican-US drug issue in the 1980s." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 34, no. 3, 1992, pp. 89-154.

militarised drug enforcement campaigns subsequently deployed in South America (especially in Colombia, Bolivia and Peru), the objectives of Condor/Trizo were not limited to drug enforcement. Rather, they embodied a concurrent and unequivocal effort to strengthen Mexico's security capabilities and provide a platform to deploy 'pacification' campaigns against guerrilla movements and its social bases in the sierras. Condor/Trizo concentrated in regions that, accounting for the largest share of domestic opium production, hosted the most active guerrilla groups in the country (in the sierra of Sinaloa, Chihuahua and Guerrero). As I document below, the covert use of Condor infrastructure to placate peasant discontent in the impoverished sierras was accompanied, in addition, by a successful effort to exert an even more centralised form of control over the drug economy, leading to the tightest phase in the 'integration' of state and drug markets embodied by the PRI party.

Condor focused mostly on the poppy-growing states of the Golden Triangle: Sinaloa, Chihuahua, Durango, as well as the state of Guerrero. Opium and heroin production in Mexico originated from temporary legalisation of poppy-cultivation during WW II to meet U.S. demand. After the war, when the ban was re-established under U.S. pressure, opium-growing campesino families in Sinaloa (as well as Durango and Chihuahua) such as the Herreras, Quinteros, Treviños and Beltran refused to switch back to the survival economies of beans and maize. Beginning in the late 1960s, eradication campaigns against opium production were conducted by the Attorney General (PGR), the Policía Judicial Federal (PJF), and the Mexican military. The results of these campaigns were modest, selectively targeted and plagued with corruption. As noted above, opium production in Mexico was embedded in the governance systems of these regions, implicating governors and caciques⁴¹¹. In turn, the key brokers of this international heroin and cannabis market (representing until the mid-1970s a

⁴¹¹ According to Aguilar Camín: "It was during the government of Leopoldo Sánchez Celis, between 1963 and 1969, when drug trafficking broke out openly in Sinaloa. Sánchez Celis began to surround himself with gunmen. These gunmen included Miguel Ángel Felix Gallardo (the head of the Guadalajara cartel)" (Aguilar Camín, Hector. "Narco-historias extraordinarias". *Nexos*, May 1, 2007 [own translation]. See also: Smith, Benjamin T. "The Rise and Fall of Narcopopulism: Drugs, Politics, and Society in Sinaloa, 1930–1980." *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2013, pp. 125-165).

limited share of global output) were national and foreigner *mafiosi* operating under the protection of federal agencies like the DFS⁴¹². From the early 1970s onwards, this central involvement in drug markets would not only grow in proportion to the size (and value) of the market but also in accordance to the growing social instability the security forces were called to police and repress. In other words, the PRI state provided its repressive bodies, already enjoying a well-established foothold in the market, with a ‘licence’ to integrate drug markets even tighter with federal bodies, as long as these bodies undertook the policing and repressing activity instructed by the regime.

Mexico’s position in global heroin and opioid markets, limited until the early-1970s, began to quickly increase when the so-called French Connection — the Turkish-Corsican network that had supplied heroin to U.S. markets since WW II — was dismantled by the Nixon administration⁴¹³. From Turkey and Marseilles, heroin production bound to the U.S. relocated to the sierras and laboratories of Sinaloa, Durango and Chihuahua⁴¹⁴. The share supplied by the French Connection to U.S. consumers fell from more than half in the late 1960s to 10% by 1972⁴¹⁵. In parallel, Mexico’s share of the U.S. market increased from about one-third in 1972 to about three-fourths in 1974⁴¹⁶. By 1975, what had been throughout the 1950s and

⁴¹² In particular, international operations of the Mexican drug markets were at this hour brokered by the U.S. mafia and his chief envoy to Mexico, Alberto Sicilia Falcon. Sicilia was a Cuban veteran from the Bay of Pigs invasion; a drug-trafficker that, after the mafia’s collapse in Cuba, became part of the criminal syndicate of Cuban expats in Miami. Alberto Sicilia Falcon is often noted for its involvement in CIA-supported arms trafficking operations. His prominence in the pre-1976 drug market in Mexico partly owes to his high-level social connections in Mexico, which included president Luis Echeverría’s wife, herself part of a family associated with drug markets in Guadalajara, the Zuno Family (See: Lupsha, Peter A. “Drug trafficking: Mexico and Colombia in comparative perspective.” *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1981, pp. 95-115; Enciso, Froylan. *Nuestra historia narcótica: Pasajes para (re) legalizar las drogas en México*. Debate, 2015.).

⁴¹³ The drug ban only lasted 3 years in Turkey. Legalising it was the electoral platform of the party that displaced the military junta. Its reintroduction, however, occurred under efficient controls to prevent deviations to illegal markets.

⁴¹⁴ The Nixon administration is commonly associated with the beginning of the War on Drugs. This belief is misplaced. On the international front, Nixon’s war on drugs consisted namely of pressing the French and Turkish governments to dismantle the transatlantic heroin trade. It also consisted of Operation Intercept, which nearly shut down the U.S. border with Mexico for 20 days to pressure the latter to tackle marihuana production in Sinaloa and Durango. Marihuana use was closely associated with the hippy movement. The criminalisation of drug consumption (at the domestic front) and the militarised approach to eliminate the “source” of the drug market (at the international front) is actually much closer associated with the subsequent ‘neoconservative’ administrations of Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan, as well as George H.W. Bush. It was also under these administrations that drug trafficking was used as a proxy economy to advance the national interest in third world conflicts.

⁴¹⁵ For: Phil Buchen, Robert T. Hartmann, Jack March, Bill Seidman, Max Freidersdorf, Jim Lynn, Brent Scowcroft. From: Jim Cannon. Domestic Drug Abuse Report. Memorandum. September 30, 1975. Gerald Ford Presidential Library.

⁴¹⁶ Allen Heath, Edward. “Mexican Opium Eradication Campaign.” The National Security Archive, 1981.

1960s a small Mexican global output was providing between 50 to 80% of the drug consumed in the quickly expanding heroin market in America⁴¹⁷. Aimed at reducing this opium and heroin spike, the Mexican government bowed to U.S. pressure by the end of 1976 and accepted to undertake the first militarised, binational eradication campaign conducted in any country. The result was Operación Condor/Trizo.

Condor/Trizo operations were significant and involved military contingents whose size varies according to sources⁴¹⁸. The army seems to have contributed 15,500 soldiers (including 1,225 officers and 20 generals)⁴¹⁹ while the PJF devoted 350 agents (about 80% of its force). In any case, the operation involved unprecedented and massive troop deployments that turned drug enforcement at this hour into the key focus of the armed forces⁴²⁰. The success of the official aims of the programme (opium eradication by aerial spraying accompanied by troop deployments) was, according to both governments, impressive. In its first year, Condor/Trizo reported an eradication increase of 153% in comparison to the previous year (when the Mexican government was conducting eradication operations alone)⁴²¹. Eradication peaked at 9,311 hectares in 1977, then dropped to 1,819 hectares in 1978, to only 863 hectares in 1979⁴²². According to figures provided by the Mexican army (likely exaggerated), 94% of cannabis crops in the region covered by Condor were destroyed between 1976 and 1980⁴²³. The effectiveness of Condor was felt in the streets. Retail prices of heroin in the U.S. rose from \$1.15 per milligram in 1975 to \$2.19 in 1979⁴²⁴. Heroin-related deaths in the U.S. decreased from 1,597 in 1976, to 597 in 1977, and to 471 in 1978⁴²⁵. By 1980, the National Narcotics Intelligence Consumers Committee (NNICC) estimated that Mexico was no longer

⁴¹⁷ Idem.

⁴¹⁸ Pérez Ricart notes that “the absence of reliable information prevents us from determining the amount of military forces and MFJP operatives deployed for Condor. Estimations vary from just 1,200 men to more than 10,000”. See: Pérez Ricart, Carlos A. “Taking the War on Drugs Down South: The Drug Enforcement Administration in Mexico (1973–1980).” *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2020, pp. 82-113.

⁴¹⁹ Camp, Roderic A. *Generals in the Palacio: the military in modern Mexico*. Oxford University Press, 1992.

⁴²⁰ Idem.

⁴²¹ Allen Heath, Edward. “Mexican Opium Eradication Campaign.” The National Security Archive, 1981.

⁴²² Idem.

⁴²³ Idem.

⁴²⁴ Idem.

⁴²⁵ Idem.

the first provider of heroin to U.S. markets, down from 80% before Condor⁴²⁶. The programme, marketed strictly to the public as a drug enforcement operation, had nevertheless the additional mandate of counter-insurrection.

The deployment of troops and agents under the Condor/Trizo programme had the concurrent and undisclosed aim of suppressing guerrilla organisations once and for all. The most brutal operations under Condor/Trizo concentrated in regions where guerrilla activity was densest. This included the highly impoverished Sierra Tarahumara in Chihuahua (where the 1965 pivotal attack led by Arturo Gamiz on the Madera army barracks inspired guerrilla activity in Mexico), the equally poor sierra of Guerrero (hosting the most important guerrilla organisation in the country, initiated in the late 1960s by Lucio Cabañas) as well as urban pockets of insurrection in Sinaloa. It is important to keep in mind that Condor/Trizo took place at a moment when U.S.-supported counterinsurgency operations in Latin America were reaching their highpoint. A CIA cable on Condor/Trizo puts this double standard unambiguously: “Army eradication [under Condor/Trizo] may devote as much effort to internal security as to eradication. [...] [T]he Army also will take advantage of the eradication campaign to uncover any arms trafficking and guerrilla activities”. For this purpose, “[t]hey may seek helicopters and other equipment from the Attorney General [furnished by the U.S. government]”⁴²⁷. As journalist Craig Pyes noted, “Mexico’s acceptance of the program had more to do with acquiring police hardware to suppress peasant insurgency movements than drug-enforcement”⁴²⁸.

According to a 1977 study by the Prisoners Committee for the Defence of Human Rights, 90% of the 457 inmates in Culiacán (Sinaloa’s capital) apprehended under Condor were poor campesinos. *Desaparecidos* under Condor/Trizo ran in the hundreds⁴²⁹. An exodus from rural areas took place, capitalised by state actors involved in drug activities. Amnesty International

⁴²⁶ Idem.

⁴²⁷ CIA. “Mexico: Increases in Military Antinarcotics Unit.” Memorandum. Redacted. MD00404 MEX-USA_C.P_DNSA, 1983.

⁴²⁸ Pyes, Craig. “Legal Murders.” *The Village Voice*, June 4, 1979. See also: Cabrera, José L.G. *1920-2000 ¡El Pastel! Parte Uno*. Palibrio, 2012.

⁴²⁹ Cited in Pyes, Craig. “Legal Murders.” *The Village Voice*, June 4, 1979.

condemned the atrocities under Condor⁴³⁰. José Ángel Gómez Mora, a journalist from Sinaloa, noted in his chronicles hundreds of ‘extra-judicial’ executions and the evictions of thousands of peasants in the Sinaloan enclaves of Guasave, Guamúchil and Culiacán. Cases of documented torture committed under Condor against suspects included blows with the fists, pistol butts, rupture of eardrums, opening of the legs to its maximum extension, electric shocks, rape of women “by the normal and abnormal way”, introduction of nails to eyes and ears, torture of children and wives in the presence of detainees, crucifixions of suspects, among others⁴³¹.

Similarly, the profile of the army generals in charge of Condor points in the direction of an anti-insurgency campaign. Generals José Hernandez Toledo and Manuel Díaz Escobar, appointed to command the operation, were also the highest-ranking officers involved in the student massacres of Tlatelolco (1968) and Jueves de Corpus (1971). The commander of the military zone in Sinaloa, Alberto Quintanar López (appointed after the beginning of Condor) had been the head of *Batallón Olympia*, the paramilitary organisation responsible for initiating the Tlatelolco massacre. Quintanar is also noted in DGIPS reports for his involvement in the torturing of *campesinos* and the racketeering of drug traffickers during Condor. Memos note the presence of BEA members in Guerrero and Sinaloa during the operation⁴³². In one of the few reports in the Mexican press documenting Condor abuses, journalist Francisco Ortiz Pinchetti described scenes more commonly associated with the Southern Cone than the PRI regime. “Y no Argentina. Ni Chile. Ni Uruguay. Es México: Sinaloa, Culiacán”⁴³³. These massive human rights violations, deployed by a war against an “internal enemy” and taking place under the excuse of drug enforcement, could only go unreported in a state whose control of the media was remarkable. In this respect, the single-party regime’s grip on national media outlets allowed it to keep these atrocities away from the public’s eye to an extent that other ‘Condor nations’ were likely incapable of achieving.

⁴³⁰ Astorga, Luis. *El siglo de las drogas: el narcotráfico, del Porfiriato al nuevo milenio*. Plaza y Janés, 2005.

⁴³¹ Ortiz Pinchetti, Francisco, et.al. *La Operación Cóndor*. Editorial Proceso, 1981.

⁴³² Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales. Caja 1711-C, Exp. 14. Archivo General de la Nación.

⁴³³ Ortiz Pinchetti, Francisco. “Sinaloa: un trasplante de Sudamérica. La Operación Condor, letanía de horrores.” *Proceso*, October 7, 1978.

In absolute contrast to the official narratives legitimising drug enforcement and the nascent war on drugs, Condor marked a key stage in the history of the drug racket in Mexico by enabling a much stronger involvement of central security agencies in all aspects of the business. As noted before, by global standards, the pre-Condor drug market in Mexico had been quite small. Limited opium production in the sierras was racketeered by local powerbrokers such as governors and *caciques*. Transnational trafficking of Mexican heroin, representing a small portion of global output, was controlled by foreign *mafiosi* traffickers protected by the DFS. Condor changed this by providing an opening for a much deeper insertion of national institutions like the DFS and PJJF in the racketeering of the drug market as a whole. The role of the PJJF during Condor is a case in point. As noted by journalist Craig Pyes, “[w]hile lower-level [PJJF] agents pilfered to augment salaries [...], the field commanders – using access to comprehensive intelligence data supplied by American law enforcement – ran a sophisticated protection racket based on selective enforcement and arresting drug traffickers who would not pay”⁴³⁴. James Mann, a U.S. congressman who visited Sinaloa at the time representing the House Select Committee on Narcotics, expressed distress about the highly selective nature of targeting under Condor, a practice that he referred to as a “lack of aggressiveness on certain areas”⁴³⁵.

A notable embodiment of the extent to which Condor involved a parallel effort to establish a tighter protection racket in the drug business was its top law enforcement official, Carlos Aguilar Garza. In one memo, for example, the DFS reports that Aguilar extorted multi-million bribes from apprehended Sinaloan drug traffickers to secure their release under Condor. Reports note how traffickers Alvaro Morales Beltran and Esteban Beltran Felix (from the notorious Beltran drug trafficking family) were released after paying bribes to Aguilar and his men⁴³⁶. Aguilar told the press that these drug traffickers had escaped custody⁴³⁷. Another confidential report notes that a major heroin-trafficker from Sinaloa referred to as “Onofre”

⁴³⁴ Pyes, Craig. “Legal Murders.” *The Village Voice*, June 4, 1979.

⁴³⁵ *Idem*.

⁴³⁶ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Carlos Aguilar Garza, legajo único.

⁴³⁷ *Idem*.

was freed by Aguilar in return for an extortion fee⁴³⁸. The report notes how Aguilar and his men offered him to reclassify his offence as ‘accessory’ to a crime (as opposed to drug trafficking) in order to secure his release⁴³⁹. Aguilar demanded 3,000,000 pesos in return for the courtesy. The same report notes how the notorious drug trafficker Ernesto Fonseca Carrillo, who would later become the second-in-command of the ‘cartel’ consolidated by Condor, ‘escaped’ from Aguilar’s custody while in detention in Culiacán. Aguilar and his Condor team extorted leading drug traffickers with the knowledge of the Attorney General, the overseeing agency of the PJF. A DFS memo states: “When the attorney general was shown the arbitrariness and plundering of millions of pesos that [Aguilar and his team] obtained from drug traffickers, he promised to fire them, but instead simply rewarded them with [new] appointments”⁴⁴⁰. Furthermore, court records, confidential memos, reports by civil society and newspaper accounts document the vast number of *desapariciones*, acts of torture, executions, arbitrary detentions and systematic brutality employed by Aguilar and other top law-enforcers in this ‘reorganisation’ of the racket. After less than a year of heading Condor, Aguilar’s position became untenable and was transferred by orders of the Attorney General to head drug enforcement in Tijuana (1978) and Nuevo Laredo (1980)⁴⁴¹. There he continued to extort drug traffickers and invest in multiple businesses, including media outlets⁴⁴². His deputy, Cruz López Garza, also widely involved in drug trafficking⁴⁴³, torture⁴⁴⁴ and executions⁴⁴⁵, was selected as his replacement in Condor⁴⁴⁶. In 1982, Aguilar joined the DFS by direct appointment of its director, José Antonio Zorilla Perez⁴⁴⁷ (widely regarded as being involved

⁴³⁸ Idem.

⁴³⁹ Idem.

⁴⁴⁰ Idem.

⁴⁴¹ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Carlos Aguilar Garza, legajo único, f. 123.

⁴⁴² Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Carlos Aguilar Garza, legajo único, f. 150. See also : Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. "Political protection and the origins of the Gulf cartel". *A war that can't be won: Binational perspectives on the war on drugs*, edited by Tony Payan, Kathleen Staudt, and Z. Anthony Kruszewski, University of Arizona Press, 2013, p.138.

⁴⁴³ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Carlos Aguilar Garza, legajo único, f. 3-4.

⁴⁴⁴ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Carlos Aguilar Garza, legajo único, f. 7-34, 121-122, 238-239.

⁴⁴⁵ Pyes, Craig. “Legal Murders.” *The Village Voice*, June 4, 1979.

⁴⁴⁶ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Carlos Aguilar Garza, legajo único, f. 125.

⁴⁴⁷ "Los diarios de Carlos Aguilar, en poder de sus trabajadores". *Proceso*, August 12, 1989.

in drug trafficking himself, convicted for the murder of noted journalist Manuel Buendía in 1985⁴⁴⁸). Aguilar was assassinated in 1992.

The top hierarchy of PJF comandantes assigned to Condor was also involved in the extortion of drug traffickers and extensive human rights violations. These included Aguilar's deputy, agent Cruz López Garza (cited in reports for his involvement in drug trafficking and torture⁴⁴⁹); agent Jaime Alcalá (coordinator of PJF agents in Condor, also noted in DFS memos for extorting drug-traffickers and committing acts of torture, subsequently appointed director of all PJF agents in the country⁴⁵⁰ and assassinated in gang-style fashion in Guadalajara in 1977⁴⁵¹), agent Roberto Martínez (head of information of Condor, assassinated in 1977 by orders of Aguilar according to confidential reports⁴⁵²) and agent Pablo Antonio Hernández (chief prosecutor under Condor, subsequently appointed *delegado* of the Attorney General in the border town of Hermosillo)⁴⁵³. A DFS report notes: "By these new appointments, this group of criminals, who have become multi-millionaires, closed the main drug trafficking axis in the country [...] under the Attorney General"⁴⁵⁴. As I note below, these early protection rackets established by the PJF and DFS during Condor represented the germ of what later became the Guadalajara Cartel, a structure that came to represent the full 'integration' of Mexican security services and the drug market.

The deployment of Condor in Sinaloa and the assertiveness of federal institutions took place in a context where local corruption associated with drug trafficking was getting out of control. Condor provided a channel endorsed by the Mexican government to 'regulate' a drug racket that, after 1978, would never cease to expand. Files at the Archivo General de la Nación contain numerous examples of the extent to which local political actors and institutions were tapping into the expansion of the opium economy shortly before Condor. One

⁴⁴⁸ Bartley, Russell H., and Sylvia Erickson Bartley. *Eclipse of the Assassins: The CIA, Imperial Politics, and the Slaying of Mexican Journalist Manuel Buendía*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.

⁴⁴⁹ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Carlos Aguilar Garza, legajo único, f. 1-6.

⁴⁵⁰ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Carlos Aguilar Garza, legajo único, f. 123.

⁴⁵¹ Idem. Also: Blancornelas, Jesus. "Fingimiento". *Zeta Tijuana*, November 13, 2004.

⁴⁵² Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Carlos Aguilar Garza, legajo único, f. 120.

⁴⁵³ Idem, f. 123.

⁴⁵⁴ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Carlos Aguilar Garza, legajo único, f. 124.

DGIPS memo notes, for example, that the assassination (in the early months of Condor) of Sinaloa's deputy police chief, Alfredo Reyes Curiel, was the result of his extortionist practices over drug traffickers, pointing to a likely vendetta⁴⁵⁵. A news report notes that in Mazatlán (western Sinaloa), the former mayor, along with the head of the local penitentiary, was found to be heading a “red de narcos”⁴⁵⁶. A DGIPS report notes that the state Attorney General “is releasing people who have been detained under drug trafficking charges” because “of the obligations he has contracted with the main drug traffickers” of the region⁴⁵⁷. Another report notes how members of the security team of Sinaloa's governor, Alfonso Calderón Velarde, assassinated an army major after the latter pointed out to his superiors the whereabouts of an ‘important’ drug stash belonging to them⁴⁵⁸. A CIA report on the situation in Sinaloa advises that the governor was highly upset because “the army has been patrolling a rich suburb of Culiacán renowned as an enclave of drug traffickers”⁴⁵⁹. Similar reports also detail the way in which the heads of PJJ clashed with the local authorities in disputes over the racket⁴⁶⁰. A local newspaper editorial asked: “What is the reason for the recent spike in violence in our state?”. To which it replies: “In good measure, to the violence generated by conflicts between law-enforcement institutions”.

Towards ‘integration’

Condor led to what became a very pervasive or ‘symbiotic’ integration of federal security institutions and the drug market. Two dynamics taking place in the context of Condor encouraged this. First and foremost was the rising value of the transnational drug market in Mexico, going from a sleepy heroin and cannabis economy to a major drug trafficking corridor and producer. DFS involvement in the transnational drug business during the PRI regime was, in fact, always proportional to the value of the market — the underlining racketeering tendencies were always there, the true variable was the availability of low-barrier economies

⁴⁵⁵ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Caja 1734 – C Exp. 16 Marzo 1973 – Diciembre 1978, f. 16.

⁴⁵⁶ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Caja 1711 – C. Exp. 13 Enero 1977- Marzo 1972, f. 237.

⁴⁵⁷ AGN. DFS-IPS Caja 1711 – C. Exp. 13 Enero 1977- Marzo 1972, f. 48.

⁴⁵⁸ AGN. DFS-IPS Caja 1711 – C. Exp. 13 Enero 1977- Marzo 1972, f. 70.

⁴⁵⁹ CIA. RP ALA 77-047 Latin America: Regional and Political Analysis. July 7, 1977 (FOIA CIA-RDP79T00912A000700010002-0).

⁴⁶⁰ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Caja 1734 – C Exp. 16 Marzo 1973 – Diciembre 1978, f. 48.

to tap into. Beginning in the late 1970s, as social tensions began to increase and to transpire in growing guerrilla movement, the availability of a much larger pool of resources increased the state's appetite to take over the drug economy. Likewise, by the early-1980s, Mexico's growing importance as a transport corridor for cocaine shipments owned by Colombian cartels demanded guarantees that only national agencies and powerful powerbrokers could deliver. The surging value of the drug market and its increasingly transnational character called for a more pervasive involvement of central security agencies.

The expansion of the drug trafficking racket in Mexico involved selective law enforcement, centralised racketeering and targeted killings undertaken in 1977 and 1978. These policies allowed the central government to consolidate a group of traffickers with a major foothold on the Mexican drug market working under the tutelage of federal institutions, in particular the DFS. As Charles Bowden notes: "When Condor wreaked temporary havoc in Sinaloa, many [heroin] traffickers left the state and settled in Guadalajara to the south. This migration was the origin of what became the Guadalajara cartel"⁴⁶¹. Condor produced a consolidated group of protected Sinaloan drug traffickers commonly referred to as the Guadalajara Cartel. The group was headed by Miguel Angel Felix Gallardo 'El Padrino' (a former PJF official) and his lieutenants Ernesto Fonseca Carrillo, Rafael Caro Quintero, Juan José Esparragoza Moreno, Manuel Salcido Uzeta, Gilberto Ontiveros Lucero, Rafael and Juan José Quintero Payán. Most of these cartel-lieutenants were former *gomeros* [opium producers] from Sinaloa and Chihuahua. According to DEA-2, the Guadalajara cartel concentrated about 80% of the sale of heroin and had a near-monopoly over cocaine shipments transiting Mexico in the years that followed Condor⁴⁶². The relocation of prominent *gozero* trafficking figures from Sinaloa to the city of Guadalajara (where they continued to control opium and cannabis production in the western sierras and cocaine shipments coming from South America) underscored how political protection to drug trafficking involved expanding geographies. Protection to drug traffickers accelerated with the appointment of Javier Garcia Paniagua (1975-

⁴⁶¹ Bowden, Charles. *Down by the river: Drugs, money, murder, and family*. Simon and Schuster, 2002, p. 136.

⁴⁶² Interview with DEA-2.

1978) and Miguel Nazar (1978-1982) as DFS directors⁴⁶³. Top DFS agents such as Rafael Chao, Tomás Morlet⁴⁶⁴, Juan Esparragoza (top member of the Guadalajara cartel), Rafael Aguilar (top member of the Juarez cartel), among others, became leading racketeers in the drug business.

This DFS/PJF racket established during Condor would survive, with adjustments, for the following two decades—a highly notable achievement of the PRI state, to be missed in later periods. Until the late 1990s, the racket would allow the regime to both retain managerial authority of the drug business as well as generate a political economy in support of policing and security activity attached to presidential authority. The political exploitation of the drug economy in Mexico to fund security and para political structures was, importantly, a practice fully endorsed by the U.S. government. The exploitation of drug markets by regimes and great powers during this period continues to underline the importance that updated forms of co-opted banditry had at key junctures in global history. A DFS agent, interviewed by Padgett, notes the increased involvement of federal agencies in drug trafficking after Condor:

If you analyze the effects of Operación Cóndor in Sinaloa, between 1977 and 1981, with the alleged purpose of dismantling drug trafficking, the only result was its “incorporation”, protected by the DFS and the army⁴⁶⁵.

All ‘reconfigurations’ thereafter involved nefarious consequences for security in Mexico. The drug-trafficking landscape that followed Condor became characterised by large-scale concentrations of drug production in estates operated by Guadalajara figures, enabled by DFS agents. The most notable example in this regard is *El Búfalo* ranch: a twelve square-kilometre marijuana plantation in Chihuahua employing 12,000 campesinos in slave-like conditions

⁴⁶³ Quezada, Sergio Aguayo. *La charola: una historia de los servicios de inteligencia en México*. Editorial Ink, 2014.

⁴⁶⁴ See, for example: United States of America v. Juan García Ábrego, CR. NO. H-93-167-SS. Appendix A. See: “Inactividad oficial, según todas las apariencias, para protegerlo.” *Proceso*, May 20, 1989. On his ties with the assassination of Camarena, see: Castellanos, Guillermo V. *Historia del narcotráfico en México*. Aguilar, 2013.

⁴⁶⁵ Cited in Padgett, Humberto. “Cuando los tigres del narco se soltaron”. *Sin Embargo*, September 4, 2013 [own translation].

which remained active from the late 1970s to 1984⁴⁶⁶. According to some estimates, its production was the equivalent of what the U.S. marijuana market consumed in one year⁴⁶⁷. The sheer size of the estate (the largest cannabis plantation ever recorded in the world) conveys the extent to which drug markets were operating under the tutelage of the Mexican intelligence services. The ranch was directly overseen by DFS men, including the agency's delegate for the states of Chihuahua, Durango and Coahuila, Rafael Aguilar Guajardo⁴⁶⁸ - a DFS agent who subsequently established drug rackets in Tamaulipas and became the founding figure of the Juarez Cartel (assassinated in 1993)⁴⁶⁹. A retired high-ranking PJF agent with knowledge of DFS operations noted to me how under Condor,

DFS agents were dispatched to regions that they knew well, usually regions where they came from. The exposure of DFS agents to racketeering opportunities in poppy and cannabis growing regions slowly began to consolidate a DFS racket over production and trafficking. Exposure to drug markets during Condor led to the "rationalisation" of the drug market under the DFS. The profits generated in this fashion came to represent the economic foundation of the agency. DFS and PJF agents were expected to live off by the money generated by extortion⁴⁷⁰.

⁴⁶⁶ Astorga, Luis. *El siglo de las drogas: el narcotráfico, del Porfiriato al nuevo milenio*. Mexico City: Plaza y Janés, 2005.

⁴⁶⁷ Scott, Peter Dale, and Jonathan Marshall. *Cocaine politics: Drugs, armies, and the CIA in Central America*. University of California Press, 1998, p. 37.

⁴⁶⁸ Bowden, Charles. *Down by the river: Drugs, money, murder, and family*. Simon and Schuster, 2002, p. 149. The AGN contains a report on Aguilar's drug trafficking activities, focused on the Northeast. However, the file was recalled again by the AGN. Flores Pérez cites the item as: AGN. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente "Organización de Tráfico de Drogas (Rafael Muñoz, Carmelo Avilés y Rafael Aguilar)", DFS, legajo único, fojas 1-6.

⁴⁶⁹ In Guadalajara, protection to the families also involved the services of governors Flavio Romero de Velasco (1977-1983) and Enrique Álvarez del Castillo (1983-1989). Romero de Velasco was found guilty in 2005 of protecting drug traffickers from the Juarez Cartel. Álvarez del Castillo, also widely suspected of providing protection to drug traffickers during his tenure, was subsequently appointed Attorney General during the presidency of Carlos Salinas (1988-1994). He was charged in the United States of providing protection to Guadalajara cartel members.

Bowden, Charles. *Down by the river: Drugs, money, murder, and family*. Simon and Schuster, 2002; "Extortion of drug-traffickers by authorities charged." *El Diario de Nuevo Laredo*, CIA, March 21, 1981.

⁴⁷⁰ Interview with PJF-1.

Events taking place in the Mexican drug business under Condor mirrored and connected with wider geopolitical strategies. From Afghanistan to Central America, the late 1970s and early 1980s was a period in which transnational drug-running economies expanded again their role as paramilitary facilitators in Cold War theatres⁴⁷¹. In Mexico, this instrumentalisation began to outdo its exclusively internal orientation and lay down support for broader security objectives. A DEA investigation found that U.S. agencies indirectly extorted the Guadalajara Cartel (via the DFS) to channel funds and provide training infrastructure for Contra rebels in the early 1980s⁴⁷². The Contra effort, aimed at deposing the socialist government in Nicaragua and at rolling back widespread social protest in Central America, tapped into transnational cocaine flows after the Reagan administration was prohibited by congress from allocating right-wing paramilitaries (the Contra) with weapons and economic support. As a result, and with the direct logistical support of America's national security establishment, the Contra began to compensate this state of austerity with drug money. These covert mechanisms employed in Central America by the U.S. clandestine services were amply documented in an official investigation undertaken by the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Operations⁴⁷³. In Mexico, the operation to support the Contra-effort enjoyed the support of the DFS⁴⁷⁴. The DEA investigation cited earlier was based on the testimony of Lawrence Victor Harrison, an employee of the Guadalajara cartel who witnessed the training of Contra operatives in Mexico⁴⁷⁵. Other DEA agents subsequently confirmed the use of the Mexican drug racket in the Contra effort (including the former head of DEA intelligence, Phil Jordan, interviewed for this thesis). The use of

⁴⁷¹ In Afghanistan, for example, opium markets and heroin laboratories protected by Pakistani intelligence under the anti-communist Islamist dictator Mohamed Zia-Ul-Haq served as the central political economy underlying the concurrent US-supported mujahedeen efforts against the Soviet Union. See Haq, Ikramul. "Pak-Afghan Drug Trade in Historical Perspective." *Asian Survey*, vol. 36, no. 10, 1996, pp. 945–963. See also: Felbab-Brown, Vanda. "Kicking the opium habit?: Afghanistan's drug economy and politics since the 1980s: Analysis." *Conflict, Security & Development*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2006, pp. 127-149; Coll, Steve. *Ghost wars: the secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001*. Penguin, 2005.

⁴⁷² DEA – 6. Report of Investigation. February 13, 1990.

⁴⁷³ United States Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Operations. "Drugs, Law Enforcement and Foreign Policy." Washington, D.C., United States Government Printing Office, OCLC 968628011, 1989, S. Prt. No. 100-165.

⁴⁷⁴ DEA – 6. Report of Investigation. February 13, 1990.

⁴⁷⁵ *Idem*.

drug money to fund paramilitary activity subsequently expanded into Colombia⁴⁷⁶. The central involvement of the intelligence services in the cocaine market would be notable at different moments in the history of early 1980s Bolivia⁴⁷⁷ and 1990s Peru⁴⁷⁸.

In 1985, after almost four decades of service, the time of the DFS was finally up. What can be regarded as the PRI's Cold War 'deep-state' — the equivalent to Turkey's *derin devlet*, by far the most studied 'dark' network hosted at the heart of the state's security apparatus — was 'officially' dismantled. For four decades, the DFS had successfully mediated between economies of banditry and the PRI state: by doing so, it had incorporated political economies that played key logistical roles in the consolidation and retention of power in modern Mexico. The DFS was the regime's arm to locate and avert structural challenges — challenges that crossed the line of what the state was able to co-opt or willing to tolerate. These internal challenges often transpired from labour movements, peasant organisations, student bodies, political foes, rural and urban guerrillas, and other forms of organised discontent challenging the *top-to-down* methods and orientation of governance under the PRI system. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the 'integration' of the transnational drug economy and the security apparatus was, by most accounts, complete. The liquidation of the DFS came after revelations brought about by the Camarena scandal: an obscure episode in which DFS agents abducted, tortured, and assassinated the DEA chief in Guadalajara, Enrique Camarena⁴⁷⁹. The scandal,

⁴⁷⁶ A study about the links between the Colombian government and paramilitary bodies is: Mariner, Joanne, and Malcolm Smart, eds. *The "Sixth Division": Military-paramilitary ties and US Policy in Colombia*. Human Rights Watch, 2001. Findings by the International Criminal Court, pointing to the links between these paramilitary bodies and the Alvaro Uribe government, are summarized in Vieira, Constanza. "Colombia: International Criminal Court Scrutinises Paramilitary Crimes." Inter Press Service, August 27, 2008, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2008/08/colombia-international-criminal-court-scrutinises-paramilitary-crimes/>. A recent study on the historical links between paramilitarism, cocaine markets and the Colombian government, focused on the city of Barranquilla, is: Martínez, Franklin Martínez, Luis Fernando Trejos Rosero, and Reynell Badillo Sarmiento. "Aproximación a las dinámicas del conflicto armado en la ciudad de Barranquilla. "Entre la marginalidad insurgente y el control paramilitar 1990-2006". *Papel Político*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2018, pp. 1-22.

⁴⁷⁷ Mitchell, Christopher. "The new authoritarianism in Bolivia." *Current History*, vol. 80, no. 463, 1981, p. 75.

⁴⁷⁸ Allegations on the involvement of Peru's central security agency, SIN, in drug markets under the presidency of Alberto Fujimori are registered in a number of declassified memos, dating from 1996. For example: DEA. "Public allegations of drug trafficking against the head of the Peruvian National Intelligence Service (SIN) Vladirimir Montesinos." Report of Investigation, August 27, 1996, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB37/04-01.htm> [last accessed 20 January 2020].

⁴⁷⁹ The Camarena scandal is analysed in: Bartley, Russell H., and Sylvia Erickson Bartley. *Eclipse of the Assassins: The CIA, Imperial Politics, and the Slaying of Mexican Journalist Manuel Buendía*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2015. See also: Castellanos, Guillermo V. *Historia del narcotráfico en México*. Aguilar, 2013.

which echoes Turkey's *Susurluk* scandal, sent shockwaves across the Mexican political establishment, exposing for the very first time to the public just how deep DFS involvement in criminal activity went⁴⁸⁰. The DFS director, Antonio Zorrilla (appointed after Nazar's involvement in contraband markets was made public) would subsequently be convicted on drug trafficking charges as well as for masterminding the assassination of Mexico's top journalist, Manuel Buendía⁴⁸¹. As Aguayo eloquently puts it, in the end, the DFS was devoured by its own practices: "La perversidad del método acabaría por destruir a sus oficiantes" [the method's perversity destroyed its officiants]⁴⁸². The Guadalajara Cartel attached to the DFS became more fragmented, although still tied by kinship relations, giving nevertheless way to a more fragmented 'reconfiguration' of the *narco* underworld. But drug trafficking in Mexico, which thereafter expanded exponentially, remained nevertheless subordinated to the Mexican state. The next chapter documents how the PRI regime at this time resorted to another agency, the PJF, to continue to tap into drug markets after the DFS was, supposedly, out of the picture. These protection rackets continued to support to a formidable extent the very operation of federal security in Mexico. A new liberalisation process, starting in 1982, would make the input of banditry crucial.

Conclusions

The centralisation of the PRI regime after WW II was accompanied by a process in which a new state, framed by austerity, expanded its security capabilities by establishing protection rackets in illegal activities. The present chapter documented the acceleration of this process

⁴⁸⁰ DEA agent Celerino Castillo stated that Camarena "had been trying to get the US government to pressure Mexican authorities to take down the industrial-size marijuana plantations in Chihuahua and Sonora, but the Reagan administration was reluctant to do so because it was protecting Rafael Caro Quintero in return for his support to the Contras" (Bartley, Russell H., and Sylvia Erickson Bartley. *Eclipse of the Assassins: The CIA, Imperial Politics, and the Slaying of Mexican Journalist Manuel Buendía*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2015, p. 214). DEA former Intelligence chief, Phil Jordan, in interview with this thesis's author, confirmed that the DFS was supporting Contra training camps. This was part of a larger pattern where transnational drug traffickers provided support for the realization of covert operations.

⁴⁸¹ For a thorough look into the murder of Buendía, see: Bartley, Russell H., and Sylvia Erickson Bartley. *Eclipse of the Assassins: The CIA, Imperial Politics, and the Slaying of Mexican Journalist Manuel Buendía*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.

⁴⁸² Quezada, Sergio Aguayo. *La charola: una historia de los servicios de inteligencia en México*. Editorial Ink, 2014, p. 227 [own translation].

in the mid-1970s — a period in which extended state involvement in contraband and transnational drug trafficking supported an agenda now focused on neutralising guerrilla activity. Central institutions and leading figures in the country's security sector, tasked by the regime with responding to this growing threat, continued to be provided in parallel with a license to extort these markets. The 'instrumentalisation' of this updated version of co-opted 'banditry,' aimed at developing parapolice and paramilitary structures abroad, embodied a broader mechanism employed in other geographies of the Cold War by American intelligence. Legality and illegality thus continued to blend in Mexico, but this blending served a process leading to the securitisation of peripheries and the neutralisation of internal enemies. A conceptual remark worth noting at this stage is that the instrumentalisation of the bandit embodied *the* key process generating the 'dual' or 'deep' state in Mexico. What tends to characterise these 'parallel' state structures is the necessarily covert and inevitably conspiratorial instrumentalisation of crime to advance security ends.

The chapter also noted that, whereas the drug trafficking market of the pre-Condor era in Mexico (representing a limited share of global output) operated closer to regional powers and key trafficking figures operating under DFS cover, the much larger market that followed Condor witnessed an expansive presence of the federation's security services over all aspects of the drug business. In this respect, the chapter argued that contraband and drug economies were at all times ancillary to the operation of these security processes. The expanded involvement of the security services took place amidst a U.S.-sponsored expansion of Mexican security infrastructure serving, concurrently, dirty wars. What Barnes describes as the 'integration' of transnational drug trafficking and the PRI state reached, at this hour, its most thorough manifestation. The formation of the Guadalajara Cartel in 1977 and 1978 represented an effort conducted by Mexican and U.S. intelligence to further align the protection racket with national security objectives. The official drug trafficking narrative socialised by the state after Condor, centred in picturesque and all-powerful 'narcos', successfully concealed the extent to which the state exploited the drug market to advance security objectives. The dismantlement of the DFS in 1985 took place, precisely, when this cover was rendered no longer credible. In this regard, the chapter sought to shed more light onto the structural motives and

aims behind the instrumentalisation of drug economies, noting the extent to which the Mexican experience, far from exceptional, resonated with broader patterns associated with Cold War conflict. As I note in the following chapter, the drug trafficking market that followed the dismantlement of the DFS, while still orbiting around the Mexican state, lost its association with national security mandates, giving federal policing (now under neoliberalism) a more predatory orientation.

Finally, the chapter underlined the overlooked importance of *Operación Trizo/Condor* in the history of the security services in Mexico. As Aviña noted, repression and drug enforcement shared a common root⁴⁸³. Whereas Condor is mostly remembered as a successful drug enforcement operation, evidence suggests that the U.S. government rather equipped Mexican security agencies with technology, equipment, training, aid, intelligence and other infrastructure to address its guerrilla problem. Finally, Condor was a landmark movement because it represented the testing ground for a policy that the U.S. would subsequently deploy in South America: the use of drug enforcement programmes to, discretely, expand the host's ability to target internal dissent. Unsurprisingly, the actual result of U.S.-sponsored drug enforcement programs was, from Condor to Plan Colombia, not an enduring reduction in drug output but rather a lasting expansion of the host's abilities to suppress internal dissent. In this regard, the chapter shed light onto the widely suspected but little understood processes and long-term objectives that underline the militarisation of the war on drugs implemented originally under *Condor/Trizo*.

⁴⁸³ Aviña, Alexander. "Mexico's Long Dirty War: The origins of Mexico's drug wars can be found in the Mexican state's decades-long attack on popular movements advocating for social and economic justice." *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2016, pp. 144-149.

Chapter 4 - From national security to policing neoliberal chaos: the 'commodification' of drugs

Historically speaking, extortion rackets in illegal economies were ancillary to the development of law enforcement in Mexico. The coercive mechanism underlying the state's ability to secure property rights and shape the social order was contingent, paradoxically, on the enablement of criminal activity. This mechanism generated the crucial political economies permitting emergent capitalist classes to lay down the coercive bodies (formal and informal) necessary to 'secure' accumulation. As noted in the preceding chapters, the input of banditry into the construction of policing in Mexico was a notable characteristic in the historical evolution of federal law enforcement under the single-party state. Unsurprisingly, the trajectory of Mexican policing reflects not only the history and phases of capitalist penetration but the contingency of capitalist accumulation to the instrumentalisation of criminals and bandits.

Established in 1860, Mexico's first 'national' policing body, Los Rurales, deployed the necessary violence to secure the 'primitive' accumulation process implicated by the commercialisation of agriculture, the end of the commons and the implementation of enclosures under the liberal state. When completed, this process would leave 97% of the rural population without land⁴⁸⁴, 90% of the indigenous communities without traditional communal plots⁴⁸⁵, and make land concentration in Mexico the worst in the continent⁴⁸⁶. This period of generalised dispossession laid down the key driver of social antagonisms erupting in the Mexican Revolution. Like most policing bodies established in the transition to capitalist modes of production, the creation of the country's first national policing body, Los Rurales, represented a form of 'shock-troops' to address the discontent, revolts and strikes generated by liberalisation, but also the vehicle to curb another notable manifestation of social alienation: the expansion of criminality. The coercion embodied by Los Rurales was directed in particular against rural protests and peasant invasions associated with the end of the commons, the

⁴⁸⁴ Hamilton, Nora. *The limits of state autonomy: post-revolutionary México*. Princeton University Press, 2014.

⁴⁸⁵ Klooster, Daniel James. *Conflict in the Commons: Commercial Forestry and Conservation in Mexican Indigenous Communities*. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1997.

⁴⁸⁶ De Ita, Ana. "Land concentration in México after PROCEDE." *Promised Land: Competing Visions of Agrarian Reform*, edited by Peter Rosset, Raj Patel, and Michael Courville, 2006, pp. 148-64, p. 149.

expansion of haciendas, and the end of traditional rights⁴⁸⁷. Progressively, as the new capitalist spirit expanded into the cities, Los Rurales became a key instrument in the creation of wage labour. John Mason Hart notes that, between 1900 and 1910, Los Rurales became almost entirely invested in protecting textile factories, railways, communications, mines, commerce, as well as repressing peoples and towns opposed to the penetration of the commercial enterprise⁴⁸⁸. By 1905, 80% of Los Rurales was stationed in manufacturing centres with the sole purpose of keeping workers in line. American capitalists collected about half of Mexico's economic output during this period⁴⁸⁹.

As expected, the undercapitalisation of Mexico's economy made it impossible for the federal government to meet the costs of securing this particularly harsh transition, leading to the instrumentalisation of organised crime to form local and federal policing bodies. Paul Vanderwood describes Los Rurales as a "fusion" of criminal and police: "Half police, half bandits, Los Rurales operated both sides of the law. [...] The common Mexican, who suffered under their hand [...] despised and feared them [...] while political detractors called it the *bête noire* of the dictatorship"⁴⁹⁰. The extra-legal 'rents' generated by Los Rurales, writes Vanderwood, were ultimately the economies that allowed for the maintenance of peace in a country experimenting a process of unprecedented transformation⁴⁹¹. As López Portillo also notes, "[i]n practice, the Mexican police was created not to protect, but to control the population, allowing it to repress, extort and bribe in exchange for loyalty to the authority"⁴⁹².

After the Revolution, which wiped out Los Rurales, the reconstruction of national policing services not only continued to rely on bandits but progressively *integrated* them into the security apparatuses of the emerging, single-party state. López Portillo notes how law enforcement in the early post-revolutionary period entailed "a close relationship between post-

⁴⁸⁷ See: Knight, Alan. *The Mexican Revolution. Volume 1, Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants and Volume 2, Counter-revolution and Reconstruction*. University of Nebraska Press, 1986, pp. 619, 679.

⁴⁸⁸ Mason Hart, John. *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution*. University of California Press, 1987.

⁴⁸⁹ *Idem*.

⁴⁹⁰ Vanderwood, Paul J. *Disorder and Progress: Bandits, Police, and Mexican Development*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1992.

⁴⁹¹ *Idem*.

⁴⁹² "From US Embassy to Secretariat, Department of State." Memorandum, August 25, 1976. [own translation].

revolutionary political elites and organized crime, whereby the regime used its police forces—as well as other parts of its repressive state apparatus—to control and ‘tax’ organized criminals”⁴⁹³. It is not surprising, Müller argues, “that a broad variety of organized criminal activities flourished in post-revolutionary Mexico City due to police protection, frequently involving the police chiefs themselves, providing them and their organizations with additional income”⁴⁹⁴. As noted in previous chapters, police rackets under the early PRI period supported in important ways the policing services of the regime and its ability to repress “prodemocracy social movements and protesting students, not to mention squatters, itinerant street vendors, and others classified as socially undesirable”⁴⁹⁵.

By the late-1980s, the disruption of patronage networks brought about by the (neo)liberalisation process and the concurrent collapse of PRI hegemony broadened the scarcity underlining the operation of police and expanded, at the same time, the prevalence of banditry. As Davis notes: “With the gradual erosion of the PRI regime, the police turned away from the same informal practices of patronage and rent seeking that in prior decades had kept them loyal to the state [...] turning against citizens and criminal gangs for sources of income, adding more impunity and violence”⁴⁹⁶. Scarcity, amidst a process of structural transformation, turned policing into a more socially predatory activity. In contrast to the racketeering of organised crime under the DFS, which was driven and contained by Cold War dynamics and a full-fledged corporatist state, the expansion of federal policing at this hour took place amidst political decentralisation and an accelerated collapse of living standards. These were, ultimately, the symptoms of a global process in which Mexico was to play a key part: the socialisation of neoliberalism in the developing world.

⁴⁹³ Idem [own translation].

⁴⁹⁴ Müller, Markus-Michael. *Public security in the negotiated state: policing in Latin America and beyond*. Springer, 2011, p. 84.

⁴⁹⁵ Davis, Diane E. “Policing and Regime Transition From Postauthoritarianism to Populism to Neoliberalism.” *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, edited by Wil G. Pansters, Stanford University Press, 2012, pp. 68-90, p. 80.

⁴⁹⁶ Davis, Diane E. “The Political and Economic Origins of Violence and Insecurity in Contemporary Latin America: Past Trajectories and Future Prospects.” *Violent Democracies in Latin America*, edited by Daniel M. Goldstein, and Enrique Desmond Arias, 2010, pp. 35-62, p.50.

Building on access to former PJF and DEA officials who directly witnessed the events noted below, the chapter sheds light onto the fabrics, services and exchanges ‘generating’ policing during the transitional period that followed the 1982 debt crisis in Mexico and the implementation of neoliberal policies. Unlike other chapters, here I seek to flesh out the *how*, rather than the *why*, of high-level entanglements between the Mexican security apparatus and drug markets. The chapter will continue to note the extent to which these entanglements involved the highest hierarchies of the security institution of the Mexican state. Like drug markets under the DFS, systematic and multi-level racketeering obeyed less to the crooked ambition of a handful of officials and reflected a more fundamental logic attached to the securitisation of capitalist relations in Mexico —a process leading to increasingly coercive and militarised forms of social control partly but significantly reliant on protection rackets in illegal economies.

The Policía Judicial Federal and the *plaza* racket

The key distinction in Mexico between regular police (*policía preventiva*) and judicial police (*policía judicial*) is that the former is tasked with preventing crime before it happens, while the latter is responsible for investigating a crime after it has happened⁴⁹⁷. As Davis notes, “[p]reventative police regulated the social, commercial, and aesthetic “order” of the city” while “the judicial police determined whether a crime had occurred and they alone held the power to legally sanction (i.e., arrest), investigate, and try or jail citizens for infractions of the law”⁴⁹⁸. The PRI regime established two forms of judicial police: a local judicial police in every state (appointed by the local governor, tasked with investigating non-federal offences) and a federal police (appointed by the Prosecutor General and the President, tasked with investigating federal offences). The federal judicial police was called the Policía Judicial Federal (PJF).

⁴⁹⁷ Sam López, Jesus Antonio. *La policía judicial en Mexico*. Biblioteca Central, UNAM, 1988.

⁴⁹⁸ Davis, Diane E. “Policing and Regime Transition From Postauthoritarianism to Populism to Neoliberalism.” *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, edited by Wil G. Pansters, Stanford University Press, 2012, pp. 68-90, p. 74.

Established in 1919 and dismantled in 2001 because of its extensive involvement in predatory criminal activity (it was replaced by the short-lived Agencia Federal de Investigación, or AFI, dismantled for similar reasons⁴⁹⁹), the PJF represented the closest body to a national police in Mexico⁵⁰⁰. Part of the Attorney General Office (PGR), the PJF was tasked with investigating, most specifically, drug-related offences. The Director-General of PJF, appointed by the Attorney General and the President, was responsible for assigning delegates or *primeros comandantes* to head PJF delegations in every state. These, in turn, assigned *segundos comandantes* (along with their teams) to head PJF sub-delegations in important cities. Given that drug enforcement represented the most important assignment of the PJF, the Bureau for Narcotics, the Bureau for Terrestrial and Aerial Enforcement, and the Bureau for Regional Deployment were regarded as key agencies⁵⁰¹.

Until the mid-1980s, the PJF was a relatively small agency, constituted by about 745 members (1982)⁵⁰². It was far smaller than the DFS, which counted over 3,000 agents at the same time⁵⁰³. When the DFS was disbanded in 1985 for its involvement in criminal activities, the largest share of DFS agents (2774) were simply transferred to federal law enforcement, which included both the PJF and its sister agency, the Policía Judicial del Distrito Federal (PJDF). The reassignment of agents involved in the ‘regulation’ of the national drug racket expanded, of course, the criminogenic tendencies already present in the judiciary’s enforcing arm. In contrast to the DFS, which extorted drug markets representing a relatively small size of global output, the transnational drug market available to the PJF (now involving the most valuable

⁴⁹⁹ Libro Blanco: Agencia Federal de Investigación. 2000-2006. Procuraduría General de la República.

⁵⁰⁰ According to Davis, the division of labour between preventative and judicial police, while creating considerable ambiguity and overlap in police functions, was quite purposeful. “Part of Carranza’s rationale for introducing this reform was his concern that many of the existent “preventative” police—those longstanding municipal police employed by the “free” municipios, where counterrevolutionary or nonrevolutionary sentiments often prevailed—were politically unsympathetic to his administration’s efforts to consolidate the government’s political hegemony. One way to limit renegade police influence and limit opposition forces from challenging the new state was to establish a separate police corps with legal arrest and prosecutorial powers, or the judicial police, who would answer directly to the state and its executive branch” (Davis, Diane E. “Policing and Regime Transition From Postauthoritarianism to Populism to Neoliberalism.” *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, edited by Wil G. Pansters, Stanford University Press, 2012, pp. 68-90, p. 75.)

⁵⁰¹ Interview with PJF-1.

⁵⁰² Archivo General de la Nación, DFS. Policía Judicial Federal. October 20, 1982.

⁵⁰³ Quezada, Sergio A. *La charola: una historia de los servicios de inteligencia en México*. Editorial Ink, 2014.

commodity in global markets, cocaine) was immensely more valuable. The PJF racket allowed the Mexican state to nevertheless establish a remarkable ‘institution of protection’ over the drug business lasting until the end of the century and, as noted by the literature⁵⁰⁴, allowing to a large extent for the remarkably pacific nature of drug markets in Mexico until recently⁵⁰⁵. Despite the massive growth of the transnational drug market, violence continued to be successfully curtailed under the PJF system⁵⁰⁶.

The national, hierarchical management of the drug racket under the PJF came to be referred to as the *sistema de plaza*. PJF comandantes and their teams, appointed to head PJF delegations in cities and states (or *plazas*) were licensed and expected by the federal government to extort the flow of transnational criminal goods taking place in their jurisdictions. According to PJF officials, the plaza was expected to: 1) Generate a regular rent for the leading PJF comandante in charge of the jurisdiction; 2) Generate a monthly quota that was channelled to higher-ranking members of the PJF and the Attorney General’s Office; 3) Generate a permanent cash flow in order to support, to a very large extent, PJF operational expenses in the jurisdiction; and 4) Establish and enforce *acuerdos* amongst drug traffickers and between drug traffickers and the state in order to keep operations smooth and far from newspaper headlines. The plaza system was particularly important at the U.S. border, where illegal commodities reached their highest value, as well as in regions associated with the production and transport of contraband, migrants and drugs. Plazas such as Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Ojinaga, Hermosillo, Culiacán, Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, Tapachula, Chetumal and Mexico City were considered the most relevant. All these processes, of course, represented ancillary mechanisms generating ‘security’ for a rapidly transforming ‘neoliberal’ society.

Poppa underscores how the term *plaza* in the 1980s meant something different from what it means today⁵⁰⁷. Today, plaza refers to a particular geography where a drug organisation is dominant (for example: “the Gulf cartel is in control of the plaza of Matamoros”). In the late-

⁵⁰⁴ Snyder, Richard, and Angélica Durán Martínez. “Drugs, violence, and state-sponsored protection rackets in Mexico and Colombia.” *Colombia Internacional*, vol. 70, 2009, pp. 61-91.

⁵⁰⁵ Idem.

⁵⁰⁶ Idem.

⁵⁰⁷ Poppa, Terrence E. *Drug lord: The life and death of a Mexican kingpin*. Pharos Books, 1990.

1980s, however, plaza referred to something else in the law enforcement and criminal jargon: it referred to the police actor holding the concession to run the narcotics *racket*⁵⁰⁸. Poppa's use of the term 'racket' in his description of the plaza system is significant in that it also shifts the focus of attention from the drug organisations themselves to the institutional and political structures that enabled them. This was a system in which drug traffickers operated under "an authority or authorities with sufficient power to ensure that (they) would not be bothered"⁵⁰⁹. As Flores Pérez notes, the system operated above the interests of particular drug trafficking groups, and even above the interests of individual law-enforcers⁵¹⁰. The drug trafficker under the *plaza* system was a relatively dispensable administrator that could be replaced at any time. Replacing *narcos* was the result of political convenience, public exposure, and U.S. pressure. Like the *Leopard*, the system was constantly changed and tweaked in order to remain in place, precisely because of the extent to which this system provided a key support for the authoritarian deployment of structural policies in Mexico. The plaza system resembled a system of franchises whereby 'licenses' to generate income, while allocated to appendant actors, allowed nevertheless for the operation of the system as a whole. Guillermo Valdés, former head of Mexican intelligence, labelled the plaza system as one of *participación accionaria* or 'shareholding'⁵¹¹. In contrast to the DFS system, where the 'politics' driving drug markets reflected the national security predicaments of a coherent state, the plaza system under the PJF became a much more commoditised form of racketeering market whose purpose was extracting money to support, most particularly, the policing apparatuses of an increasingly neoliberal and de-centralising polity.

⁵⁰⁸ Idem, pp. 41-42.

Poppa explains how, to stay in good graces, a plaza holder in those days had a dual obligation: to generate money for its protectors and to lend his intelligence gathering activities by fingering the independent operators, those narcotics traffickers and drug growers trying to avoid paying the necessary tribute to the plaza holder (Poppa, Terrence E. *Drug lord: The life and death of a Mexican kingpin*. Pharos Books, 1990, p. 43).

⁵⁰⁹ Idem, pp. 41-42.

⁵¹⁰ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *El estado en crisis: crimen organizado y política: desafíos para la consolidación democrática*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2009.

⁵¹¹ Interview with Guillermo Valdés Castellanos, director of the Centro de Investigaciones en Seguridad Nacional (CISEN) from 2006 to 2012.

The configuration of a plaza began with the appointment of a state *delegado*. A down-payment by this *primer comandante* to ‘purchase’ a *delegación* “could reach millions of dollars”⁵¹². According to PJF-1, being appointed to head a high-value location in the 1990s often involved paying a substantial ‘purchasing’ fee to the Bureau of Regional Deployment. The price-tag to purchase a plaza was expensive as it not only enabled the taxing of drug commodities, human trafficking and contraband of goods but allowed the license-holder to ‘sell’ positions in lower-echelons of the *delegación* at considerable prices. The plaza system was all about appropriating criminal revenues in order to make these investments cost-effective and generate agreed quotas.

The head of the *plaza* was the PJF *delegado*, which was referred to as “*El Yankee*” (or “*El Y*”). Under the Yankee, and appointed by him, you had the sub delegates, assigned to cities and regions. The subdelegados were referred to as “*Los Equises*”. Equises often brought with them their own operational personnel, people that they knew well and had work with in other places. These lower PJF operatives were referred to as “*Los Zetas*”. Zetas were in charge of collecting money from narcos, arresting those who didn’t pay, controlling the *madriñas* (informants and extra-judicial enforcers) and making arrests.

Zetas were the conduit for collecting money from all kinds of criminal activities, not only from drug trafficking. This included collecting money from the *pollos* (human traffickers) and *fayuqueros* (contrabandists). These two economic activities represented immense rackets: a single month of “taxes”

⁵¹² Interview with PJF-2. See also: Blancornelas, Jesus. *El Cartel*. Debolsillo, 2004.

over *fayuqueros* and *pollos* in a border plaza could easily reach a million dollars⁵¹³.

Zetas were expected to generate rents to support their livelihood and channel income to their superiors⁵¹⁴. As López Rivera and Botello note, failing to do so generally leads to being ‘re-assigned’ to a *puesto* where the chances of extortion are minimal⁵¹⁵. After securing the monthly quota, the surplus that *Zetas* collected from local extortion rackets was theirs to take. The monthly rent reported by the *Zetas* to the higher ranks (the *subdelegados* and *delegados*) was referred to as “*poner la polla*”⁵¹⁶. The leading *Zeta* on the ground (referred to as “*el poste*”) collected the *polla* and delivered it to the *subdelegado*, who in turn reported a quota to the *delegado* responsible for the plaza. Finally, the delegate, or *Yankee*, was responsible for “sending the ‘infamous’ *maleta* [suitcase] to the PJF and the Attorney General headquarters in Mexico City” on a regular basis⁵¹⁷. Pimentel notes how PJF directors at this hour “regularly sent their immediate subordinates in official PGR [Attorney General’s Office] aircraft to pick up the suitcases filled with money and gifts obtained from the organized crime elements by the PGR/PJF “plaza” holders throughout Mexico”⁵¹⁸.

Although in all likelihood the system did not operate as smoothly and regularly as portrayed in these testimonies, it involved a considerable degree of routinisation, demands and expectations socialised across the PJF hierarchy and considered “normal” by everyone. The fact that, as noted in multiple interviews, PJF officials were left to ‘fend for themselves’ underlines that extortion was *expected* to support the operation of the agency by those in power. *Zetas* on the ground were expected to pay for operational costs (down to the very gasoline of

⁵¹³ Interview with PJF-2.

⁵¹⁴ The term ‘*zeta*’ is commonly employed in the Mexican security lingo to denote any law enforcement or army-official in possession of a low, operative rank. The term would be used in 2003 by a group of deserters from the Mexican Army to brand their paramilitary organisation, *Los Zetas*. The choice in name noted the former operative army rank of those who constituted the original group of the organisation. *Los Zetas* became the paramilitary arm of the Gulf cartel in 2003, and became an autonomous drug trafficking organisation in 2006. The federal government’s effort to eliminate this group triggered the Drug Wars in Mexico in 2007.

⁵¹⁵ Botello, Nelson A., and Adrian López Rivera. *Policía y Corrupción*. Plaza Y Valdes, 1977.

⁵¹⁶ Interview with PJF-2.

⁵¹⁷ Interview with PJF-2.

⁵¹⁸ Pimentel, Stanley. "Mexico's legacy of corruption." *Menace to society: political-criminal collaboration around the world*, edited by Roy Godson, Routledge, 2017, pp. 175-197, p. 184.

their vehicles) by virtue of extortion rackets⁵¹⁹. Cars used by PJF officials, for example, were often *coches chocolate*: vehicles stolen in the U.S., legalised clandestinely by the national registry and presented as ‘gifts’ by drug traffickers to PJF officials⁵²⁰. “PJF officials were particularly fond of Grand Marquises”⁵²¹. A frequent practise mentioned in the interviews was the appropriation (and selling) of drug seizures. This mechanism was particularly attractive because it represented an extraordinary income for PJF officials as well as a ‘photo-shoot’ opportunity to show results⁵²². Like racketeering *mafiosi*, life as a PJF field-officer was thus determined by a constant need to obtain and generate money through illegal means to make a living and comply with quotas. Interviewed DEA agents who collaborated with PJF officials in the 1990s similarly recall how PJF officers were provided “close to zero” funds to undertake their responsibilities. PJF officials often accepted to carry out “dirty jobs” for DEA field-officers in return for money. Jobs undertaken by DEA agents went from generating intelligence through brutal means to conducting arbitrary arrests⁵²³. DEA-1 noted, for example, how he would leak information to PJF officials about drug traffickers knowing that the leak would probably result in a killing. Of course, DEA agents knew that PJF agents were involved in drug trafficking, torture and murder, “but we needed to build cases”⁵²⁴. DEA agents were well aware, already at this relatively early period, of the existence of a large number of mass graves kept secret from the public⁵²⁵.

Protection to drug traffickers involved different services provided by PJF officials. One was to escort drug shipments via land and air. PJF duties were based on the number of kilos trafficked. These operations involved coordinating the actions of multiple actors and bureaus.

The *Zetas* on the ground stopped vehicles at *retenes* (check-points) in key land routes heading to the border. *Postes* were the highest-ranking officers at a particular checkpoint. *Postes*

⁵¹⁹ Interview with PJF-1 and PJF-2.

⁵²⁰ *Idem*.

⁵²¹ *Idem*.

⁵²² Interview with PJF-2 and DEA-2.

⁵²³ Interview with DEA-2.

⁵²⁴ Interview with DEA-1.

⁵²⁵ *Idem*.

were the operational link to the *subdelegación*; the officers in charge of selecting vehicles for inspection.

Shipments were given a keyword for safe passage in advance. During my time in PJF, one such password was, for example, ‘Jaguar’. Jaguar, in this case, referred to the persona of the PJF *delegado*. Shipments had to be cleared in advance by the *delegado*. Operators lacking protection would be arrested by the *poste*. Protected vehicles were given what we called *viada* (pass)⁵²⁶.

With the expansion of the cocaine market in Mexico, air shipments became by the late 1980s the preferred method for moving drugs from South America. This increased the tactical importance of PJF radar operators, who ran the most sophisticated radar system in the country⁵²⁷. PJF-1 and PJF-2 recall the constant ‘switching off of radars’ undertaken at the Bureau for Terrestrial and Aerial Enforcement at PGR headquarters. Trafficking by air also involved a staggering number of clandestine airfields in remote locations protected by PJF officials⁵²⁸. PJF-1 noted how, when deemed necessary, PJF comandantes would even close highways in order to enable them as temporary landing airfields⁵²⁹. DEA-1 noted how, while operating undercover in Ciudad Juarez, he witnessed how PJF comandantes emptied planes loaded with cocaine in the city’s airport and shipped money back to Mexico City’s headquarters.⁵³⁰

Importantly, the *plaza* system often involved face-to-face interaction between major drug traffickers and high-ranking members of the PJF and the Attorney General Office. The unambiguously *authoritarian* character of the regime explains partly why these bold entanglements remained undisturbed and undisclosed despite remaining in place for so long. PJF-1 recalls, for example, how he personally escorted an Attorney General to hotels in the early

⁵²⁶ Interview with PJF-1.

⁵²⁷ Interview with PJF-1 and PJF-2.

⁵²⁸ *Idem*.

⁵²⁹ Interview with PJF-2.

⁵³⁰ Interview with DEA-1.

1990s to meet directly with major drug traffickers. He noted that: "When the General Prosecutor had an appointment with a drug trafficker, we performed *barridos* (sweeps) in order to detect cameras and microphones in the hotel room where the meetings took place"⁵³¹. These meetings were used to establish both the terms of operation as well as the terms of exchange. PJF-1 notes, for example, how he personally accompanied the head of the PJF (renamed AFI at that point), Genaro García Luna, to meet directly with the head of the Beltran Leyva cartel in a foreclosed highway in the early 2000s⁵³². As noted in the introduction, García Luna was charged in 2019 by the U.S. government for protecting major drug traffickers while heading the federal police. Importantly, before heading the AFI, García Luna had directed counterinsurgency efforts focused on guerrilla activity in Guerrero (in particular, the organisations *Ejército Popular Revolucionario*, *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo Insurgente* and *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias del Pueblo*)⁵³³. García Luna was subsequently the chief architect of President Felipe Calderón's war on drugs from 2006 to 2012.

While not every PJF director under the PRI regime partook in these collaborations, "money was there for the take"⁵³⁴. It came down to the director to partake or not in these businesses, but the racket remained in place with the knowledge of the political elite and regardless of the involvement of a particular actor⁵³⁵. When asked if it would have been possible to work around these racketeering arrangements and conduct his official obligations with adherence to the law, PJF-2 smiled and shook his head. "*Llegan con 4,000 dólares – no pesos, dólares*" ["they come to you with 4,000 dollars – not pesos, dollars"]⁵³⁶. He notes that he was amongst those who drew a line and indulged in the strict minimum to be able to carry out his job. But he also points out that broad and systemic involvement of PJF officials at every level made it impossible for agents to conduct themselves legally. The operational orientation of PJF was much more responsive to these deeply rooted informal practices than to the personal

⁵³¹ Interview with PJF-2.

⁵³² *Idem*.

⁵³³ Montemayor, Carlos. "Los movimientos guerrilleros y los servicios de inteligencia (Notas reiteradas y nuevas conclusiones)." *Seguridad nacional y seguridad interior. Colección: Los grandes problemas de México*, edited by Arturo Alvarado and Mónica Serrano, 2012, p. 49.

⁵³⁴ Interview with PJF-2.

⁵³⁵ Interview with PJF-2.

⁵³⁶ *Idem*.

agenda of an honest agent or sincere attempts of reform. As Sabet notes, attempts to reform the police “do not occur in a vacuum but within a dense network of pre-existing institutional rules, including persistent informal rules that [...] might contradict reform efforts”⁵³⁷. As noted by President Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988), who also shook his head when asked if corruption was avoidable in Mexico’s system of governance⁵³⁸, or President José López Portillo (1976-1982), who blatantly confided to a U.S. ambassador that law enforcement and drug trafficking were per necessity linked to one another⁵³⁹, PJF and DEA agents interviewed for this thesis noted the extent to which racketeering *was* the system supporting policing activity. Whatever honest top-down initiatives were undertaken to target these practices in federal law enforcement clashed with pre-existing practices and institutional routines going back to the DFS and found more amply entrenched in the Mexican political system.

Evidence in the 2019 trial in the U.S. against drug-lord Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzmán illustrates the persistent relationship between PJF *delegados* (‘Yankees’) and drug traffickers in border plazas. Although this particular evidence involves the PJF’s successor, the Agencia Federal de Investigación (AFI), it is illustrative of the relationships between federal drug enforcement and drug traffickers under the plaza system. In a recorded phone call used as evidence in the trial, Guzmán discusses the drug business with his local representative at the border-state of Baja California. Guzmán is informed by his lieutenant that a new AFI delegate, or Yankee, has been appointed by Mexico City’s headquarters to oversee the state. Guzmán’s representative tells his patron that he was paying a monthly fee of \$80,000 dollars to the former Yankee. “The Yankee never picks up the money directly”, “the money is collected by the AFI group”⁵⁴⁰. The representative also notes to Guzmán that AFI field-officers

⁵³⁷ Sabet, Daniel. *Police Reform in Mexico: Informal Politics and the Challenge of Institutional Change*. Stanford University Press, 2012, p. 40.

⁵³⁸ Entrevista a Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado. Carmen Aristegui, Noticias MVS Radio, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSnbXr0KZ20>.

⁵³⁹ “From US Embassy to Secretariat, Department of State.” Memorandum, August 25, 1976. When questioned by the U.S. ambassador on his choice of Arturo Durazo (a noted racketeer) as head of Mexico police, the president noted “that law enforcement and illegal activities frequently intertwine, not only in Mexico but in other countries as well”.

⁵⁴⁰ The recorded conversation between Guzmán and the Yankee was made by Frontera Noticias channel, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkJQsfubss>. See also: Belsasso, Bibiana. “Cómo espiaba y era espiado “El Chapo”.” *La Razón*, January 13, 2019.

operate in close synchronicity with the cartel. The problem, he tells Guzmán, is that the recently-appointed Yankee, “who is now receiving his monthly fee from us” intends to rotate the AFI personnel deployed in the plaza. He explains to Guzmán that the adjustment is inconvenient because things already run smoothly the way they are. After noting to his representative that he has been paying extortion fees to the Policía Federal, which he refers to as ‘Los Azules’, Guzmán requests to speak directly with the Yankee. The Yankee, who is standing next to Guzmán’s representative, is handed over the phone. After exchanging courtesies, Guzmán asks the Yankee to please refrain “from removing the AFI *operativos* that are currently ‘working’ the plaza”. Guzmán tells him that he has “all his team's support” to keep the plaza in peace. The Yankee agrees to retain the AFI Zetas already acquainted with the operation of the plaza. The episode again illustrates the direct relationship that plaza *comandantes* established all along with major drug trafficking figures as part of a hierarchical protection racket endorsed by the country’s top security officials and operated by regional delegates. As Serrano notes: “In this regulatory framework, the local and the federal judicial police, not criminals, were the key actors controlling the *plazas*. These were the strategic transit points, which served as checkpoints for the collection of bribes, the monitoring of the movements of criminal actors, and ultimately the surveillance of the drug market”⁵⁴¹. She adds how, “[i]n return for “taxes” paid to these agencies, criminal actors were provided with protection and their market activities were effectively regulated”⁵⁴².

It is important to note that, like the DFS before it, the PJF never enjoyed an *absolute* monopoly on contraband or drug trafficking. One of the most important characteristics of the plaza system, especially after the mid-1990s, is that it involved players from different institutions. Federal customs, for example, played an important role in racketeering the contraband of goods, while the army was better suited to tax the harvesting of cannabis and opium poppies. Poppa notes how, for decades, the FBI, DEA, Customs, Border Patrol, INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service), ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives) and

⁵⁴¹ Serrano, Mónica. “States of violence: State-crime relations in Mexico.” *Violence, coercion, and state-making in twentieth-century Mexico: The other half of the centaur*, edited by Wil G. Pansters, Stanford University Press, 2012, p. 138.

⁵⁴² Idem, p. 138.

CIA, among other agencies, had compiled intelligence on the implication of Mexican police, politicians, bureaucrats, government agencies and the military in organised criminal activities⁵⁴³. However, PJF's size and jurisdiction over federal enforcement placed PJF commanders and those appointed by them in a central position to 'regulate' the extremely profitable transnational drug business, especially in valuable border plazas. This involved control over the use of federal land routes to ship cargo, aerial corridors, flights, clandestine airports, radar systems, border crossings, among other key security infrastructure paradoxically legitimised by an alleged 'war' on drug trafficking⁵⁴⁴. The relative but important success of the PJF in its handling of the transnational drug market continued to bring stability and peace to an unrelentingly expanding drug market. As Snyder and Durán Martínez note, "the relationship between illicit markets and violence depends on institutions of protection: if state-sponsored protection rackets form, illicit markets can be peaceful". The breakdown of state-sponsored protection rackets is often the direct cause of the increase in violence⁵⁴⁵.

Policing neoliberalism

PJF-1 and PJF-2 noted how, by the middle of the 1990s, extortion under the PJF began to change in at least two important ways. First, PJF officials assigned to plazas commenced to partner with local politicians in the logistics of transnational drug running. Additional research needs to be undertaken to understand the drivers that led federal police officers to liaison with local authorities, but a plausible factor behind the empowerment of local politics is the increasingly de-centralised political system in Mexico that followed neoliberal reforms and its concomitant alteration of the national political order. According to PJF-1, the agency began at this time "to *apalancar* [gear] its operations at the municipal level [...] involving and partnering directly with local politicians to run drug markets"⁵⁴⁶. Akin to tactics employed by Los Zetas cartel years later, "newly appointed PJF commanders sent vanguard

⁵⁴³ Poppa, Terrence E. *Drug lord: The life and death of a Mexican kingpin*. Pharos Books, 1990, p. 321.

⁵⁴⁴ Interview with PJF-2.

⁵⁴⁵ Snyder, Richard, and Angélica Durán Martínez. "Drugs, violence, and state-sponsored protection rackets in Mexico and Colombia." *Colombia Internacional*, vol. 70, 2009, pp. 61-91.

⁵⁴⁶ Interview with PJF-2.

group [*estacas*] to their new plazas in order to negotiate terms with municipal authorities”⁵⁴⁷. In other words, according to him, it was the PJF structure in the states (who effectively controlled the drug market at this time) rather than the drug traffickers (who remained subordinate players) who opened the door to local politicians seeking a piece of an expanding drug business. In any case, involvement in transnational drug trafficking at the local level, which remained limited until this period, began to slowly overflow the regime’s ability to centralise extortion.

Second, by the mid-1990s, extortion rackets operated by the PJF began to diversify beyond *pollos*, *fayuqueros* and *narcos*. The political economy of the federal security services at this time, expanding into kidnapping, theft and extortion, reflected the increasingly socially predatory orientation of the police. The erosion of the single-party regime, generated less by an alleged ‘political opening’ and more by the structural undermining of the ‘irrational’ obstacles to capital accumulation in which the political structure had rested, affected also the patronage networks that supported the everyday economies of the police⁵⁴⁸. In addition, the most severe economic crisis in the history of Mexico, taking place in 1995, not only brought more scarcity to law enforcement but, in parallel, generated effervescent criminality in need of protection. As noted earlier, times of crisis and the end of historical cycles like the one that Mexico certainly experienced in 1995 tend not only to increase the prevalence of banditry (namely because of economic dislocation and state collapse) but also the extent to which the emerging regime co-opts bandit economies to support its security apparatus. The mid-1990s were marked by an unprecedented ‘crime epidemic’ in kidnapping, armed theft and bank

⁵⁴⁷ Idem.

⁵⁴⁸ Davis, Diane E. “The Political and Economic Origins of Violence and Insecurity in Contemporary Latin America: Past Trajectories and Future Prospects.” *Violent Democracies in Latin America*, edited by Daniel M. Goldstein, and Enrique Desmond Arias, 2010, pp. 35-62, p.50.

robbery⁵⁴⁹, vividly remembered by Mexicans today, widely known to have involved protection networks operated by the regime's main security body, the PJF and the PJDF⁵⁵⁰. Perceptively, Martínez de Murguía labels these kinds of crimes as 'police crimes' for they almost invariably require manpower, weapons and a know-how that is pretty much exclusive to the police⁵⁵¹. Federal law enforcement began to employ auxiliaries, or *madrinas*, to handle a growing criminal portfolio. "Comandantes informally contracted criminals as auxiliaries and enforcers who, without receiving any salary, had an open letter to obtain resources illegally, almost always through extortion"⁵⁵². As noted by PJF-2, "until [President] Salinas, major crime had been contained by this system of collusion. Thereafter, the PJF began to *abaratarse* [to cheapen]"⁵⁵³. Looking back, Oppenheimer notes how the use of PJF and PGR to 'regulate' drug markets in the late 1980s had placed these institutions in the course to racketeer new activities when necessity and opportunity presented themselves — a prospect fully materialised in the mid-1990s⁵⁵⁴. Also referring to the deeper historical roots of this process, a former DFS agent (close to DFS director Francisco Gutierrez Barrios) reminded journalist Humberto Padgett that the DFS officials incorporated into the PJF after 1985 were technical experts in extra-judicial executions, trafficking of drugs and *desapariciones*⁵⁵⁵. The difference between kidnapping under the DFS and kidnapping under the PJF, the agent explained, "is that, while the first sought to generate intelligence, the second simply sought to generate money"⁵⁵⁶. This observation points to an idea noted earlier, which argued that an important difference between the DFS and the PJF racket in the drug business, especially after 1995, was the national security mandate that contained and gave 'purpose' to the first and the much more

⁵⁴⁹ See: Alvarado, Arturo et al. "Respuestas vecinales a la inseguridad pública en la ciudad de México." *Diálogo Internacional para la Reforma Policial en México, El Colegio de México*, July 22-23, 2004. The rise of crime is also analysed in Pansters, Wil G., and Héctor Castillo Berthier. "Violencia e inseguridad en la ciudad de México: entre la fragmentación y la politización." *Foro Internacional*, 2007, pp. 577-615. Pansters and Castillo note the strong association between the economic crisis of Salinismo and the explosion in crime rates in Mexico City.

⁵⁵⁰ The extent to which these crimes operated under the protection of the PJF and the PJF-DF has been amply documented in Padgett, Humberto. *Jauría: la verdadera historia del secuestro en México*. Grijalbo, 2011.

⁵⁵¹ Martínez de Murguía, Beatriz. *La policía en México: ¿Orden social o criminalidad?* Mexico City, Planeta, 1999.

⁵⁵² Padgett, Humberto. "Cuando los tigres del narco se soltaron." *Sin Embargo*, September 4, 2013 [own translation].

⁵⁵³ Interview with PJF-2.

⁵⁵⁴ Oppenheimer, Andres. *Bordering on chaos: Mexico's roller-coaster journey toward prosperity*. Little, Brown and Company, 1998.

⁵⁵⁵ Idem.

⁵⁵⁶ Padgett, Humberto. "Cuando los tigres del narco se soltaron." *Sin Embargo*, September 4, 2013 [own translation].

commoditised ethos that characterised the policing ethos of the second. These different orientations are partly explicable by the contrasting historical contexts and policing mechanisms belonging to each period.

The PJF was becoming, at this point, the nucleus of what would later become Mexico's national police. It represented the institutional launching-pad for the expansion of law enforcement that followed thereafter, as well as the institutional basis for the subsequent militarisation of law enforcement more generally. A white paper by the Mexican government in 2007 found that more than half of the 3,500 agents of the Agencia Federal de Investigación (successor to PJF) were involved in organised crime⁵⁵⁷. Likewise, after dozens of interviews with federal *judiciales* (judicial agents in the Federal District), Azaola found that joining the judicial police involved often an automatic admittance to some form of racketeering: "The majority of *judiciales* recognized that, had they not entered the police, they wouldn't [have] had become involved in organized crime"⁵⁵⁸. Azaola notes that at least half of the judicial officers interviewed became involved in crime following direct orders from their superiors⁵⁵⁹. Similarly, most individuals who joined the judicial police did so with the chief purpose of accumulating wealth⁵⁶⁰.

Interviews with *judiciales* in the Federal District by Murguía also underline the structural reasons, particularly at lower levels, making predatory rackets a key component to 'policing': "We are only given 42 pesos a day to buy gas and expected to patrol non-stop for 12 hours". "There are no computers... we have to pay for stationary equipment ourselves... we have been asking 3 years for new tires". He added: "Colleagues [...] steal because the bosses will not support us nor lend us any money when we need it. That is why we behave as criminals". "We extort money from criminals because, otherwise, where will the money come from?"⁵⁶¹. Unsurprisingly, this every-day proximity in which *judiciales* spent most of their working

⁵⁵⁷ Libro Blanco: Agencia Federal de Investigación. 2000-2006. Procuraduría General de la República.

⁵⁵⁸ Ruiz T., Miguel Angel, and Elena G. Azaola. "The experience in prison of ex police officials sentenced for kidnapping in Mexico." *International Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, July-December 2012, pp. 139-169, p.148.

⁵⁵⁹ Idem.

⁵⁶⁰ Idem.

⁵⁶¹ Martínez de Murguía, Beatriz. *La policía en México: ¿Orden social o criminalidad?* Planeta, 1999.

hours looking for money (very much like *mafiosi* collecting *pizzo*) made them notably brutal. Torturing, forcing confessions, extorting civilians and ‘fixing’ crimes were common practices in the PJF, turning the very word ‘*judicial*’ into a synonym of ‘extorter’ in the everyday language of Mexico. Involvement in drug markets often translated into drug use. According to PJF-2, cocaine use was very common amongst PJF *comandantes*. He recalled how PJF officials regularly indulged in cocaine and generous parties attended by prostitutes⁵⁶². He also remembers ‘rituals of initiation’ whereby new members of the PJF would scratch *la bola* (a cocaine stone) and indulge as part of their admission into the realities of drug enforcement. Conflicts within the institution were basically oriented to securing rents. Of course, the extensive corruption taking place at higher levels of the judicial police reduced the availability of resources for street *judiciales*. Public prosecutors often declined to process small-scale criminals not because of law enforcement priorities but because of the limited money that could be extorted from them⁵⁶³. Racketeering crime thus became a crucial component in the operation of Mexico’s security systems and judiciary operation.

The collusions taking place at this point between the highest levels of the regime’s security services and the transnational drug business reflect historical patterns that, as noted in previous chapters, go back to the establishment of the PRI state. From Carlos Serrano to Miguel Nazar, from Arturo Durazo to Mario A. Chaparro, from Carlos Aguilar to Genaro García Luna, a systematic tendency to racketeer criminal markets provided a key supporting economy for the operation of internal security in Mexico. Mounting evidence of the enduring ‘collaboration’ at the highest level provides important data calling for a re-examination of the history of the criminal and its relationship with the Mexican state, in particular the history of its policing institutions and, in turn, the input of the bandit into the capitalist process and the making (and unmaking) of a relatively centralised and coherent organisation of the means of violence. From the regime’s perspective, the endorsement that these practices enjoyed seems warranted given the extent to which protection rackets supported federal security as a *process* tied to accumulation. From top to bottom, illegal economies paved in systematic

⁵⁶² Interview with PJF-2.

⁵⁶³ *Idem*.

ways the state's means of violence at key moments in the history of modern Mexico. *Rurales* in the 19th century tapped into bandit economies to support the wider process of political and economic liberalisation that followed the collapse of the patrimonial order and the dislocation of millions of peasants. After the revolution, the DFS, in turn, exploited 'bandits' to support a covert war against social antagonisms generated by an authoritarian, markedly corrupt, and intensely capitalist regime cloaking behind a nationalist, populist and revolutionary narrative. Something similar can be said about the 'instrumentalisation' of drug markets (and, particularly, cocaine) by the PJF during Mexico's transition to neoliberalism, a transition marked by a mass and unprecedented generalisation of banditry. This distinct periods of Mexican policing involved highly contrasting historical conditions, and by noting these regularities the thesis does not aim to gloss down the markedly different contexts in which these activities took place. Rather, the objective is to underline how incorporated 'banditry' became entangled in important ways to a changing deployment of capitalist relations and political authoritarianism in Mexico. The following chapter will document the role of the cocaine racket, still operated by the PJF, in the politics of neoliberal change and political decentralisation in Mexico. The chapter centres in the most important region in the history of transnational organised crime in Mexico: Tamaulipas. Echoing broader dynamics in the history of the PRI regime, the historical entanglements between crime and power in Tamaulipas (both in local and supralocal levels) reflected key aspects of the PRI regime as a whole.

Conclusions

This chapter documented how the Mexican government – particularly its security services – continued to exercise *top-to-down* control over the transnational drug business in the decade that followed the dismantlement of the DFS. The plaza system allowed the Mexican state to 'regulate' the drug business. While this so-called 'regulation' allowed the state to curtail the kind of violence most commonly associated with competition in criminal markets, it also enabled a less visible economy whereby state security, echoing dynamics rooted in the establishment of the DFS and expanded after Operación Condor, continued to be supported in important ways by protection rackets in criminal economies. After the dismantlement of the

DFS, the relationship between drug trafficking markets and the state changed in a qualitative way. From a protection racket contained by a national security agenda associated with PRI hegemony and Cold War dynamics, the racket subsequently operated by the PJF “began to *abaratarse*” (to cheapen) in a context framed by a radical liberalisation process. It now began to resemble a system of franchises aimed solely at generating rent in a context of ever-increasing austerity, social alienation and state collapse. The racket at this hour took the form of a (still) relatively centralised and coordinated corporation with regional offices, or *plazas*, appointed by the PJF national hierarchy and endorsed by the political system. On top of each *plaza*, the *Yankee* was the PJF authority in possession of a centrally appointed license to extort drug, contraband and human trafficking markets on behalf of the entire ‘corporation’. Underlining this bolder orientation towards the extraction of rents, appointments to head *plazas* were now purchased and sold as a commodity. The price for an appointment to head a PJF *delegación*, according to interviews and other sources, could reach millions of dollars duly paid to PJF directors and those in charge of key bureaus such as Aerial Enforcement and Regional Deployment. Yankees not only expected to make a profit from their investment but were obliged to produce a regular flow of cash going back to headquarters. Even more important, rackets were expected to generate money to cover the operational costs of the PJF, a dependency that tightened extortion rackets and the ‘securitisation’ process under neoliberalism closely together. At the highest echelons, the plaza system involved face-to-face interactions between drug traffickers and the highest-ranking actors of the institution. PJF officials interviewed for this thesis note how they personally escorted PJF directors and attorney generals to meet with top drug traffickers and formalise high-level *acuerdos*. Money was there for the take, and the system was in place independently of the moral standards of individual actors or efforts to reform the security sector in Mexico. According to first-hand witnesses, sending suitcases to PJF directors and attorney generals was a regular practice during these years. Money, according to interviewees, was even counted at the “tables” of PJF headquarters. In return, traffickers were provided with secure federal land routes, aerial corridors, airports, clandestine airfields, border crossings, radar operators, roadblocks, security, intelli-

gence and other services that only high-level, coordinated PJF officials were able to guarantee. The orientation of the drug market in Mexico was, during this period, top-to-down. Under this particular form of integration, the police, not traffickers, held the most important cards.

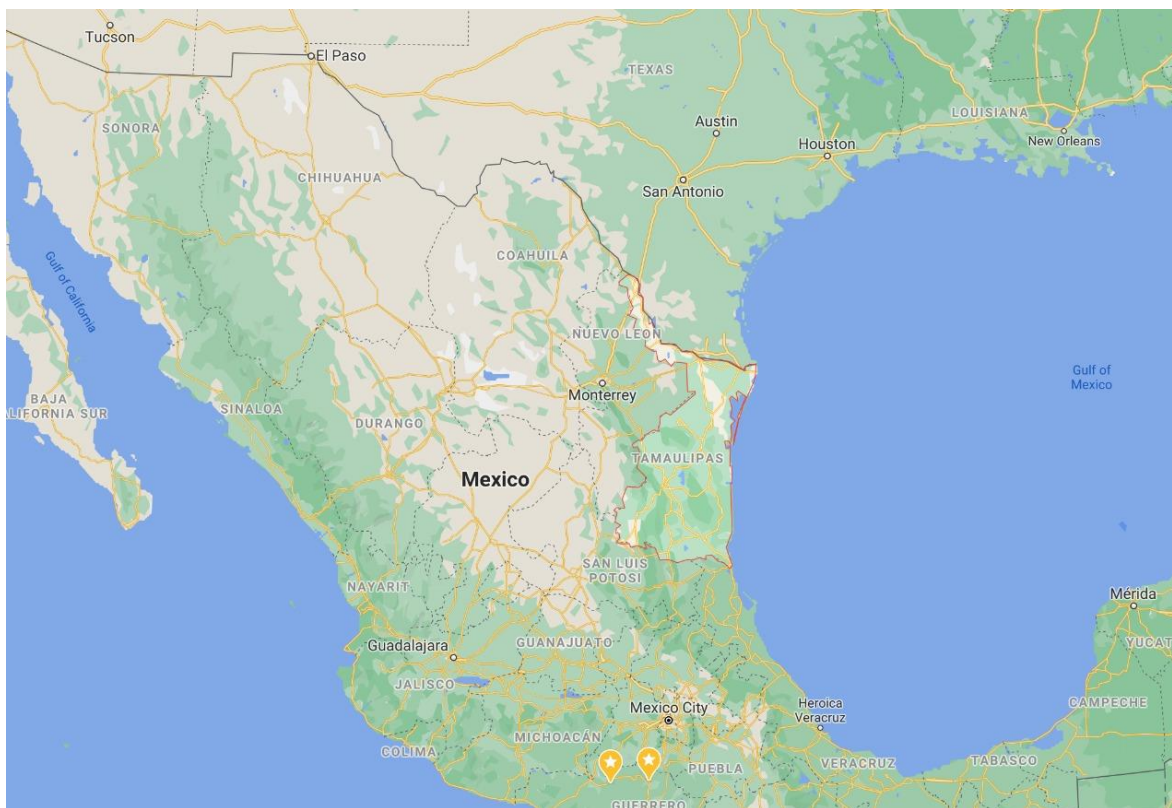
Building on previous scholarly work, the chapter underlined the importance of high-level institutional involvement in drug enforcement. Grasping how far-up these corrupt practices went (and how regular they became) makes one wonder how such a conspiratorial system was able to remain secret and in place for so long. On the one hand, the authoritarian character of the PRI regime helps explain why entanglements at these levels were able to operate with such impunity and removed from the public's view. An official *narcotraficante* narrative, equivocally separating the 'police' from the 'bandit', informed public views of the operation of the drug trade. This ability to continuously break the law with little public knowledge and systematic impunity underlines, once again, the strong authoritarian capacities of the PRI system of governance. On the other hand, the extent to which the federal security services continued to rely on levies extracted from criminals helps explain why it was so difficult to act against these practices. *Racketeering*, as a PJF agent told me, *was the system*. In this regard, the chapter noted how *zetas* on the ground devoted most of their working hours to the extraction of rents to pay operational expenses, meet quotas demanded by their superiors and provide themselves with a living. The daily routines of PJF officials resembled *mafiosi* agents collecting *pizzo* on behalf of a much larger organisation aimed at regulating criminal activity by virtue of extorting it. Finally, the chapter also noted how protection rackets established under the plaza system involved, at first, taxing contraband, drug and human trafficking flows. The political and economic crisis of the mid-1990s augmented nevertheless the need of protection money as a compensatory mechanism for the operation of security services, opening a much more predatory form of political economy supporting the securitisation process at a time of economic liberalisation. The historic and sudden expansion of kidnapping, theft and extortion that followed Mexico's gargantuan economic crisis in 1995 did not only result from generalised economic precarity but also from policing services lacking patronage opportunities and operational funds. The chapter emphasised the paradox represented by a securitisation process largely supported by protection rackets.

Chapter 5 - Tamaulipas and the end of a centralised drug racket

The following chapter documents the entanglements between drug markets and the political system in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It focuses on a region of unparalleled economic importance for drug trafficking and contraband in the history of 20th century Mexico: the northeastern state of Tamaulipas. The first section of the chapter provides some historical background to note how border rackets in the aftermath of the revolution were ancillary to the autonomy of regional *caciques*. Following *Alemanismo*, however, transnational criminal markets began to encourage centripetal tendencies and a more comprehensive articulation of national power embodied by a powerful executive branch. Supported by the notable Guerra Organisation (arguably the most successful contraband organisation in the 20th century, based in Tamaulipas), the PRI regime established thereafter a 50-year racketeering continuum in the most important corridor for criminal activity in the country. By the late 1980s, this corridor dealing mostly in contraband capitalised on the new gem of global commodity markets: cocaine. The Guerra Organisation was, thereafter, referred to as the Gulf Cartel.

The second section, focused on this latter period, explores the emergence of the cocaine economy in Tamaulipas in the early 1980s and its entanglements with a political, economic and social context marked by unprecedented transformation. Triggered by the 1982 Debt Crisis (a key event in the history of the post-colonial world, prompted by Mexico's default), neoliberal reform changed the political and social landscape in Mexico like no other event in its modern history. Akin to *Alemanismo* in the 1940s, the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) embarked on a historic attempt to swiftly and profoundly capitalise class relations in the country by making away with the 'irrational' obstacles to capital accumulation that have geared the clientelar relationships of the PRI regime during the Cold War. Bringing this new order about, like the one successfully established by *Alemanismo* after WW II, required concentrating power, purging antagonistic *caciques* and *charros*, dismissing an unprecedented number of governors, distributing rents to a new oligarchy, employing lethal violence against leftist and social leaders, and enabling 'political economies' for the daily

operations of the federal security agencies attached to the executive branch. Tamaulipas, representing the key ‘bandit’ borderland, would play a key role in the ‘dark’ side of a political transformation implicating the whole of Mexico.



Map 1: Tamaulipas. Source: GoogleMaps

The interest in looking more closely at Tamaulipas also obeys to its pivotal importance in the drug conflict that later engulfed the country. The violence originating in Tamaulipas in the early 2000s (which quickly spread all across Mexico) did not only result from its strategic position at the U.S. border or the collapse of central power, but also from the particularly brutal neoliberal transformation of social and economic life in Tamaulipas and the rest of the Mexico-U.S. border. The border became at this hour an industrial periphery rife with alienation, poverty and anomie. Manufacturing at the border was meant to capture the human exodus fleeing a liberalised agricultural world and, by doing so, provide a competitive edge to U.S. manufacturing firms. Embodied in particular by the infamous *maquilas* (sweat shops),

the capitalist transformation of the border came to represent what Charles Bowden aptly defined as “laboratories of our future”.⁵⁶⁴ Increasingly assertive bandits, capitalising on the opportunities provided by the collapse of central authority, opened in the Tamaulipecan wastelands a new chapter in the country’s history: a new form of civil war.

The third section of the chapter notes how the decentralisation and political liberalisation that followed the collapsed Salinas regime (marking the end of a single-party regime in Mexico) made the prospect of establishing a new centralised protection racket in the national drug business a particularly challenging one. The section shows how the end of a centralised protection racket opened the door for the emergence of paramilitary non-state actors with a growing voice in the security processes of Tamaulipas and, subsequently, other regions in Mexico. These criminal organisations, compelled to generate themselves the operational security that the post-PRI state was no longer in a position to provide, began at this hour to expand their own security capabilities. Transnational drug markets provided these increasingly detached paramilitary actors with a source of income that, until this hour, had nurtured in a very fundamental sense the policing capabilities of the PRI state.

State reconfiguration of drug markets

Research on the history of criminal rackets in Tamaulipas is extremely limited. Surprisingly, despite embodying the most obvious precedent to the Mexican drug wars, the consolidation of the Gulf organisation is only tangentially discussed in academic literature. Most works about drug trafficking in the Northeast are focused on the Gulf’s paramilitary successor, *Los Zetas*⁵⁶⁵. The only exception in the near-total absence of literature on the Gulf organisation is the landmark work by Carlos Flores Pérez⁵⁶⁶. Flores Pérez documents (via archives) the

⁵⁶⁴ Bowden, Charles. *Juárez: The laboratory of our future*. Aperture, 1998.

⁵⁶⁵ For a discussion about Los Zetas as a military organisation, see: Campbell, Lisa J. “Los Zetas: operational assessment.” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2010, pp. 55-80. A very good account on the extreme violence of Los Zetas, involving mass executions and forced disappearances, is: Aguayo, Sergio, ed. *En el desamparo: Los Zetas, el Estado, la sociedad y las víctimas de San Fernando, Tamaulipas (2010)*, y *Allende, Coahuila (2011)*. El Colegio de México AC, 2017. See also: Correa-Cabrera, Guadalupe. *Los Zetas Inc.: Criminal corporations, energy, and civil war in Mexico*. University of Texas Press, 2017.

⁵⁶⁶ In particular, Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013. Also: Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. “Political protection and the origins of the Gulf Cartel.” *Crime, law and social change*, vol. 61, no. 5,

historical evolution of contraband and (later) drug trafficking economies in Tamaulipas, noting, in particular, the entanglements of criminal markets and local and national hierarchies belonging to the PRI party. His work is unrivalled in documenting the role that illegality played, in particular, at two pivotal ‘macro’ historical junctures of the PRI regime (two moments also of key importance to this work): the establishment of the PRI regime under president Miguel Alemán (1946-1952) and its conclusion under president Carlos Salinas (1988-1994). These two periods, as noted before, represented two foundational moments in the history of state-making and capitalist development in 20th century Mexico. These were, likewise, two critical transitions where the political process and illegal economies (contraband in the case of the former, cocaine trafficking in the latter) became noticeably intertwined. The first moment, analysed in chapter two, involved the establishment of the pro-capitalist, pro-U.S., *charrista* and notably authoritarian political system established at the beginning of the Cold War. As noted before, the Alemanista regime was instrumental in establishing the post-WW II directives that framed the operation of the single-party regime in Mexico for its entire history. Similarly, it was particularly under Alemanismo where the appropriation of the rule of law for rent-seeking purposes became the PRI’s central mechanism to consolidate power and articulate a national hierarchy⁵⁶⁷. If racketeering the rule of law was the ‘operating system’ of the PRI state, then this system was put in place under Alemanismo⁵⁶⁸. This included not only the distribution of ‘formal’ rackets to be abused for personal and political advancement (*caciquismo*, *charrismo*, etc.) but taking over regional powers by strengthening, too, the input of the centre into how illegal business in the north (and particularly in the Tamaulipas corridor) were to be conducted.

The subsequent ‘structural’ transformation of the PRI state took place under Salinismo and ran parallel to the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a new global order predicated in neoliberalism. With the Cold War over, and the PRI regime lacking an existential raison

2013, pp. 517-539; Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. “Hegemonic power networks and institutional configuration for illicit purposes.” *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2018, pp. 513-531.

⁵⁶⁷ The classic reference for the role that *corruption* played in the consolidation of the PRI party during Alemanismo is: Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

⁵⁶⁸ Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999.

d'être from the U.S. perspective, Mexico was the obvious candidate to serve as *the* pivotal country in which the post-Cold War order was to be implemented first. Strengthened by the 1982 debt crisis, Salinista 'hegemony' was to be responsible for introducing the neoliberal consensus in Mexico. Crucial directives in U.S. foreign policy, pursued in a particularly aggressive manner⁵⁶⁹, overshadowed the corruption, graft and criminality associated with those responsible for their implementation.

Akin to the 'capitalisation' process of Alemanismo, Salinismo also involved extinguishing labour and peasant rights by means of co-opting, replacing or eliminating social leaders; liberalising land property and abolishing peasant subsidies to serve the interests of a new class of *hacendados* (a transnational form of agroindustry, dominated by U.S. interests); transforming the labour market into (arguably) the most deregulated labour market in the world; opening almost the entire public sector to private investors, as well as lubricating the whole process with spoils from a privatisation programme surpassed in scale, swiftness and corruption only by that simultaneously taking place in Russia. The authoritarian character of the regime helped, of course, to socialise economic reforms that in other countries would, in actual praxis, meet much fiercer resistance. Salinas called this *top-to-down* ability to alter Mexico's structure "one of the greatest assets of the PRI system of rule"⁵⁷⁰.

Nevertheless, to overcome the obstacles involved in this swift, all-pervasive 'reorientation' of a political and economic system in place for more than half a century, Salinismo required, like Alemanismo, centralising political power in the hands of a *grupo compacto*⁵⁷¹. In this, Salinismo succeeded admirably. Salinas became the president who forcefully removed the

⁵⁶⁹ A review of diplomatic memos shows how the Reagan and Bush administrations used the 1982 economic crisis in Mexico to coerce the country into implementing vast and swift neoliberal reform. Cables note how this pressure was particularly intense in Republican Party political circles.

⁵⁷⁰ Krauze, Enrique. "Carlos Salinas de Gortari. El hombre que quiso ser rey." [video material] *Serie México Siglo XX, colección Sexenio*, 1998 [own translation].

⁵⁷¹ The importance of centralising power under a *grupo compacto* as a requirement to undertake a profound political transformation is highlighted by Manuel Camacho, Salinas's closest political advisor. Anticipating Salinismo, Camacho underlines the necessity to centralise power in what he describes as a *grupo compacto* in: Solís, Manuel Camacho. "El poder: estado o feudos políticos." *Foro Internacional*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1974, pp. 331-351.

second-highest number of governors in Mexico in order to appoint allies in their place (second only to Miguel Alemán)⁵⁷². Also like Alemanismo, Salinismo was strengthened, in addition, by bringing social expenditure into the president's hands, hence reducing the brokering power that governors and mayors had enjoyed under the old system of mediated patronage. A municipal president commented about this process: "Salinas wants to become the *presidente municipal* of all of Mexico"⁵⁷³. In parallel, Salinismo undertook a generalised purge aimed at removing political actors and union leaders belonging to the left. These actors were replaced by equally shady figures of unquestionable loyalty to the president. These new *charros* were not only tasked with keeping labour in check during the liberalisation process but, more fundamentally, containing the social earthquake that liberalisation was to bring about. When co-optation was not enough, Salinismo went further and directly eliminated social leaders and political opponents. Inevitably, like Alemanismo, laying down a new economic structure came to involve a mutually constructive relationship between the state and the bandit economy, a bandit economy embodied, in particular, by the cocaine corridors of Tamaulipas. The notable role of instrumentalised banditry during Alemanismo and Salinismo underlines the historical importance of banditry in times of profound political and economic transformation.

In effect, the unprecedented and vast transformation of the country's political and economic system coincided with another development that, becoming entangled into this process, would weigh like few others in the subsequent history of the country: the establishment of Mexico as the transnational corridor for cocaine shipments to the U.S. The incorporation of Mexico into global cocaine markets was a derivative of U.S. selective drug enforcement in the Caribbean. Aimed primarily at overthrowing the Medellín cartel, the result of this task force, directed by vice-president George H.W. Bush, was the empowerment of the Cali cartel in Colombia (which enjoyed much closer relationships to the Colombian government, as noted by Colombia's judicial process, Proceso 8000) and driving cocaine shipments from the

⁵⁷² Rodríguez, Rogelio H. *El centro dividido: la nueva autonomía de los gobernadores*. El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Internacionales, 2008.

⁵⁷³ Krauze, Enrique. "Carlos Salinas de Gortari. El hombre que quiso ser rey." [video material] *Serie México Siglo XX, colección Sexenio*, 1998 [own translation].

Florida Bay to northeastern Mexico. Violence, accordingly, relocated from the streets of Miami to the Mexican borderlands. The rise of Mexico as the most important drug corridor on the planet, and the particularly sensitive political context in which this process took place, affected in important ways the interaction of state and drug markets in the country. As I note below, rackets established under Salinismo, aimed at bringing the cocaine corridors of the Northeast under state control, collapsed along with the implosion of the Salinas government, encouraging the violent centrifugal pull that, before any other state, Tamaulipas first exhibited.

Borrowing from a typology originally developed by Luis Jorge Garay Salamanca et.al.⁵⁷⁴, Flores Pérez notes how the drug racket in Mexico, after Salinismo, transitioned from what he describes as a *centralised-hierarchical* racket (framed by a strong, authoritarian state) to an *atomised-multidirectional* one (framed by a weak, democratic polity)⁵⁷⁵. According to Flores Pérez, ‘strong’ and ‘democratic’ states are the most successful in *suppressing* criminal markets. ‘Strong’ but ‘authoritarian’ states (like the PRI) tend, in contrast, to *integrate* them⁵⁷⁶. Weak, authoritarian states (resembling Mexico under Salinismo) often employ their institutions to opportunistically advance factional interests through criminal activity — what Garay Salamanca calls ‘*reconfiguración cooptada del estado*’⁵⁷⁷. Finally, states that are weak, but democratic (like the one that followed Salinismo) often see their institutions *taken over* by criminal interests — what Garay Salamanca calls “*captura del estado*”⁵⁷⁸. As Marcelo Fabian Sain notes, “[P]rotective [state] intervention aims to allow some criminality through a manifest pact with members of criminal groups whereby the “how” and “when” of criminal activities is either decided with or imposed to criminal organisations. In other words, the state decides how much crime is to be tolerated [...] without ever questioning the material

⁵⁷⁴ Salamanca, Luis Jorge Garay, Salcedo-Albarán, Eduardo, De León-Beltrán, Isaac, & Guerrero, Bernado. *La captura y reconfiguración cooptada del Estado en Colombia*. Avina, 2008.

⁵⁷⁵ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

⁵⁷⁶ Idem.

⁵⁷⁷ Salamanca, Luis Jorge Garay, et al. *La captura y reconfiguración cooptada del Estado en Colombia*. Avina, 2008, p. 10.

⁵⁷⁸ Idem, p. 10.

and symbolic domain of the police in the space of regulation”⁵⁷⁹. Building from Barnes⁵⁸⁰ and Flores Pérez’ models, Mexico can be said to have transitioned at this time from a model of *vertical* integration of drug markets (where the state holds the upper hand, especially because power has been considerably centralised in state institutions) to a *horizontal* form of collaboration (whereby a more decentralised political system interacts with criminals on more even terms and through multidirectional contacts).

As these interpretative frameworks suggest, the analysis of the historic ‘entanglements’ between state and drug traffickers in Mexico has focused, in particular, on networks, groups and structures. What these frameworks tend to underline are the connections between criminals and state actors at multiple levels working collaboratively to achieve financial and political ends. Building on these contributions, the aim here is to ponder the kind of historical processes set in motion by these entanglements at a time when unprecedented change (re)visited Mexico. The findings presented in this chapter are based on archival evidence collected at the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City, interviews with former PJF and DEA officials, and a limited input of reputed newspaper and magazine sources.

Politics and contraband rackets in Tamaulipas

No other region in Mexico has commanded more importance in the historical evolution of transnational criminal markets than the northeastern state of Tamaulipas. Tamaulipas represents the closest link between the U.S. East Coast and Mexico’s heartland. The early development of cities in the region, including Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo and Reynosa largely resulted from opportunities opened by the smuggling economy of the 19th and early 20th centuries⁵⁸¹. The enormous wealth associated with contraband made contraband rackets crucial in the austere politics of post-revolutionary Mexico. Providing protection to contraband markets represented at this time a relatively straightforward avenue to tap into what (arguably)

⁵⁷⁹ Sain, Marcelo Fabián. "La regulación policial del narcotráfico en la Provincia de Buenos Aires." *Seminar 'What Happens When Governments Negotiate with Organized Crime'*, 2013, p. 14.

⁵⁸⁰ Barnes, Nicholas. "Criminal politics: An integrated approach to the study of organized crime, politics, and violence." *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2017, pp. 967-987.

⁵⁸¹ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013, pp. 69-91.

represented the border's most important cash economy. Unsurprisingly, political consolidation at the national level during the centralising period of Alemanismo involved displacing caciques in control of these rackets and enabling allies and relatives of Alemán in their place. As Flores Pérez notes, a "reconfiguration" of illicit economies was a notable aspect in the process of national state formation, particularly at the borderlands⁵⁸².

This 'centralisation of abuse' was a particularly notable strategy deployed in Tamaulipas, where the consolidation of Alemanismo in the late 1940s involved deposing the region's cacique, Emilio Portes Gil. As noted in Chapter 2, Portes Gil had served as one of the early post-revolutionary presidents in the pre-Cárdenas era (1928-1930) and held sway over the Tamaulipecan region. In contrast to all notable *cacicazgos* in the early post-revolutionary period, the regional power of Portes Gil was established on a political machine incorporating peasant and workers organisations. This political machine, the Partido Socialista de la Frontera, would subsequently serve as an inspiration for the PRI party and its formidable corporative system. As noted by Arturo Alvarado, the peculiarity of *portesgilismo* lay, above all, in this particular form of corporate representation allowing for workers and peasants to mobilise social demands. By segmenting the workers and peasant organisations into different bodies, *portesgilismo* was able to limit the potential of mass organisation and empower the interests of national and foreign economic actors⁵⁸³. Portesgilismo had a strong presence in the Tamaulipecan countryside: the machine distributed lands, granted credits, promoted cooperative agriculture and carried out a (limited) agrarian redistribution programme⁵⁸⁴. Its merit, according to Alvarado, lay in integrating a short-lived but differentiated regional structure of political representation established on social forces. In this respect, "Portes Gil was, like many local leaders, a transitional figure in the period in which Mexican corporatism and Mexican presidentialism became constituted"⁵⁸⁵. This geographically differentiated structure was displaced in the 1940s by the PRI party, but the local embeddedness that the PRI party

⁵⁸² Idem.

⁵⁸³ Mendoza, Arturo Alvarado. *El portesgilismo en Tamaulipas: estudio sobre la constitución de la autoridad pública en el México posrevolucionario*. El Colegio de México, 1992.

⁵⁸⁴ Idem.

⁵⁸⁵ Idem.

consolidated in the region was only possible by structuring new alliances with local political powers and social forces⁵⁸⁶. When Portes Gil came to realise the inevitability of the PRI party, he noted how this new structure “devoured men, and the time has come to accept my fate with the same openness by which I accepted my (old) position. This is simply the last step in a route that was drawn from the beginning”⁵⁸⁷.

Portes Gil had tapped into transborder contraband during his cacicazgo. According to Jesús Lemus, he capitalised on prohibition in the U.S. and provided political protection to large operations running liquor across the border⁵⁸⁸. He had a close relationship with leading smugglers, particularly in the vicinity of Ciudad Victoria⁵⁸⁹. The Alemanista penetration of Tamaulipas involved severing these rackets from *portesgilista* actors and enabling allies of the president in their place. As noted by Flores Pérez, Alemanista associates such as Tiburcio Garza Zamora, Bonifacio Salinas Leal⁵⁹⁰, Raúl Zarate Legleu and Francisco Castellanos Tuexi came to directly or indirectly control both protection rackets *and* regional politics, a process that shows how control over illegal markets often ran hand-in-hand with political clout⁵⁹¹. Assuming control of these rackets (and thus negating them to others) thus became a

⁵⁸⁶ Idem.

⁵⁸⁷ Idem.

⁵⁸⁸ Lemus, J. Jesús. *El último infierno (Los Malditos 2): Más historias negras desde Puente Grande*. Grijalbo, 2016.

⁵⁸⁹ Solorio Martínez, J. Á. *Grupos de gobierno. Tamaulipas 1929–1992*, n.d., p. 360.

⁵⁹⁰ General Bonifacio Salinas Leal is a paradigmatic example of the relationship between political power and contraband in the Northeast, as well as the changes that Alemanismo began to introduce in this convergence. As noted by Rath, Salinas Leal, whose military career went back to the revolution, became in 1939 governor of neighboring Nuevo León. Also according to Rath, Salinas Leal established an independent political base in Nuevo León and was able to impose an ally as his successor in 1943 *despite* resistance by the central government. Salinas was subsequently appointed, in 1946, regional military commander of Tamaulipas, where he became involved in contraband activities in partnership with a local strong man, Tiburcio Garza Zamora. According to Rath, the Alemanista appointment of Raúl Gárate Legleu as governor of Tamaulipas sought not only to displace portesgilismo from Tamaulipas, but to counter the influence of Salinas. In this respect, Flores Pérez notes that Salinas became incorporated into the ‘camarilla’ política of Alemán at this hour, which led to enormous opportunities for embezzlement in return for loyalty. He writes: “General Bonifacio Salinas Leal amassed a fortune and, according to an official document, was the actual owner of Maseca Company, one of the most important agro-industrial business in the country”. The case of Salinas Leal exemplifies broader developments in the politics governing the relationship between the PRI regime and military in the 1940s and early 1950s. One of these developments, Rath notes, was that opposing the national government risked political repression and economic reprisals, but it also showed that, in exchange for national loyalty, officers could expect to enjoy some political entrepreneurial autonomy within the PRI system. See: Rath, Thomas. *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960*. UNC Press Books, 2013; Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. “Contrabando, tráfico de drogas y la configuración de circuitos institucionales para su protección en México.” *RESI: Revista de estudios en seguridad internacional*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2019, pp. 37-58.

⁵⁹¹ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

notable strategy to integrate the borderland regions into a new national hierarchy. In the words of one of these Alemanista caciques, “contraband was easier to control than to tackle”⁵⁹². Displacement also involved appointing friends and relatives of Alemán to direct the key custom offices in Tamaulipas. As Flores Pérez notes, “during the presidency of Miguel Alemán, the appointment of family relatives and members of the Alemanista circle to head custom offices at the border was a recurrent practice”⁵⁹³. Tamaulipas “would be a paradigmatic case in this regard, but the practice spread throughout the borderland economy”⁵⁹⁴. The consolidation of Alemanismo in Tamaulipas, and Alemán’s direct and indirect involvement in ‘capturing’ the contraband economy of the Northeast, represents a key precedent to understand the political entanglements that organically developed when trafficking in goods, forty years later, morphed into trafficking in cocaine.

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, contraband operations in the Tamaulipecan border were operated by Mexico’s most notable bandit, Juan N. Guerra. His organisation can be arguably described as the most successful contraband organisation in the 20th century. A confidential memo by the DGIPS noted, by the 1940s, how Guerra embodied “the largest contraband operator in the smuggling of arms, commercial items and drugs in the northern border”⁵⁹⁵. Based in the Tamaulipecan border town of Matamoros, Juan N. Guerra started his criminal career in bootlegging operations at the U.S. border (late 1920s). His organisation was known originally as *Los Tequileros*⁵⁹⁶. In the 1930s, Guerra was appointed agent in the judicial police of Jojutla, Morelos. In that capacity, he was charged with theft and attempted murder, but somehow the charges were dropped⁵⁹⁷. In 1943, he was reappointed as a judicial police officer by Mexico City’s Attorney General, Francisco Castellanos⁵⁹⁸. Castellanos, a

⁵⁹² Archivo General de la Nación. 266.7 (721.1), 1938, f. 32. S

⁵⁹³ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013, p. 135.

⁵⁹⁴ Idem.

⁵⁹⁵ AGN. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Roberto Guerra Cardenas, legajo único, f. 12.

⁵⁹⁶ Figueroa, Yolanda. *El capo del Golfo: Vida y captura de Juan García Ábrego*. Grijalbo, 1996.

⁵⁹⁷ “Fue procesado en Jojutla el uxoricida Juan N. Guerra”. *Noticiero*, September 16, 1947; Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

⁵⁹⁸ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013, p. 140

close ally of Alemán, had been governor of Tamaulipas in the early 1930s and had developed close ties with Guerra⁵⁹⁹. The relationship between Castellanos and Guerra was indeed very close: the former governor personally accompanied Guerra to court hearings in which Guerra was charged with murder⁶⁰⁰. Guerra's relationship with the political elite allowed him to navigate the vast collection of crimes (including multiple homicides) that he directly and indirectly committed. His success as the country's most prominent trafficker, extending at least over four decades, owed less to his mythical 'bandit' abilities and much more to the level of political protection he enjoyed from authorities. A federal attorney that investigated an early murder committed by Guerra (that of his own wife) said in the 1940s that the trafficker managed to evade justice by virtue of "his powerful influences with local politicians [...] cultivated with the enormous money he has given to them"⁶⁰¹. Thirty years later, confidential memos continued to note that: "Mr. Guerra is part of a very large family that has always been involved in bloody crimes" with "several of its members having been prosecuted for murder"⁶⁰². The Guerra family, another report of the time notes, "has a reputation as 'bandits', being feared throughout the state"⁶⁰³.

DFS memos note that Guerra (and most particularly, his brother, Roberto) cultivated ties with Tamaulipecan governors Praxedis Balboa⁶⁰⁴ (1963–1969) and Emilio Martínez Manatou (1981–1987)⁶⁰⁵. Guerra is noted, for example, as a generous contributor to the electoral campaign of the latter. Guerra's political acceptance was so conspicuous that a street was named after him by Tamaulipas governor Egidio Torre Cantú (2011-2016). The relationship between Tamaulipecan governors and the Guerra organisation echoed the 'informal networks'

⁵⁹⁹ Archivo General de la Nación, DFS, Versión Pública de Roberto Guerra Cárdenas; Archivo General de la Nación, DFS, Versión Pública de Emilio Martínez Manatou (the Emilio Martínez Manatou file is referenced by Flores Pérez).

⁶⁰⁰ "Juan N. Guerra expresa sus deseos de respetar la ley. Acudió hoy ante los militares de la Presidencia." *Noticiero Diario de la Tarde*, September 20, 1960, pp. 1, 3; cited in Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

⁶⁰¹ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Roberto Guerra Cárdenas, legajo único.

⁶⁰² AGN. DFS-IPS 1734 – C, Expediente 16. Marzo 1973 – Diciembre 1978, f. 35.

⁶⁰³ Idem.

⁶⁰⁴ AGN. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Juan N. Guerra Cárdenas, legajo único.

⁶⁰⁵ Ricardo Condelle a Luis de la Barrera, AGN, DFS, versión pública del expediente de Lino González Pérez, legajo único, 2017, f. 9-10; cited in Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

and ‘grey areas’ that, in a similar fashion, exploited drug economies in states like Sinaloa, Baja California and Michoacán throughout the PRI regime. The relationship between Guerra and the local political establishment fitted neatly into these landscapes. However, the long-term operation and impunity that Guerra enjoyed, lasting for the entire PRI period, gravitated beyond local politics and involved protection from political heavyweights and institutions of much greater scope. As Anton Blok notes, the success of the bandit is contingent on his connections with the key political actors.

Guerra’s proximity to regional and national politics extended to other kin members of his family. DFS memos note that Guerra’s brother, Roberto, was one of the most powerful political brokers in Tamaulipas for many decades⁶⁰⁶. Roberto is noted in confidential cables as a key financial backer of multiple governors of Tamaulipas⁶⁰⁷. According to his widow, he was particularly close to governors Norberto Treviño Zapata (1957-1963) and Enrique Cárdenas (1975-1981)⁶⁰⁸. He was appointed director of customs in Tamaulipas in the 1960s⁶⁰⁹. A DFS memo notes that, in addition to receiving multiple government contracts, he was the owner of 500 liquor stores⁶¹⁰. DGIPS and DFS memos note that Roberto was personally responsible for several murders, including that of a Matamoros mayor, Ernesto Elizondo (1949-1951)⁶¹¹. Another memo notes how he ordered the assassination of Jesus Ramirez, a local official in Matamoros, whose father told a confidential agent “that he would not denounce Roberto because he owns all the authorities and because doing so would lead to his own death”⁶¹². Roberto’s son, Roberto Guerra Velasco, ran for mayor of Matamoros in the mid-1980s under the banner of the PRI party, an electoral contest that, under a single-party regime, he obviously won. His cousin was Juan Garcia Abrego, the man who took over the Guerra organisation when contraband in goods switched to contraband in cocaine.

⁶⁰⁶ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Roberto Guerra Cárdenas, legajo único.

⁶⁰⁷ According to DFS memos, for example, Roberto Guerra was the key supporter in Praxedis campaign for governor in 1963. He is also noted for being a key financial backer of Emilio Martínez Manatou in the 1980s. Guerra was also the head of the local chapter of PRI’s CNR in the 1960s.

⁶⁰⁸ Cited in: Solorio Martínez, José Ángel. *Grupos de gobierno. Tamaulipas. 1929-1992*. Amacalli Editores, 1997.

⁶⁰⁹ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Roberto Guerra Cárdenas, legajo único.

⁶¹⁰ *Idem*.

⁶¹¹ *Idem*.

⁶¹² *Idem*.

The political connections that enabled Guerra's operations in Tamaulipas (as well as his direct participation in local politics) transcended state politics and involved key political heavyweights of the PRI regime. Amongst the most powerful enablers of Guerra was Raúl Salinas Lozano, a political heavyweight from the Northeast who commanded the conservative, pro-business, pro-U.S. faction of the PRI party in the decades that followed Alemánismo. His political group in the PRI party, educated in U.S. universities and hosted in the Finance Secretariat, was commonly referred to as the 'technocratic' wing of the PRI. Salinas Lozano's power in the 1960s was notorious: the powerful secretary of Commerce and Customs of the Mexican 'miracle' nearly became the PRI's presidential candidate in 1964. If Salinas Lozano did not make it to the presidency, his son, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, eventually would. The relationship between Salinas Lozano and Guerra was public⁶¹³. According to the 1992 testimony of his private secretary, FBI protected witness Magdalena Ruiz Pelayo, Salinas Lozano was directly involved in contraband and narcotics operations in partnership with the Guerra organisation. Ruiz testified how she personally handled drug money destined for her boss on multiple occasions⁶¹⁴. She had been apprehended in 1992 at the U.S. border when attempting to smuggle millions of dollars from the cocaine business into Southern California⁶¹⁵. An intelligence report by the Centro de Inteligencia Antinarcóticos in Mexico noted that the relationship between Salinas Lozano and Guerra involved both legitimate and illegitimate enterprises⁶¹⁶. According to Flores Pérez, the Guerras were also close to Salinas Lozano's brother, Carlos, a powerful figure in neighbouring Monterrey⁶¹⁷. As confirmed in interviews with cabinet-level politicians active in the 1990s, Salinas Lozano (educated at Harvard) was one of the Mexican politicians enjoying greatest access to U.S. intelligence circles during the PRI

⁶¹³ Kenny, Paul, and Monica Serrano. "The Mexican State and Organized Crime: An Unending Story." *Mexico's Security Failure Collapse into Criminal Violence*, edited by Kenny, Paul, Monica Serrano and Arturo C. Sotomayor, Taylor and Francis, 2013, p. 44.

⁶¹⁴ Dillon, Sam. "Secretary to Mexican Patriarch Discloses Links to Drug Barons." *New York Times*, February 26, 1997; Fineman, Mark. "Smuggler May Shed Light on Level of Corruption." *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1997.

⁶¹⁵ Fineman, Mark. "Smuggler May Shed Light on Level of Corruption." *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1997.

⁶¹⁶ Cited in: Boyer, Jean-François. *La guerre perdue contre la drogue*. La Découverte, 2013; and Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

⁶¹⁷ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. "Contrabando, tráfico de drogas y la configuración de circuitos institucionales para su protección en México." *Revista de Estudios en Seguridad Internacional*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2019, pp. 37-58.

regime. In this regard, his relationship with George H.W. Bush was not only close but particularly important in the ‘opening’ of Mexico undertaken under the presidency of his son⁶¹⁸. In any case, the social acceptance and political partnerships that Guerra enjoyed amongst the most powerful political figures who inherited the Alemanista agenda explains the remarkable success of his criminal organisation. But what this suggests is that the protection that Guerra enjoyed obeyed not only to the level of ‘integration’ of his organisation and key actors of the Mexican state but also to the functional role of these ‘bandits’ in adapting Mexican policy to U.S. strategic interests.

Rather than a single, coherent, and tightly integrated operation, the state-supported rackets extorting contraband and drugs at the border were systemic, pervasive and fully integrated into the regular operation of the agencies tasked with suppressing them. While the DFS and the PJF played a key role in the racketeering of the contraband business, no single state agency had a monopoly over the smuggling racket. Opportunities were instead systematically exploited by institutional and political actors occupying positions of relevant authority, expected to racketeer and push tributes back into the system. While those at lower levels made a living from racketeering, those above –the *familia revolucionaria* – made fortunes. In this regard, the transformation of public authority into a privatised, rent-seeking *racket* in the border region makes explicit the underlying dynamics of governance under the PRI party: a system largely established over the systematic abuse of ‘regulatory’ opportunities for personal and political advancement⁶¹⁹. A large collection of confidential memos and newspaper clips at the Archivo General de la Nación portrays the pervasiveness of official involvement in contraband in Tamaulipas and the extent to which political and bureaucratic posts constituted, in practice, licenses to racketeer. A newspaper report from 1976 notes, for example, how a “former director of Tamaulipas customs owned an aerial fleet consisting of at least 10

⁶¹⁸ See: Whalen, R. Christopher. *Inflated: how money and debt built the American dream*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010, p. 312. According to a former cabinet member of the Ernesto Zedillo administration interviewed for this work, the relationship between Salinas Lozano and Bush went beyond friendship and extended to business, particularly in the oil sector. According to Raúl Salinas de Gortari’s wife, Jeb Bush (son to George H. W. Bush) was hosted multiple times at the Salinas family ranch in Puebla. See: Zarembo, Alan. “Bush Family Ties.” *Newsweek*, February 25, 2001.

⁶¹⁹ Knight, Alan. “Narco-violence and the state in modern Mexico.” *Violence, coercion, and state-making in twentieth-century Mexico: The other half of the centaur*, edited by Pansters, Wil G., Stanford University Press, 2012.

small aircrafts in which tons of contraband (are) shipped on a regular basis”⁶²⁰. A confidential DGIPS report notes how “PJF agents in Reynosa [Tamaulipas] charged a weekly quota of 3,000 pesos to contraband organizations”⁶²¹. A smuggler in Nuevo Laredo [Tamaulipas] testified in court how he paid the local PJF *delegado* a monthly rate of 2,000 pesos “to facilitate the introduction of contraband” into the interior of Mexico⁶²². In Piedras Negras [in the neighbouring state of Coahuila], the director of state customs, who had “intimate links to contrabandists and drug runners”, was reportedly selling posts at the border for a fee “ranging from 60,000 to 500,000 pesos”⁶²³. The governor of Coahuila himself is noted in DGIPS confidential memos as protecting contraband of heavy machinery and sending *judiciales* armed with machine guns to protect cargos⁶²⁴. In 1978, *Proceso* magazine summarised: “The Tamaulipas panorama is bleak: generalized judicial venality, official protection to drug trafficking and smuggling, institutionalised and universal arbitrariness, *porrismo* (parapolicing), nepotism, inefficiency and graft”⁶²⁵. Newspapers report again and again how tons of contraband items were shipped every week across the Tamaulipecan-Texan border *en route* to the great *fayuca* markets in Mexico. One report estimated the value of contraband in the mid-1970s at 3 billion dollars (about \$140 billion today)⁶²⁶. Peter Lupsha notes that anywhere from 20 to 30% of all economic activity along the border at this time was illegal contraband⁶²⁷. Where did all this massive amount of money go? How was it laundered? Channelled into what banks, shell companies and tax havens? The contraband rackets in Mexico constitute a key (and highly overlooked) political economy of the PRI regime that merits further research.

⁶²⁰ De Anda, Jose Luis. “El ex jefe de la aduana de Matamoros tenía una flotilla aerea de contrabando.” *Ultimas Noticias*, March 11, 1976, in Archivo General de la Nación, IPS, 1734-C [own translation].

⁶²¹ Archivo General de la Nación, 1734-C.

⁶²² *Idem*.

⁶²³ Medina, Rafael. “Los jefes aduanales de Piedras Negras venden plazas y solapan a narcotraficantes”. *Ultimas Noticias*, May 31, 1977, in Archivo General de la Nación, DGIPS, 1734-C [own translation].

⁶²⁴ Archivo General de la Nación, DGIPS, 1734-C, p. 29.

⁶²⁵ “Sólo sus chicharrones truenan.” *Proceso*, January 14, 1978 [own translation].

⁶²⁶ Saucedo, Miguel. “3 mil millones de dólares de contrabando.” *El Universal*, April 18, 1977, in Archivo General de la Nación, 1734-C.

⁶²⁷ Lupsha, Peter, and Kip Schlegel. “The Political Economy of Drug Trafficking: The Herrera Organization (Mexico and the United States).” *Latin American and Iberian Institute*, Working paper, 1980.

Importantly, although contraband rackets in Tamaulipas orbited around the political network originally enabled under the Alemanista presidency, the exploitation of contraband opportunities in the Northeast involved other political actors. A notable example in this regard is the involvement of relatives of the revered leftist president Lazaro Cárdenas in contraband activities. Two DGIPS confidential reports from 1971 note that the brother of Cárdenas, Damaso, sent large shipments of contraband to Guadalajara on a regular basis while serving as head of customs in the Tamaulipecan city of Reynosa. A DGIPS report notes how notable members of the Cárdenas family “participate in a smuggling business that circulates products inclusive of whiskey, air conditioning devices, office furniture”, among others, “sold in the city of Guadalajara”⁶²⁸. The report notes how Cárdenas’s close family, including “Alberto Cárdenas, Damaso Cárdenas, Napoleon Cárdenas and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, are involved in shipping contraband” from several points in the U.S. using “lorry trucks, small aircraft, planes and sea vessels”⁶²⁹. The involvement of leading members of the Cárdenas dynasty in contraband rackets in Tamaulipas underscores the extent to which political power in the PRI regime went hand in hand with exerting some kind of direct or indirect control over the *key* economies represented by transnational organised crime —irrespective of political orientations. As later transpired in the Cardenista state of Michoacán, where the inheritors of the Lazaro Cárdenas dynasty became entangled with drug markets in the 2000s, racketeering organised crime in contexts of limited wealth is not only important in that it provides financial clout (often, though not always, invested directly or indirectly in security capabilities) but also in that exerting control over these economies deprives all-too-willing adversaries of using them to their advantage. This is the inexorable dilemma bringing realistic and determined politicians, seeking to advance their political agenda, domestically and abroad, to instrumentalise the bandit.

⁶²⁸ Archivo General de la Nación, DGIPS, 1734-B (62-70).

⁶²⁹ Idem [own translation].

Salinismo and protection rackets

As noted in previous chapters, drug trafficking in Mexico after Operación Condor (1977) became further ‘integrated’ into the DFS via a protection racket established in Guadalajara. According to former DEA intelligence chief Phil Jordan⁶³⁰, the DFS/Guadalajara Cartel was able to secure the largest share of heroin and cannabis exported to U.S. markets from the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s. The dismantlement in 1986 of this ‘integrated’ structure (DFS-Guadalajara) opened a period in which an expanded federal *policing* apparatus (which incorporated a large number of former DFS agents) continued to racketeer geographical jurisdictions, or *plazas*, taxing drugs, contraband, immigrants and, most importantly, cocaine.

The new drug traffickers at the border plazas were all organically connected to the former Guadalajara/DFS organisation, a common origin that facilitated understandings and communication between increasingly differentiated corporations. By the mid-1980s, however, the Guerra organisation, which did not enjoy any kinship to Sinaloan lieutenants, had begun to switch from the smuggling of *fayuca* to capitalising on cocaine, hence joining the drug market as the only drug trafficking organisation not belonging to the original Sinaloan stock. The emergence of a cocaine corridor in Tamaulipas led to a pronounced divide in the drug business that would have important consequences for the country’s future. Juan García Ábrego, a nephew of Juan N. Guerra, assumed control of the organisation in the mid-1980s with the blessing of his ageing uncle. The Guerra organisation was thereafter referred to as the ‘Gulf Cartel’.

According to DFS reports, the consolidation of a cocaine corridor in Tamaulipas enjoyed the support of Tamaulipas governor Emilio Martínez Manatou (1981-1987), a figure close to

⁶³⁰ Interview with DEA-1.

Salinas Lozano⁶³¹, noted in DGIPS files as having a close relationship with the Guerra family⁶³². Martínez Manatou was a prominent PRI politician with a reputation for graft⁶³³. He had been senator for Tamaulipas (1959-1964) as well as personal secretary to President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970). According to DFS reports, Guerra was the most important contributor in Manatou's campaign for governor⁶³⁴. A DFS report notes that Augusto Cárdenas, Manatou's brother in law, partnered in the smuggling business with the Guerras⁶³⁵. Confidential memos also note how Manatou belonged to a faction in the PRI party deeply associated with illegal economies. DFS reports note how this political 'network', which backed Manatou's failed presidential bid in 1970, included PRI *dinosaurios* such as Sinaloan governor Leopoldo Sánchez Celis (entangled with drug traffickers in Sinaloa⁶³⁶); Carlos Hank González (a cacique figure from the Estado de México, noted for indulging in unprecedented levels of graft, and whose family would facilitate money laundering operations for the Tijuana cartel), Oscar Flores Sánchez (head of the Attorney General Office during Operación Condor and noted in confidential reports as condoning drug trafficking activities during his tenure as governor of Chihuahua⁶³⁷), as well as the already noted heavyweight politician Raúl Salinas Lozano⁶³⁸. At the local level, the consolidation of the Gulf Cartel took place in a period when the Guerra family directly controlled the political 'siege' of the organisation's clout: the city of Matamoros. Roberto Guerra Velasco, nephew of Juan N. Guerra and son to his brother, Roberto, was mayor of Matamoros from 1984 to 1987.

⁶³¹ Payan, Tony, Kathleen Staudt, and Z. Anthony Kruszewski, eds. *A war that can't be won: Binational perspectives on the war on drugs*. University of Arizona Press, 2013, p. 143.

⁶³² Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Juan Nepomuceno Guerra Cárdenas, legajo único.

⁶³³ The graft that characterised the administration of Manatou is well-documented. People close to Manatou, with direct knowledge of his administration, confirmed the extent to which the governor was extensively involved in graft, particularly in the allocation of public contracts. See, for example, "Cárdenas González, Martínez Manatou, Américo Villarreal y Cavazos Lerma prohicieron corrupción y delincuencia." *Proceso*, October 8, 1994.

⁶³⁴ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Juan Nepomuceno Guerra Cárdenas, legajo único.

⁶³⁵ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS, "Estudio económico, social y político del Estado de Tamaulipas".

⁶³⁶ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Leopoldo Sánchez Celis, legajo único.

⁶³⁷ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Juan Nepomuceno Guerra Cárdenas, legajo único.

⁶³⁸ Archivo General de la Nación. DFS-IPS, Versión pública del expediente de Raúl Mendiola Cerecero, legajo único, cited in: Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

The consolidation of the Gulf Cartel under Governor Manatou and Mayor Guerra⁶³⁹ was perhaps the first case in which local politicians in Mexico became directly involved in a political economy of unprecedented value: cocaine. It is also at this time when a relatively new practice became established in Mexico: the assassination of journalists following political leads into the drug trade. The killing of journalists, radiating from Tamaulipas, began with the assassination of journalists Ernesto Flores Torrijos, Norma Alicia Moreno Figueroa and Jorge Brenes Araya, all in 1986. Their killings, echoing the 1985 assassination of Mexico's leading reporter, Manuel Buendía, for allegedly disclosing the link between the DFS and the Guadalajara Cartel⁶⁴⁰, were among the first killings in a deadly spiral that would eventually make of Mexico the most dangerous country for investigative reporters anywhere in the world⁶⁴¹. The killing of journalist Flores Torrijos was emblematic in this respect. He was noted for being amongst the few who wrote about the obvious connections between the Guerras and the political system in Tamaulipas. His widow declared to the press that behind the murder of her husband was Roberto Guerra Velasco, mayor of Matamoros and cousin to the leader of the Gulf Cartel, Juan García Ábrego. The widow of the victim also pointed out that organised crime was playing a growing role in the ownership of the local media⁶⁴², a phenomenon labelled as *narco-periodismo*⁶⁴³. The reputed Proceso magazine asserted that the murder of Flores Torrijos was an act of *La Familia*, referring to the Guerra family⁶⁴⁴. Soon the practice extended elsewhere. In 1988, the director of the renowned Zeta magazine, Hector Felix Miranda, was assassinated in Tijuana after disclosing the relationship between the powerful Salinista Hank clan and the drug world. The assassins of Miranda were bodyguards of the Hank family. After publishing a book documenting the ties between the Guerra

⁶³⁹ "En los pasados seis años, el Cártel del Golfo introdujo cerca de 750 toneladas de cocaína pura a Estados Unidos." *Proceso*, January 20, 1996.

⁶⁴⁰ Bartley, Russell H., and Sylvia Erickson Bartley. *Eclipse of the Assassins: The CIA, Imperial Politics, and the Slaying of Mexican Journalist Manuel Buendía*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.

⁶⁴¹ See: Bartley, Russell H., and Sylvia Erickson Bartley. *Eclipse of the Assassins: The CIA, Imperial Politics, and the Slaying of Mexican Journalist Manuel Buendía*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.

⁶⁴² A prominent owner of newspapers in Tamaulipas was the former PJF director for Operación Condor, Carlos Aguilar Garza (see Chapter three). He owned the newspapers La Tarde, El Punto, El Popular and El Aguila.

⁶⁴³ Valle, Eduardo. *El segundo disparo: la narcodemocracia mexicana*. Océano, 1995.

⁶⁴⁴ "En Matamoros todos conocen a los asesinos, pero se esfumaron". *Proceso*, August 2, 1986.

family and the Gulf Cartel, journalist Yolanda Figueroa was also murdered in Mexico City in 1996.

By the mid-1980s, Juan García Ábrego was successfully turning his ageing uncle's contraband organisation into an enterprise dealing in cocaine. Tended by his uncle in car-theft and contraband operations, Ábrego's operations became less focused on contraband (no longer very profitable given the increasingly relaxed tariff restrictions at the border) and invested instead in the new 'gem' of global markets. Ábrego had started his 'bandit' career shipping marijuana in Cessna aeroplanes from the U.S. West Coast to the Tamaulipecan border in the mid-1970s. In the early 1980s, seeking to incursion in cocaine markets, he established a profitable alliance with the Cali Cartel in Colombia at a time when U.S. drug enforcement was focused on Cali's rival, Medellín. Cali planes landed in Ábrego's ranches in Tamaulipas (in regions like San Fernando and Soto La Marina) as well as in Ábrego's properties in Tabasco and the Yucatán Peninsula⁶⁴⁵. From Ábrego's ranches (Dos Hermanos, La Herradura, El Centenario, among others), pilots ferried the cocaine to other locations owned by Ábrego along the Matamoros/Brownsville border. According to court records, low-ranking government employees at U.S. customs were on Ábrego's payroll⁶⁴⁶. According to an American intelligence report, the consolidation of Ábrego's cocaine corridors in Tamaulipas obeyed to two crucial factors, the first being "his alliance with Colombia's Cali cartel", and the other "the political clout of his uncle, Juan N. Guerra."⁶⁴⁷

The 'political clout' of Ábrego became manifest in his particularly strong relationship with President Salinas' PJF. The consolidation of the Gulf Cartel began with the arrest of 33 of its competitors in 1988, one of the first major actions undertaken by the PJF during Salinismo⁶⁴⁸. In addition, at the national level, the predominance of Ábrego's organisation in cocaine markets was enhanced by the arrest or *extrajudicial* execution by the PJF of drug trafficking

⁶⁴⁵ United States of America v. Juan García Ábrego, CR. NO. H-93-167-SS. Appendix A.

⁶⁴⁶ *Idem*.

⁶⁴⁷ Cited in: Dillon, Sam. "Matamoros Journal; Canaries Sing in Mexico, but Uncle Juan Will Not." *New York Times*, February 9, 1996.

⁶⁴⁸ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

actors associated with the old guard of the Guadalajara cartel, in particular the arrest of Miguel Ángel Felix Gallardo (1989) and the execution of Pablo Acosta (1987). This *top-to-down* ‘reconfiguration’ of drug trafficking markets was tasked, in particular, to the man appointed by President Salinas to head drug enforcement in the country, the Tamaulipecan Guillermo Gonzalez Calderoni. Agent Calderoni was a PJF commander with strong ties to Ábrego. Ábrego referred to Calderoni as ‘his brother’ and both knew each other since childhood⁶⁴⁹. Agent Calderoni admitted in an interview that he was a close friend of Ábrego⁶⁵⁰. Both Calderoni and Ábrego inhabited a world in which the distinction between state and bandit was totally blurred.

Before Ábrego, more limited transnational cocaine operations in Tamaulipas had gravitated around a Medellín-affiliated drug trafficker called Oliverio Chávez. Chávez was apprehended in 1989 but persisted in handling cocaine operations from Tamaulipas state prison. After a failed assassination attempt in 1989 likely ordered by Ábrego⁶⁵¹, Chávez and his gang barricaded and took control of the penitentiary. The stand-by received attention from the national and international press. Chávez was able to smuggle a letter to the New York Times in which he explained that he refused to surrender because of what he described as “extensive links between my rivals [García Ábrego] and agents of Mexico’s federal anti-narcotics police [PJF]”⁶⁵². Chávez offered the New York Times detailed information about agents of the PJF supporting Ábrego. The New York Times added that: “In recent months [...] members of Mr. Chávez’s gang who were taken from the prison for deportation were abducted from Mexican immigration offices in Matamoros by armed officials and later found handcuffed and slayed in Brownsville, Tex., just across the border. American drug enforcement officials say they believe agents of the Federal Judicial Police were responsible for those killings”⁶⁵³. The standoff underscored the close affinity between a PJF tasked with capturing the cocaine business and Ábrego’s emerging position in that market. The situation in the state penitentiary

⁶⁴⁹ Cited in “Plática de narcos grabada por el FBI, revela nexos de González Calderoni.” *Proceso*, February 5, 2003. Also: Moreno, Mary. “Calderoni’s twisted legacy has tragic end.” *The Brownsville Herald*, February 9, 2003.

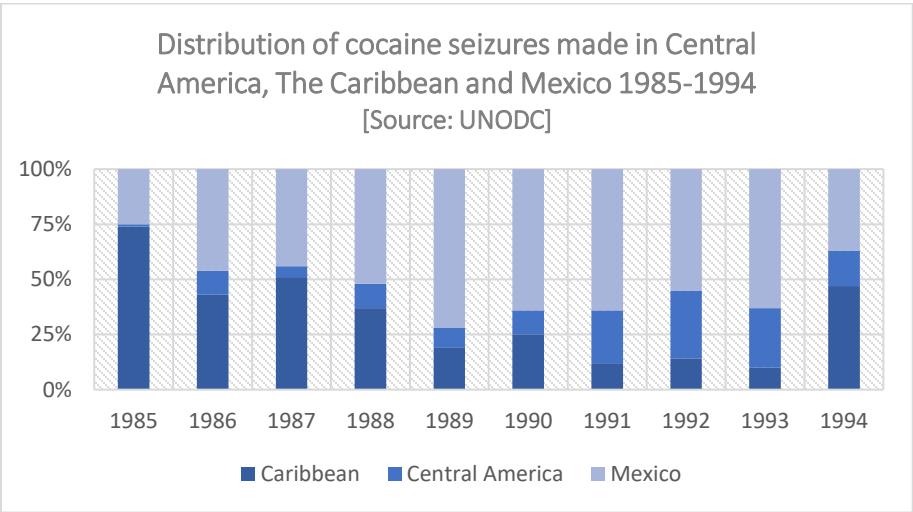
⁶⁵⁰ Frontline. *Drugwars. Interview with Guillermo Gonzalez Calderoni*. PBS.

⁶⁵¹ “El control de la plaza, origen de la matanza en el Cereso.” *Proceso*, May 25, 1991.

⁶⁵² Uhlig, Mark A. “Drug Baron Defiant in Mexican Jail.” *The New York Times*, May 29, 1991.

⁶⁵³ *Idem*.

came to an end when Chávez accepted to being transferred to a prison in Mexico City, where his influence fully declined.



The Gulf Cartel rose to become the leading cocaine organisation during Salinismo. Whereas cocaine trafficking under the Guadalajara/DFS racket had been limited to crossing minor cocaine shipments for Medellín drug traffickers in return for a smuggler’s fee, the Gulf Cartel pioneered in retaining instead a substantial percentage of cocaine from every shipment sent by Cali (30 to 50%)⁶⁵⁴. This innovation by Ábrego multiplied the value of the cocaine racket to a level far beyond what previous drug traffickers had ever accomplished, allowing him, in addition, to tap for the first time into retail cocaine markets in U.S. cities. Ábrego thus pioneered the vertical integration of the cocaine market, expanding in an unprecedented scale what until then had represented a limited transnational drug business dealing mostly in cannabis, heroin and small amounts of cocaine. As court records of the U.S. trial against Juan García Ábrego show, the Gulf Cartel managed to incorporate retail markets in cities like Chicago, New Jersey and New York⁶⁵⁵. Members of the Ábrego organisation sold cocaine in the streets of Houston for between \$17,000 and \$23,000 per kilogram, and in Los Angeles

⁶⁵⁴ United States of America, Plaintiff-Appellee v. Juan García Ábrego, Defendant-Appellant, No. 97-20130.

⁶⁵⁵ United States of America, Plaintiff-Appellee v. Juan García Ábrego, Defendant-Appellant, No. 97-20130. With the exception of The Herrera’s heroin syndicate from Durango, no group in Mexico had integrated retail markets until this point.

and New York for between \$23,000 and \$25,000⁶⁵⁶. This was an important development because, as Barnett Rubin notes, *super*-profits in the global drug market derive especially “from the risk premium of marketing an illegal commodity in wealthy societies. Producers and marketers of the raw material share in these profits only if they develop vertical integration through to the retail markets”⁶⁵⁷.

Mexico’s share of the global cocaine market was rising in both relative and absolute terms. This was a moment in which annual consumption of cocaine in the United States averaged a massive 400 tons per year, generating a yearly retail value of 74 billion dollars according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Half of the total amount of cocaine consumed in the United States during the late 1980s and early 1990s was introduced via Mexico⁶⁵⁸. The largest share of these shipments was handled, during *Salinismo*, by the Gulf Cartel. Between 1989 and 1993, U.S. law enforcement officials seized at least thirteen tons of cocaine belonging to *Ábrego*⁶⁵⁹. According to prosecutors, *Ábrego*’s operation grew to a point at which he was making \$2 billion a year (about \$4 billion today)⁶⁶⁰.

Ábrego laundered his money through exchange houses, U.S. banks (based in New York and Texas), tax havens like Switzerland and the Cayman Islands, and extensive real estate purchases⁶⁶¹. Importantly, a key figure in the laundering process of *Ábrego*’s money was Antonio Giraldi, a banker at Banker’s Trust and American Express Bank International. Giraldi was convicted in a federal court in Brownsville in 1994 for laundering money for *Ábrego*. In parallel, Giraldi also laundered money for Raúl Salinas de Gortari, the president’s brother, in a case involving 114 million dollars seized by Switzerland’s Prosecutor General and attributed to drug trafficking⁶⁶². According to court records in the U.S., *Ábrego*’s laundering

⁶⁵⁶ *Idem*.

⁶⁵⁷ Rubin, Barnett R. “The political economy of war and peace in Afghanistan.” *World Development*, vol. 28, no. 10, 2000, pp. 1789-1803, p. 1796.

⁶⁵⁸ United States of America v. Juan García *Ábrego*, CR. NO. H-93-167-SS. Appendix A.

⁶⁵⁹ United States of America, Plaintiff-Appellee v. Juan García *Ábrego*, Defendant-Appellant, No. 97-20130.

⁶⁶⁰ Cited in: Thorpe, Helen. “Anatomy of a Drug Cartel.” *Texas Monthly*, January, 1998.

⁶⁶¹ United States of America, Plaintiff-Appellee v. Juan García *Ábrego*, Defendant-Appellant, No. 97-20130.

⁶⁶² “Raul Salinas, Citibank, and Alleged Money Laundering.” Report to the Ranking Minority Member, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate, United States General Accounting Office, October 1998.

operations in Mexico were handled by the financial ‘brain’ of Ábrego, Luis Esteban García Villalón⁶⁶³. García was at the time director of the Bureau for National Coordination at the General Attorney Office.

The PJF and Salinismo

Declassified memos reviewed at the National Security Archive (George Washington University) underline that the empowerment of PJF actors in the drug business was further enhanced by Salinas’s decision to isolate the Mexican Army from drug enforcement operations – especially those sectors in the army which had not supported his technocratic ‘coup’ in the 1988 elections, which were considerable⁶⁶⁴. According to CIA memos, this created enormous animosity against Salinas within the armed forces. CIA reports note that Salinas’s choice to head the Defence Ministry, General Antonio Riviolo Almazán, lacked popularity within the armed forces and obeyed to his alleged docile personality⁶⁶⁵. Another memo underlines the rent-seeking orientation of inter-institutional disputes between the army and the PJF noting how sectors within the armed forces wanted to become involved not only in *eradication* but in the *interdiction* of drug markets as well, a prospect that Salinas resisted⁶⁶⁶. A notable example of the tensions generated between the PJF and the army in their respective bids to tap into an expansive transnational drug economy was the massacre of nine PJF officers in

⁶⁶³ United States of America, Plaintiff-Appellee, v. Juan GARCÍA ÁBREGO, Defendant-Appellant, No. 97-20130.

⁶⁶⁴ “Follow-Up on President Salinas’ Demonstration of Support to Mexican Army.” United States Embassy, Mexico, Defense Attaché [Classification Excised], Cable, December 23, 1991: 5 pp. Colección de DNSA: Mexico-United States Counternarcotics Policy, 1969-2013.

⁶⁶⁵ “Senior Army Leadership Upset with Secretary of Defense’s Performance.” United States Embassy, Mexico, Defense Attaché, Confidential Cable, November 28, 1991: 3 pp. Colección de DNSA: Mexico-United States Counternarcotics Policy, 1969-2013. Also: “Follow-Up on President Salinas’ Demonstration of Support to Mexican Army.” United States Embassy, Mexico, Defense Attaché [Classification Excised], Cable, December 23, 1991: 5 pp. Colección de DNSA: Mexico-United States Counternarcotics Policy, 1969-2013.

⁶⁶⁶ “Impact of the November 7 Veracruz Incident and the Mexican Human Rights Commission Recommendation: An Assessment.” [Excised Versions Appended] United States Embassy, Mexico, Confidential Cable, January 3, 1992: 25 pp. Colección de DNSA: Mexico-United States Counternarcotics Policy, 1969-2013.

Veracruz in 1993, a mass execution undertaken by a contingent of the Mexican army protecting drug shipments⁶⁶⁷. As noted in declassified CIA memos, the event aggravated tensions between the Salinas administration (strongly attached to the PJJ) and the army⁶⁶⁸. In any case, the event exemplified early examples of inter-institutional violence aimed at capturing, rather than undoing, the drug economy in Mexico.

As noted in the previous chapter, the racketeering of the cocaine economy became embedded into the very operation of the PJJ, particularly at the border. Racketeering became at this hour institutionally ‘embedded’ in the sense that the operation of federal law enforcement was contingent on: 1) generating a rent in order to support, to a very large extent, federal policing routines, 2) generate income for the PJJ ‘purchasers’ of the plaza, eager to recuperate its investment, and 3) generate a monthly quota that was channelled to higher-ranking members of the PJJ and the PGR. In this respect, three well-known PJJ/PGR figures appointed by Salinas to head the apex of national drug enforcement embodied the ‘bandit’ actors employed to ‘generate’ security processes leading to state formation: Adrian Carrera Fuentes (appointed national director of the PJJ⁶⁶⁹), Guillermo Gonzalez Calderoni (national director for drug enforcement) and Mario Ruiz Massieu (deputy-director at the Attorney General Office and head of narcotics investigations).

Adrian Carrera Fuentes started his career as an agent in Mexico City’s police in the 1970s working directly for chief Arturo Durazo (already noted for his extensive involvement in drug markets as well as his leading participation in the *guerra sucia* in Mexico City). Under Durazo, Carrera was tasked with extorting the infamous Tepito market, the main destiny for contraband goods in Mexico City⁶⁷⁰. After the fallout of Durazo in the early 1980s, Carrera was put in charge of the semi-clandestine Mexico City police organisation *Jaguares* – the

⁶⁶⁷ “Chronological Events on Veracruz Incident.” [Differently Excised Version Appended] United States Embassy, Mexico, Defense Attaché, Confidential Cable, December 17, 1991: 15 pp. Colección de DNSA: Mexico-United States Counternarcotics Policy, 1969-2013.

⁶⁶⁸ On this tensión, see: Guzmán, Jorge Luis Sierra. *El enemigo interno: contrainsurgencia y fuerzas armadas en México*. Plaza y Valdés, 2003, p. 199. The issue is also briefly addressed by: Lindau, Juan D. “El narcotráfico y las relaciones México-Estados Unidos.” *México-Estados Unidos-Canadá: 1997-1998*, edited by Bernardo Mabire, Colegio de Mexico, 2000, pp. 179-214, p. 199.

⁶⁶⁹ Adrian Carrera Fuentes replaced Rodolfo Leon Aragon as head of the PJJ in 1993.

⁶⁷⁰ Figueroa, Yolanda. *El capo del Golfo: Vida y captura de Juan García Ábrego*. Grijalbo, 1996.

body that succeeded the counter-insurgent Dirección General de Investigaciones para la Prevención de la Delincuencia, established by Durazo. Carrera is also reported for renting an entire hotel in the Doctores district in Mexico City transforming it into a clandestine detention centre in which brutal interrogations and confinements took place⁶⁷¹.

By the mid-1980s, Carrera was reassigned as head of security in Mexico City's central penitentiary, the infamous Reclusorio Norte (chief destination for major drug traffickers and a major extortion racket operated by its directors). In 1993, after a major scandal involving drug trafficking and the PJF (the assassination of Cardinal Juan Jesus Posadas Ocampo), the president appointed Carrera to head the PJF. Carrera at this moment became one of the key channels to articulate *acuerdos* [agreements] and collect duties from drug traffickers at the national level. Carrera appointed Alcides Ramon Magaña as his head of drug enforcement. Magaña's multiple duties included coordinating the multi-ton cocaine shipments that began to plague the Yucatán Peninsula during Salinismo⁶⁷². Magaña was later sentenced to 47 years on drug trafficking charges⁶⁷³. In 1998, Carrera admitted to the charge of taking millions of dollars from drug traffickers while heading the PJF⁶⁷⁴. He was also convicted for money laundering and torture⁶⁷⁵. He served as a witness in a drug trafficking case in the U.S. where he testified that he had collected millions in drug bribes between 1993 and 1994 from the Gulf cartel (as well as the emerging Juarez organisation)⁶⁷⁶. He also admitted to having served as a liaison for several meetings between top militaries and drug traffickers during the Salinas administration⁶⁷⁷.

The closest figure to a national drug-*tsar* during Salinismo was PJF/PGR commander Guillermo Gonzalez Calderoni, the 'top cop' of the Salinas administration. Calderoni was

⁶⁷¹ López, José. "Tepito: de la popularidad a la degradación." *Vocero*, February 19, 2018.

⁶⁷² "International narcotics control strategy report." Prepared by Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, Dept. of State, 1995.

⁶⁷³ "Sentencia de 47 años de prisión a Ramón Alcides Magaña, "El Metro"." *Proceso*, June 21, 2007.

⁶⁷⁴ "Del expediente de Carrera Fuentes: testimonios sobre la relación narco-policía en tiempos salinistas." *Proceso*, July 18, 1998.

⁶⁷⁵ "Ex Mexican Police Chief Sentenced." *Associated Press*, September 1, 1998.

⁶⁷⁶ De Cordoba, José. "Ex-Lawman May Hold Key To Mexican Drug Scandals." *The Wall Street Journal*, June 10, 1997.

⁶⁷⁷ "Trial against Francisco Quiroz Hermosillo and Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro." *Indagatoria SC/003/99/E*, Procuraduría de Justicia Militar.

from Tamaulipas. He had joined the PJF as a group leader in 1983 and was subsequently appointed *delegado* in the ‘high-value’ PJF plazas of Jalisco, Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas and Chiapas. During this period, he developed close ties with the leading members of the Guadalajara Cartel⁶⁷⁸. Subsequently appointed director for Aerial, Naval and Terrestrial Interdiction at the Attorney General Office, Calderoni became another key channel in the ‘regulation’ of drug markets, tasked with neutralising, precisely, his former ‘narco’ acquaintances in the befallen Guadalajara cartel. Calderoni headed the police raid that killed Pablo Acosta in 1987 (Chihuahua), arrested Jaime Herrera in 1987 (Durango), and personally apprehended Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, head the Guadalajara Cartel, in 1989. Calderoni was also implicated in the 1991 torture and murder of the Quijano brothers (former DFS agents with links to the Guadalajara Cartel)⁶⁷⁹. Masquerading what in reality constituted a reconfiguration of the drug racket, the arrest or killing of these Guadalajara actors served to promote a narrative in which the government was ‘getting serious’ about drug enforcement. According to Calderoni’s own account, himself and García Ábrego had been close friends since childhood⁶⁸⁰. In FBI wiretaps recorded by an undercover agent, García Ábrego told one of his enforcers: “Consider Guillermo [Caledoni] as if he were my brother”⁶⁸¹. Testimonies in the 2019 U.S. trial against Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán continued to underline the relationship between Calderoni and the drug world during Salinismo. Witnesses recalled how the country’s chief anti-narcotics agent collected millions of dollars from traffickers on behalf of the PGR and PJF in return for providing them with protection. One witness in the trial, Miguel Ángel Martínez, told the jury that Calderoni sold drug traffickers “secret information on an almost daily basis, including an invaluable tip in the early 1990s that the United States government had built a radar installation on the Yucatán Peninsula to track drug flights from Colombia”⁶⁸². In 1993, under a new Attorney General, an arrest warrant was issued

⁶⁷⁸ Castellanos, Guillermo V. *Historia del narcotráfico en México*. Aguilar, 2013.

⁶⁷⁹ “González Calderoni, hilo de la maraña narcopolítica.” *Proceso*, February 5, 2003.

⁶⁸⁰ “Revela Gonzalez Calderoni ser amigo de Juan García Ábrego.” *El Universal*, August 22, 2001.

⁶⁸¹ De Cordoba, José. “Ex-Lawman May Hold Key To Mexican Drug Scandals.” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 10, 1997.

⁶⁸² Feuer, Alan. “El Chapo Trial Shows That Mexico’s Corruption Is Even Worse Than You Think.” *The New York Times*, December 28, 2019.

against Calderoni. He fled to the U.S. and became a protected witness of the FBI. He was assassinated in 2003 in McAllen, Texas.

Importantly, Calderoni was not only one of the regime's key vehicles in the 'regulation' of drug markets, but also as a key operator behind the clandestine operations against political and social antagonists of the technocratic elite embodied in Salinismo. Astorga notes how Calderoni was put in charge of running the espionage system directed against political opposition to Salinas's neoliberal reforms⁶⁸³. Moreover, according to Calderoni's own account, "I was the one who was in charge of investigating politicians since 1988"⁶⁸⁴. Calderoni noted that "the information was delivered to [the president's brother] Raúl Salinas"⁶⁸⁵. Calderoni was tasked with spying on political opposition during the contested 1988 elections that brought Salinas to power, as well as subsequently responsible for operations against prominent labour leaders and political rivals, including the chief antagonist to Salinas in the labour movement, Joaquin Hernández Galicia⁶⁸⁶. Calderoni later declared that the Salinas administration had, in fact, resorted to Garcia Ábrego to assassinate key members of the opposition, including leading anti-Salinista activists Francisco Javier Ovando and Roman Gil Hernandez⁶⁸⁷. In any case, Calderoni's dual role as a regime's key enforcer in the political as well as the drug trafficking world underlines an important aspect of Mexico's intelligence services dating back to Alemanismo: the persistence of a 'deep state' aligning criminal rackets with the regime's most sensitive security interests. The role of Calderoni continued to echo the logic behind the actions of a 'racketeering continuum' embodied by many before him.

A product of criminal conspiracies taking place at the heart of the state, these practices fitted well in a political system established on racketeering principles and whose security apparatus, at all levels, remained structurally attached to extorting illegal economies. Racketeering tendencies in the security services, instrumentalised by a political elite employing them to

⁶⁸³ Astorga, Luis. *El siglo de las drogas: el narcotráfico, del Porfiriato al nuevo milenio*. Mexico City: Plaza y Janés, 2005.

⁶⁸⁴ Frontline. *Drugwars. Interview with Guillermo Gonzalez Calderoni*. PBS.

⁶⁸⁵ Idem.

⁶⁸⁶ Preston, Julia, and Samuel Dillon. *Opening Mexico: The making of a democracy*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

⁶⁸⁷ Schatz, Sara. "Murder and politics in Mexico: political killings in the Partido de la Revolución Democrática and its consequences." *Springer Science & Business Media*, vol. 10, 2011, p. 63.

secure its ‘hegemony’, trickled down the hierarchy to become a fundamental political economy of the securitisation process as a whole. In a revealing interview shortly before his assassination, Calderoni pointed to the more fundamental realities and predicaments that turned drug trafficking into a political economy⁶⁸⁸. When asked how police commissioners make money in the Mexican system, he replied:

“They don't only pay to get appointed. They also pay to get a job, or to get a certain geographical territory. People will pay a lot of money to get appointed to the border. If they don't have the money to pay for the appointment, then they will have to borrow it. But they are counting on making it back. For a border region, people will pay a lot of money [...]. For a border appointment you could get charged \$1 million. And then you would have to pay \$200,000 or \$300,000 per month to your bosses in Mexico City in order to remain in that position”⁶⁸⁹.

When asked, *why are so many Mexican police commanders corrupt?*, Calderoni pointed to the extent to which the political economy of law enforcement depended, paradoxically, on criminal ‘rackets’ in order to function.

What did you do to turn [police] into real police officers? Did you give them sufficient budget? Did you give them gas for the trucks? Did you give them the weapons, trucks, vehicles, intelligence, information, technology, that the traffickers enjoyed? If you didn't give them any of this...really...what did

⁶⁸⁸ Frontline. *Drugwars. Interview with Guillermo Gonzalez Calderoni*. PBS.

⁶⁸⁹ Idem.

you give to them? You sent them off to become what they became - to take money from drug traffickers in order to fight them⁶⁹⁰.

Another important actor in drug enforcement under Salinismo was Mario Ruiz Massieu, Deputy-Attorney General, tasked with drug investigations at the Attorney General's office. Ruiz Massieu was arrested in the U.S. after attempting to import in 1994 an undeclared amount of 10 million dollars⁶⁹¹. The U.S. Justice Department arrested Ruiz Massieu and charged him with drug trafficking charges. A jury and a court of appeals found Ruiz Massieu guilty of possessing \$9,041,598 dollars obtained by "facilitating the transport" of drugs⁶⁹². A key testimony in his trial was that of Magdalena Ruiz Pelayo, private secretary of Raúl Salinas Lozano (father to President Salinas), who had become an FBI cooperating witness after being convicted for smuggling drug money to California. Pelayo testified how she delivered drug money to Ruiz Massieu on multiple occasions on behalf of the Salinas family⁶⁹³. The Mexican government also accused Ruiz Massieu of drug trafficking. He committed suicide in 1999 while in custody in the U.S.⁶⁹⁴. His brother, former brother-in-law of President Salinas (and head of the PRI party during the Salinas administration) was assassinated in 1994 by a Tamulipecan squad.

⁶⁹⁰ Idem. During this period, the pervasive involvement of PJF in the regulation of the drug market trickled down its institutional hierarchy and began to blur the distinction between criminal organisations and security institutions. A good example is Luis Esteban García Villalón, who directed the bureau of Enlace y Concentración at the Attorney General's office during this period. According to his own testimony in the U.S. trial against Juan García Ábrego, he served as a link between the Attorney General and the Ábrego organisation. He declared that Ábrego paid the PJF a monthly cuota of around 1.5 million dollars. He testified that pressure against García Ábrego incremented for a brief period in 1990 because of lack of payments to the Attorney General's office. "At one point, García Ábrego was paying García \$1.5 million every month". In 1990, the FBI obtained a confession from García Villalón and his brother, Eduardo. Their accounts in Texan banks contained \$4.5 million. Ten checks for \$200,000 were written on the accounts made out to the PGR (United States of America v. Juan García Ábrego, CR. NO. H-93-167-SS. Appendix A).

⁶⁹¹ United States of America v. \$9, 041, 598.68, Civil Action No. H-953183.

⁶⁹² Idem.

⁶⁹³ Fineman, Mark. "Smuggler May Shed Light on Level of Corruption." *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1997.

⁶⁹⁴ Ruiz Massieu was brother to President Salinas' brother in law, Francisco Ruiz Massieu, assassinated while serving as president of the PRI party in 1994.

Drug markets and global transformation

Echoing little visible aspects of the centralisation process undertaken during Alemanismo, a key and analogous development taking place in Salinismo was the regime's attempt to bring protection rackets under the control of an emergent 'hegemony' embodying a capitalist process and reflecting global stakes. These 'entanglements', however, represented something qualitatively distinct from the market that, before it, was embodied by the DFS. Since the end of Alemanismo, presidents had 'endorsed' the racketeering activities of the DFS (and the PJJ) as a compromise to support processes associated with the security of the regime as a whole. Previous chapters abounded on the logic behind entanglements aimed at preserving, rather than altering, the status quo. This logic, however, abruptly came to an end when the Salinas administration, seeking to capture national power and drive the country in a very different direction, reached out to seize and exploit these economies by filling key positions in the racket with direct and indirect supporters. Akin to Alemanismo, but unlike the entire history of the PRI regime, this represented a much more direct and intensely sectarian exploitation of the transnational criminal element, sectarian in the sense that it supported neoliberal hegemony amongst other political possibilities represented in antagonistic factions within the PRI party. Evidence collected from multiple sources seems to indicate that the vast drug money made available by cocaine markets at this hour, particularly in the Gulf region, broke the institutional barriers that had safeguarded the executive office from exploiting drug-tainted money for political and economic advantage. With important consequences for the country's future, a much more intimate relationship between cocaine markets and the state became established at this moment.

In 1994, Switzerland's Prosecutor General, Carla del Ponte, initiated the most comprehensive judicial investigation undertaken to this date on Mexico's drug trafficking rackets. Del Ponte's credentials included having worked as Giovanni Falcone's Swiss counterpart in the *Maxiproceso* in Sicily, as well as having presided over two United Nations international criminal tribunals. The investigation was triggered by an attempt by Salinas's brother, Raúl, to withdraw (via his wife) about \$100 million from a bank account in Geneva (about \$200 million today). In the following days, the Swiss Attorney General located 17 bank accounts

belonging to the president's brother under false aliases. The Swiss authorities began a long investigation to determine the origin of the president's brother's money. The Del Ponte report was elaborated with the testimonies of 90 drug traffickers from Mexico, the U.S. and Colombia⁶⁹⁵. It documented the grand-scale involvement of the president's brother in extorting fees from Mexican and Colombian cocaine traffickers (especially from the Gulf and Cali organizations) during his brother's presidency. It estimated that Raúl had extorted more than half a billion dollars in this fashion (around \$867 million today)⁶⁹⁶. The investigation documented in detail the vast money laundering network that Raúl used to hide this money in tax havens in Europe and the Caribbean. The accountant-in-chief of the Cali Cartel, Guillermo Pallomari, testified to del Ponte how he personally paid millions of dollars to Raúl in exchange of securing cocaine shipments crossing Mexico. Pallomari noted that the money was deposited in front companies or paid through Bolivian intermediaries⁶⁹⁷. Pallomari was also one of the key witnesses in Proceso 8000, the judicial investigation in Colombia that documented how money from the Cali Cartel had been channelled in the 1994 presidential elections in Colombia to a large number of candidates of the Liberal Party, including the elected president, Ernesto Samper⁶⁹⁸.

The del Ponte report found that money from the Gulf Cartel had also made its way to Salinas's presidential campaign. According to del Ponte's findings, "[w]hen Carlos Salinas de Gortari became President of Mexico in 1988, Raúl Salinas de Gortari assumed control over practically all drug shipments through Mexico". "Through his influence and bribes paid with drug money, officials of the army and the police supported and protected the flourishing drug business"⁶⁹⁹. Similarly, a report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that the banker that laundered money for the Gulf Cartel, Amy Eliot, was also responsible for laundering tens of millions for the president's brother⁷⁰⁰. Eliot's subordinate at the American

⁶⁹⁵ Golden, Tim. "Swiss Recount Key Drug Role Of Salinas Kin." *The New York Times*, September 19, 1998.

⁶⁹⁶ Idem.

⁶⁹⁷ Golden, Tim. "Tracing Money, Swiss outdo U.S: on Mexico Drug Corruption Case." *New York Times*, August 4, 1998.

⁶⁹⁸ Dugas, John C. "Drugs, Lies, and Audiotape: The Samper Crisis in Colombia." *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 157-174.

⁶⁹⁹ Golden, Tim. "Swiss Recount Key Drug Role Of Salinas Kin." *The New York Times*, September 19, 1998.

⁷⁰⁰ "Raúl Salinas, Citibank, and Alleged Money Laundering." Report to the Ranking Minority Member, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate, GAO, October 1998.

Express Bank, Antonio Giraldi, was found guilty in the U.S. and sentenced to 10 years for laundering \$30 million for García Ábrego⁷⁰¹. The del Ponte report placed emphasis on the long history behind the entanglements between the Salinas administration and the Gulf Cartel, noting how the president's brother inherited a network forged decades before by his father, Salinas Lozano, and Juan N. Guerra, in Tamaulipas⁷⁰². Enrique Cervantes de Gortari, cousin to the Salinas, was convicted in a U.S. court for selling protection to cocaine traffickers⁷⁰³. As Boyer points out:

Two of the president's direct advisers, two of his ministers, several governors, his three top drug enforcers, his two directors of the judiciary police, and an unknown number of generals, have been at some point subject to investigations undertaken by the most important drug agencies on the planet for their involvement in drug trafficking. This represents a unique system of collusion in the history of drug trafficking⁷⁰⁴.

The Salinista gamble to 'reconfigure' the drug market didn't work out. When Salinas' project to centralise political power was brought down in 1994 by an unprecedented economic crisis and a series of high-level political assassinations seemingly involving drug interests (triggering a massive political crisis at the end of his administration), the state's political ability to exert centralised restraint of drug markets, by this time strongly dependent on the success of the Salinista project, was irreparably broken. As Snyder and Durán-Martínez note, for "state-sponsored protection rackets to emerge and endure, the time horizons of public officials need

⁷⁰¹ Idem. Eliot had been introduced to Raúl by Carlos Hank, son to the founder of the Hank clan, already noted for his family's extensive links with drug traffickers in Tijuana.

⁷⁰² Golden, Tim. "Swiss Recount Key Drug Role Of Salinas Kin." *The New York Times*, September 19, 1998.

⁷⁰³ In 1992, Carlos Enrique Cervantes de Gortari, a nephew of Salinas Lozano and cousin to the Salinas, was convicted under cocaine trafficking charges by a U.S. court. Court documents show that "Cervantes de Gortari--a Mexican army officer--and his associates used DC-6 aircraft, mini-submarines and widespread Mexican police corruption in Baja California to import vast quantities of cocaine destined for Southern California and the rest of the United States". Cervantes de Gortari received a 15-year prison sentence. DEA agent Frank Fernandez, who posed as a cocaine buyer to Cervantes de Gortari, testified in that trial "Magdalena Ruiz Pelayo [secretary to Raúl Salinas Lozano] had made us aware that, because of his relation to the Mexican president, [Cervantes de Gortari] was in a position to obtain import permits and also obtain [Mexican] military and police protection for shipments of cocaine that were going to be imported into Mexico." (Fineman, Mark. "U.S. Trial Foretold Depth of Mexico Drug Corruption." *Los Angeles Times*, February 27, 1997.)

⁷⁰⁴ Boyer, Jean-François. *La guerre perdue contre la drogue*. La Découvert, 2001, p. 149 [own translation].

to be long. If officials are constantly rotated or purged, then stable deals with criminal organizations are hard to cut”⁷⁰⁵. Viridiana Ríos notes that, in addition, the political decentralisation that followed Salinismo benefited protectors at levels of government that had not taken part in protection rackets before, especially at municipal levels⁷⁰⁶. The PRI’s ‘one protector, one organisation’ model in which the lack of competition between drug trafficking organisations and protectors was able to keep violence at a minimum was collapsing along with the last presidency of the single-party regime. At the national level, the collapse of the racket led to a progressive return to regional and factional forms of ‘integration’ between political actors and drug traffickers. In Tamaulipas, the political entanglements between a now orphaned drug organisation – the Gulf Cartel – and local political elites became increasingly horizontal under subsequent governors, as I note below. Moreover, the loss of political patrons at the highest levels led the Gulf Cartel to divert its income into expanding its own security capabilities. The result would be the metamorphosis of the Gulf Cartel into Los Zetas, a development that triggered a decade later the most virulent internal conflict of the 21st century.

Back to the bandit

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a changing political landscape and a redefinition of centre-periphery relations. A growing push for democratisation, generated in particular by the 1982 fraudulent elections that paved the way for Salinismo, mined the consensus embodied by the PRI party and marked the end of its ‘uncontested’ electoral hegemony. The attempt by Neo-Cardenismo – a schism from the PRI party – to displace the technocratic elite and reverse the neoliberal processes mobilised by the 1982 Debt Crisis would be successfully neutralised by Salinas’ pragmatic alliances with right wing parties (namely, Partido Acción Nacional). This process would entail a highly selective ‘democratic’ opening that reflected much less the social demands embodied by the neo-Cardenista movement but rather the interests incorporated by the selective political opening (*concertasección*) initiated by the Salinas government.

⁷⁰⁵ Snyder, Richard, and Angelica Durán Martínez. "Does illegality breed violence? Drug trafficking and state-sponsored protection rackets." *Crime, law and social change*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2009, pp. 253-273, p. 256.

⁷⁰⁶ Ríos Contreras, Viridiana. *How Government Structure Encourages Criminal Violence: The causes of Mexico's Drug War*. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 2013.

Whereas Salinismo would integrate ‘outsider’ political groups invested in structural transformation (hence mining the political hegemony of the PRI party) leftist political bodies and social movements opposing its reforms would become the prime object of state repression. As Salinas boldly put it with regards to left-wing actors opposed to structural transformation: “*A esos ni los oigo ni los veo*”. In a similar fashion to Alemanismo half a century before, Salinismo would again purge the political system from actors opposed to the swift capitalisation of economic relations, weakening the very pillars in which PRI authority had rested, and empowering a new breed of *charros* in the corporative PRI system now committed to Salinista reforms. The president rightly stressed the importance of the top-to-down orientation of the corporative system, noting its instrumental role in discouraging the enormous social turbulence experienced in other geographies implementing neoliberal policies. Reflecting the limited social input into a political transition managed by technocratic elites, the Salinas and subsequent governments in Mexico would be able to deploy a neoliberal programme (arguably) without parallel in global history.

Salinismo began to wreck PRI hegemony at the national level, but by doing so it was able to lay down nonetheless a political configuration that enabled the transformation of Mexico’s socioeconomic structure. Political opening would lead, in the following decade, to a plural form of democracy characterised, however, by its inability to slow down the neoliberal process. When the PRI regime was finally ready to cash out in the year 2000, the technocratic elite in control of the party had successfully rolled back the limited ‘fettters’ to capitalist accumulation on which PRI governance had formerly rested, taking in addition a massive portion of the crony income generated by the privatisation process and leading to the formation of a business oligarchy that would come to include some of the richest men in the world. In the view of this work, the end of the PRI party and the selective political ‘opening’ that triggered it resulted less from pressures emanating from grass-root levels but was rather the result of a transformation that changed not only the economic structure in Mexico but the ‘superstructure’ formerly embodied by the PRI party. This transformation, taking place in parallel with the end of communism, mined the limited ‘fettters to free enterprise’ that had

generated the ‘modicum’ of legitimacy and social consent embodied by the PRI party. Likewise, the liquidation of PRI political hegemony, starting at the municipal level in the mid-1980s, escalating to the state level in the early 1990s, and culminating in the loss of the presidency in 2000, triggered a much more diverse mosaic of power relations whereby governors and regional actors, belonging now to a growing pool of political parties (referred in Mexico as *la partidocracia*), were able to deepen their political autonomy. In this new landscape, power at the regional level came to reflect once again the kaleidoscope of disperse power relations that characterised the whole history of Mexico *before* the consolidation of the PRI party. Unsurprisingly, drug and other illicit economies became increasingly reliant on local political processes, no longer reflecting its coherent orientation under the PRI. The massive surge in violence that followed later reflected not only the growing paramilitary capabilities of non-state actors but was largely driven by the clash between political and institutional enablers formerly contained by the single party regime. The increasingly violent nature of the country came to reflect a drug market no longer checked by an able, centralised state, but by highly contingent, changing, and diagonal connections between drug markets and a decentralising body politic.

The relationship between drug traffickers and governors in Tamaulipas after Salinismo became, as elsewhere in the country, increasingly horizontal. Like in the past, drug traffickers continued to provide bribes and electoral contributions to governors and politicians. By the early 2000s, however, extortion payments began to earn them the right not only to traffic drugs under the tutelage of the state but, increasingly, to directly intervene in political affairs. This began to include, for example, the right of ‘bandits’ to appoint their own enforcers to head and staff municipal and state police agencies—a development unimaginable under the previous system. In the following decade, most municipal and state police forces in high-value plazas would become directly or indirectly controlled by drug organisations, as studies have shown. According to one of them, the percentage of municipalities penetrated by organised crime in Mexico went from around a third in 2001 to almost three quarters by

2011⁷⁰⁷. In addition, drug traffickers at this point also came to possess a much greater voice in the nomination process of candidates for local office, deciding along with the local political establishment who was to be nominated to govern a locality. In the most extreme instances, such as Tamaulipas, drug traffickers also began to provide governors and local authorities with armed commandos as personal bodyguards. The enormous wealth generated by the drug business allowed drug traffickers to expand their security capabilities via paramilitarisation in ways that state actors, no longer in control of the drug economy, could no longer afford. In other words, the much more horizontal drug markets that followed Salinismo was accompanied by an important change in the security dynamics in Mexico: in multiple regions, a drug economy formerly reliant on security provided by a centralised state now directly controlled the decentralising state security. The literature often refers to this kind of process as a *captura del estado* or ‘state capture’⁷⁰⁸.

In Tamaulipas, the relationship between the Gulf Cartel and politicians continued, of course, unabated. Salinista governor Manuel Cavazos Lerma (1993-1999) had been a close friend of Juan N. Guerra. Cavazos went as far as inaugurating a street in Matamoros under the name ‘Juan Nepomuceno Guerra’ to honour the nation’s most successful contrabandist. According to slayed journalist Yolanda Figueroa, it was a ‘common sight’ to see Cavazos and Juan N. Guerra together in Matamoros⁷⁰⁹. Cavazos’s connections with the drug trade involved several of his relatives. His cousin, Gilberto Lerma, was arrested in McAllen in 2012 for drug conspiracy and convicted to 12 years in prison⁷¹⁰. He had operated as a comandante in Tamaulipas’s police, appointed by his cousin. Another cousin of Cavazos, Miguel Ángel Lerma, operated as the governor’s *enlace* with the Gulf cartel⁷¹¹. He had been appointed by the governor to head internal affairs at the state judicial police.

⁷⁰⁷ Cited in: Bustillos, Juan Carlos Núñez, et al. *México se cimbra a mitad del sexenio*. ITESO, 2016.

⁷⁰⁸ Salamanca, Luis Jorge Garay, et al. *La captura y reconfiguración cooptada del Estado en Colombia*. Avina, 2008.

⁷⁰⁹ Figueroa, Yolanda. *El capo del golfo: Vida y captura de Juan García Ábrego*. Grijalbo, 1996.

⁷¹⁰ “Vinculan con narco a sobrino de ex-gobernador”. *Reforma*, July 25, 1999.

⁷¹¹ Cited in: Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

The proximity between local politics and the Gulf organisation continued under Cavazos' successor, Tomas Yarrington Ruvalcaba (1999-2005). Like Cavazos, Yarrington's career had been amply supported by Salinas⁷¹². Yarrington served as mayor of Matamoros from 1993 to 1996. He then became minister of finance under Cavazos. He was subsequently elected governor. In 2013, the DEA accused Yarrington of racketeering, drug smuggling, money laundering and bank fraud⁷¹³. In the U.S. trial against Antonio Peña-Argüelles (a high-ranking member of the Gulf Cartel) the accused testified that Yarrington held "a direct personal relationship with Zeta cartel leaders".⁷¹⁴ According to the indictment, beginning in approximately 1998, Yarrington received large bribes from the Gulf Cartel in eleven separate payments to finance his campaign for governor. According to the DEA, Yarrington was also involved in the smuggling of large amounts of cocaine from the port of Veracruz to the United States⁷¹⁵. Pointing to the changing symmetry between state power and increasingly militarised drug trafficking organisations in Tamaulipas, a protected witness testified in the U.S. trial against Yarrington how the governor's security team was provided by the Gulf Cartel. Underlining important changes in the operation of *plazas*, the witness also testified that pay-offs by drug traffickers began to purchase the right to directly appoint cartel enforcers at the judicial police. According to court records in Mexico, Yarrington 'ticked' potential candidates to mayorships in collaboration with the drug lords⁷¹⁶. A Mexican judge ordered the arrest of Yarrington in 2012. He fled the country and was arrested in Italy under an assumed alias and false passport. He was extradited to the U.S. and is currently in detention in Texas facing an 11-account indictment for conspiring to "distribute narcotics, money laundering and bank fraud"⁷¹⁷. Mexican authorities also accused Yarrington of money laundering⁷¹⁸. Court records show that, by this time, practically all local mayors in Tamaulipas were on the payroll of the cartel⁷¹⁹. Yarrington's successor, Governor Eugenio Fernandez Flores (2005-

⁷¹² Idem. Flores Pérez notes how Salinas even paid the tuition fees of Yarrington's postgraduate studies (idem, p. 252).

⁷¹³ DEA. "Former Mexican Governor Extradited To The Southern District Of Texas." Press Release, April 20, 2018.

⁷¹⁴ United States of America v. Antonio Peña Arguelles. Case 5:12-mj-00120-NSN.

⁷¹⁵ DEA. "Former Mexican Governor Extradited To The Southern District Of Texas." Press Release, April 20, 2018.

⁷¹⁶ Averiguación Previa, PGR/SIEDO/UEIDC5/240/2012.

⁷¹⁷ United States of America v. Tomas Yarrington Ruvalcaba. Criminal docket No B-12-435-S1, Brownsville Division.

⁷¹⁸ Averiguación Previa, PGR/SIEDO/UEIDC5/240/2012.

⁷¹⁹ Idem.

2011) was indicted on charges of money laundering by the United States Department of Justice. Fernandez remained at large for two years. He was apprehended by Mexican authorities and is currently awaiting the outcome of his extradition trial.

Lacking political patrons, Ábrego was detained one year after the end of the Salinas administration. His detention, however, did not immediately cause a wave of violence in Tamaulipas. As Flores Pérez notes, having lost its political supporters at the national level had left the Gulf cartel in a state of weakness⁷²⁰. Two years later, however, the organisation's new leaders began to compensate for their lack of political contacts in federal institutions by investing in paramilitary power. The Gulf Cartel's new bosses Salvador Gómez (a former agent in the state's judicial police and 'madrina' of the PJJ) and Osiel Cárdenas (a former hit-man) began to recruit deserters from elite bodies in the Mexican Armed Forces and demobilised Guatemalan *kaibiles* to furnish the organisation with protection. The military arm of the Gulf Cartel began to be referred to as Los Zetas – a reference to the operational rank of their members. Their extortion rackets all across Tamaulipas turned them into a more 'stationary' form of bandit generating antagonistic security process vis-à-vis a weakened state.

By the mid-2000s, after the assassination of Gómez and the arrest of Cárdenas, Los Zetas splintered from the Gulf Cartel. Lacking the international connections that the Gulf Cartel enjoyed in the transnational cocaine business, Los Zetas turned Tamaulipas into a massive extortion racket enforced with military brutality to reproduce its own security⁷²¹. Their economic success allowed them to expand their clout to the western coast of the country, namely the state of Michoacán, controlled by Sinaloan associates. After eliminating their local rivals (Los Valencia), Los Zetas established in Michoacán an appendant organisation known as *La Familia Michoacana* — equally predatory and brutal. The organisation gained control of the local drug business and implemented, like in Tamaulipas, extortion rackets across all sectors of the local economy — from the production of avocados and lemons to the operations of

⁷²⁰ Flores Pérez, Carlos A. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013. Between 1995 and 1996, homicides in Tamaulipas did not exceed 69, and only 13% were attributed to drug trafficking.

⁷²¹ Aguayo, Sergio, ed. *En el desamparo: Los Zetas, el Estado, la sociedad y las víctimas de San Fernando, Tamaulipas (2010)*, y *Allende, Coahuila (2011)*. El Colegio de México AC, 2017.

taxi drivers and street vendors. Their brutality generated an equally paramilitarised social reaction (‘community policing’) supported, likewise, by rackets in the drug economy.

In 2007, the Mexican government declared ‘war’ on Los Zetas. President Felipe Calderon (2006-2012) deployed thousands of soldiers in Tamaulipas and Michoacán. The total number of soldiers committed to fighting the cartels reached 45,000. In 2008, the death toll jumped from 9,000 to almost 15,000. In 2009, it leapt to 21,000. In 2010, it reached 27,000. After almost a decade and a half, the figure stands today at a yearly 33,000, and growing⁷²². This excludes the vast number of *desaparecidos*, many of them lying in an extensive number of *fosas comunes* [mass graves], estimated by the government to host 60,000 bodies. These numbers represent the epilogue to a history framed by security compromises, or ‘integration’, to secure broader political interests.

Conclusions

The collaboration between the Salinas administration and drug markets did not represent an entirely new phenomenon in Mexico. It simply replicated a strategy of rule used intensely in the history of the Mexican state to support, at a fundamental level, a security processes invested in altering the socio-economic orientation of a national geography. Notwithstanding the enormous differences separating both periods, mechanisms employed by the liberal state in the 19th century, whereby the consolidation and hegemony of liberal elites was supported by the instrumentalisation of banditry, was again ancillary to the construction of a security apparatus invested in generating a ‘neo’ liberal social order fitting global capitalist requirements and enforcing the unequal relationship between the ‘core’ (the U.S.) and its ‘periphery’ (Mexico). Co-opted banditry, then and today, allowed for the structuring of national hierarchy and helped secure the reproduction of a liberal order.

In the 1940s, a similar process aimed at paving the way for a decisively capitalist orientation of Mexican society, now under *Alemanismo*, witnessed again the co-optation of contraband

⁷²² “México cerró 2018 con más de 33,000 asesinatos, una cifra record.” *Expansión política*, January 21, 2019.

and drug economies to support the consolidation of national governance. Banditry at this hour was used once again to support the construction of a centralised security body, the DFS, aimed at suppressing social and political opposition to the new regime and its ‘crony’ but markedly harsh pro-capitalist agenda. The role of co-opted banditry in the security arrangements of the PRI state expanded further when, in the 1970s, the drug economy provided spoils and cash to state actors in charge of suppressing peaking insurgency activity. Enjoying the full support of the political establishment, these state operatives used drug and contraband economies to fund operations against those opposing the regime’s authoritarian rule. As noted, the covert use of dirty money (obtained from transnational contraband and drug trafficking) to fund national security activity in Mexico echoed a mechanism deployed more generally in theatres of the Cold War serving the security interests of America. This mechanism proved highly successful in suppressing the ‘internal enemy’ at a low expense.

From a U.S. perspective, the culmination of the Cold War removed the PRI regime’s existential *raison d’être*. The liberalisation process forced upon Mexico aimed at transforming the Mexican economy in accordance with a new set of U.S. interests or, echoing Mark Neocleous, transforming labour in accordance with capitalist requirements⁷²³. A new ‘structural’ reorientation of the PRI regime required, like the one under Alemanismo, a centralisation process embodied by the president and established on a political purge, rent-seeking opportunities for allies (generated by the privatisation process) and a (re)centralised security apparatus attached to the executive branch. Also akin to Alemanismo, protection rackets in transnational criminal economies, under Salinismo, were aligned to support capitalist objectives. Growing organically from contraband rackets established under Miguel Alemán, the Gulf Cartel in Tamaulipas became the main vehicle for a new *top-to-down* ‘reconfiguration’. Like the DFS before it, centrally appointed *comandantes* of the PJF were provided with licenses to racketeer the novel, low-barrier opportunities brought about by the expansion of the cocaine market in Mexico. The leading drug enforcers at PGR and PJF, as noted in the last two

⁷²³ Neocleous, Mark. *The fabrication of social order: A critical theory of police power*. Pluto Press, 2000.

chapters, were tasked with implementing what Flores Pérez describes as a *top-to-down* ‘re-configuration’ generated by selective targeting and protection. Importantly, these security networks, particularly at PJF, were also employed by the Salinas regime to intimidate, spy on and eliminate opponents to its liberalisation programme. Finally, according to the most comprehensive official investigation of drug markets in Mexico undertaken to this date (the del Ponte report), the drug racket under Salinismo broke institutional barriers and became subservient to a process embodied no longer by the party as a whole but the particular faction tasked with transforming Mexico under post-Cold War directives. Large cocaine shipments were directly brokered by the president’s brother, Raúl. More generally, key supporters of Salinismo were placed by the executive in key positions from which to racketeer these opportunities at political and institutional locations.

After the implementation of the (arguably) most extensive neoliberal reform undertaken in the world, the collapse of Salinismo, the end of the single-party rule in 1994 and the Peso Crisis wrecked the conditions that had allowed for the existence of a centralised, and relatively peaceful, protection racket in the transnational drug business.

Beginning in Tamaulipas, the collapse of the ‘one protector, one organisation’ model led to a fundamental alteration of the security dynamics, first of this crucial region, then in the entire country. The drug economy, which had supported until this moment parapolitical and paramilitary bodies working *for* the state, began to support instead the security capabilities of non-state actors. These actors began to have a louder voice in the political process of a decentralising political geography, expressed in their growing control of formal and informal subnational security apparatuses. Amidst an increasingly deteriorating socio-economic situation, banditry became generalised. In 2011, the former governor of the state of Nuevo León, Sócrates Rizo, told the press: “Somehow, the old regime managed to solve the problem of drug trafficking. There was control. There was a strong state, a strong president, a strong attorney general, a strong army. [...] Somehow, drug traffickers were told: ‘You can use this strip, you can use that other strip, don’t touch here and there’”⁷²⁴. The aim of the previous

⁷²⁴ Vega, Aurora. “PGR cita a Sócrates Rizzo por narcopactos en gobiernos del PRI.” *Excelsior*, November 17, 2011.

three chapters has been not only to better understand the mechanisms that allowed the Mexican state to *somehow* control the drug business but to produce a historical synthesis of the processes generated by this symbiosis. The findings presented in the last three chapters support the thesis of Luis Astorga, the leading historian of drug trafficking in Mexico, who noted three decades ago the ‘mythological’ nature of *narco narratives* that think of drug trafficking as something exterior, or even in opposition, to the state. As the murdered journalist from Tamaulipas, Yolanda Figueroa, wrote shortly before her death: “The Mexican drug lords experienced a different process from that of the Colombian drug barons, who in a different process were forced to rely on the services of Israeli, British and American war veterans. [...] On the contrary, their peers in Mexico used the police and government officials to obtain protection and impunity, precisely because of their close relationship with the spheres of political power”⁷²⁵. Finally, the chapter also built on the landmark work of Carlos Flores Pérez⁷²⁶, whose research on Tamaulipas underscores the entanglements between national and local levels in the second half of the 20th century and, more importantly, its attachment to the distinct and transformative political projects of Alemanismo and Salinismo. The contribution in these chapters, hopefully, has been to show that these historical *structures* composed by bandits and state actors were, concurrently, key *processes* enabling a particular form of order.

⁷²⁵ Figueroa, Yolanda. *El capo del golfo: Vida y captura de Juan García Ábrego*. Grijalbo, 1996.

⁷²⁶ Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre: génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2013.

Conclusions and discussion

On December 9, 2019, the architect of the War on Drugs in Mexico, Genaro García Luna, was detained in Dallas on charges of taking millions from the drug cartels. His arrest represented an earthquake in Mexico. After all, it had been García Luna — the top figure in Mexico's security apparatus for more than a decade — who masterminded the war that came to define the country's recent history, arguably the bloodiest internal conflict since the end of the Cold War. García Luna's power over law enforcement and security institutions in Mexico, extending from 2000 to 2012, had been immense. More than anyone else, he embodied the federal government's narrative of *guerra total* on the cartels. Had the Mexican government been unaware of the connections of the country's most powerful figure, second only to the president, to the drug business? It also seemed almost inconceivable that the FBI was pressing drug trafficking charges against him, given the extremely close relationship and partnership that García Luna and U.S. law/drug enforcement held for more than a decade. Had the U.S. government, once again, been unaware of the connections between drug traffickers and those at the very top of the security apparatus in Mexico? What processes lay beneath this seeming contradiction? What ends have been historically served? García Luna's detention represented a cognitive puzzle in the minds of the public, scholars and specialists: a reminder of how much work remains to be done in order to grasp the historical implications of drug markets in the political process in Mexico.

As noted in this thesis, the involvement of García Luna in the drug market, if true, would merely echo a historical pattern rooted in the history of security and policing in Mexico. The extent to which the highest hierarchies in the Mexican state have involved themselves in extorting the drug business, as this thesis has assisted in documenting, has been tremendous and goes back a very long time. This involvement, however, is seen here as a 'paradoxical' process whereby the security generating capitalist order is produced by the fusion of the 'police' and the 'bandit'. Despite a copious body of evidence, academic literature has nevertheless devoted little attention to the embeddedness of criminal economies and the political process in Mexico. By tending to disregard, in particular, the centrality of federal security institutions, national actors, global elites, and macroeconomic processes in the making of modern

Mexico, we have ignored key components that, I argue, render the logic, aims and contradictions of drug enforcement in Mexico somewhat less obscure. What we are missing, in addition, is what a more complete account of this particular history can potentially reveal about the inner workings of the state, in particular the ‘dark’ processes that underpinned national and transnational security under the PRI party, and the possibility to draw from these historical lessons to make better sense of the daunting prospects for the country today.

Seeking to better unpack the logic of banditry in historical *praxis*, the thesis laid down a framework to grasp the historical embeddedness of policing and organised crime or to understand a little better why states and crime so often intermingle. What kind of processes do these historical entanglements generate, apart from the obvious acts of corruption that they embody? Hinting that more is to be said about the role of crime in the making of modern Mexico, the thesis looked at the problem from a perspective that *compared* and *connected* Mexico to global history, invested not only in drawing from transnational experience to shed light on the Mexican case but also to note how these ‘dark’ processes have been important mechanisms generating the global hierarchies and unequal relations informing Mexican reality. To address this puzzle, the thesis made use of theoretical insights into the dynamics that make state-making and organised crime fundamental ‘look-alikes’. This seems to be a good place to begin unpacking the role of banditry in the political process and the making of centre-periphery relations. As the conclusions presented below will hopefully show, a more ‘macro’ perspective, sensitive to global experiences, and nested in a theory that accommodates well the idea of states as ‘organised crime’, can shed new light onto what makes cases like García Luna such a formidable pattern in the history of Mexico.

Predators, criminals, and the state-making process

To better grasp why the thread of the political process so often leads to ‘criminals’, the thesis first analysed what makes state and crime so fundamentally alike. As argued in Chapter One, the ‘primordial’ form of *state* looks much like a *predator*. Predators represent a primordial ‘phase’ in the state-making process because this particular activity is the most fundamentally dependant on the means of violence to generate rents, invested in turn on expanding security

capabilities to generate more revenue. Robbing, raiding, looting (the 'easiest' and *lowest*-barrier economies available) represent the 'currency' that reproduces the 'primordial' security apparatuses generating order in an internal and external sense. The economies of robbing and looting thus generate seminal 'state-like' characteristics that transcend the mere articulation of violence and are able instead to affect society in social, cultural and political ways. Criminals (in the more modern sense) are also contingent on supporting and developing the means of violence to tap into the easiest, swiftest, *lowest*-barrier currency available to them (economies that criminalisation makes particularly valuable). What I wish to underline here is the paradoxical role of activities seemingly contrary to 'state-making' in the state-making process. As Olson notes, preying is the most direct way to set in motion the wheels of the state-making process⁷²⁷. Hence the most 'rudimentary' form of 'state' is a predator, a *bandit*.

In the long term, preying is bad business for a security apparatus. It prevents capital from reproducing, and thus lessens the revenues available for the apparatus to expand its internal and external social grip. A security apparatus begins to look more like a 'state' once it shifts its political economy from the preying of victims to the protection of clients. At this stage, the success of the security apparatus will depend on its ability to retain part of the surplus generated by *key* economic activities. The success of a warlord in East Africa hence depends on his ability to protect the *key* commodity represented in diamonds; the success of a gang in the urban periphery depends on its ability to protect the retail market of drugs, and the prospects for a warring faction in a country like Afghanistan are contingent on its ability to protect opium and contraband flows. Income generated by protection rackets established on *key* economies will, in turn, be invested, almost to its full extent, in purchasing further security capabilities (weapons, ammunition, soldiers, etc.) needed to access or remain in power. The surplus collected by the earliest forms of 'protection rackets' in history, enabled when agriculture rendered the existence of a security apparatus both necessary and materially possible, was thereafter invested almost entirely in expanding the security capabilities of chieftains. Racketeering made social organisation less consensual and more hierarchical, giving

⁷²⁷ Olson, Mancur. "Dictatorship, democracy, and development." *American political science review*, vol. 87, no. 3, 1993, pp. 567-576.

birth to the distinct form of social organisation embodied by the state. Tilly notes how most rulers in the history of Europe invested until very recently the largest share of tributes in supporting and expanding security capabilities⁷²⁸. The more we look into increasingly ‘primordial’ or ‘austere’ instances of ‘state-making’, the more obvious it becomes that the essence of the political process lies in the dialectics of protection (or on how security apparatuses and capital are tied up together). What I wish to highlight here is the crucial association between protection rackets over *key* economies and the ability to rule, securitise and police.

Controlling low-barrier, *key* economies has crucial importance in the state-making process. *Key* economies include *criminal* markets because of their relative worth in deprived social contexts and low barriers to access. The literature on *criminal governance* has been able to better grasp the process that allows for the construction of a relative monopoly of violence by virtue of exerting control, in particular, of drug economies, making it possible for powerful actors to transcend the sole purpose of regulating violence and affect cultural, normative, economic and social life in significant ways. Hence criminals exhibit, as noted by Denyer Willis in relation to the favelas of São Paulo, or by Pansters with regards to narco-cacicazgos in Mexico, state-like characteristics⁷²⁹. Controlling the *key* economy represented by drugs allows local actors to control the available means violence because the latter, in contexts of austerity, is contingent on the former. The findings in this body of literature have provided a form of ‘anthropological’ lenses into the criminal drivers in the ‘early’ phases of the state-making process. The literature has also proven that structures other than ‘states’ affect the regulation of life, provide social guidance, affect culture, and even decide on the deservedness of killing.

And yet, as this body of literature readily admits, even these seemingly autonomous criminals cannot escape being affected or coming into contact with a powerful actor: the state. The interaction between criminals and state can take multiple forms (integration, collaboration, confrontation) and involve different state actors (local police, regional politicians, federal

⁷²⁸ Tilly, Charles. "Cities and states in Europe, 1000–1800." *Theory and Society*, vol. 18, no. 5, 1989, pp. 563-584.

⁷²⁹ Willis, Graham Denyer. *The killing consensus: police, organized crime, and the regulation of life and death in urban Brazil*. University of California Press, 2015.

institutions, etc.). However, unless a criminal economy develops security capacities of its own, it is very likely that a racket operated by a security institution is providing it with protection and hence expanding its *own* security capabilities. As Blok observed: the more successful the bandit, the more likely it receives state protection. As I have argued in this thesis, state protection rackets in the criminal economy tend to translate into the expansion of the actual security capabilities of the state that enables these activities —an often overlooked form of ‘revenue’ driving in important ways the ‘securitisation’ and ‘policing’ processes shaping the social order in contexts of austerity. The *obscured, grey, deep, dual, parallel, informal, hidden* nature of state rackets in criminal economies has tended to discourage academic research. This deficiency in knowledge, as well as the lack of a theoretical framework to render it intelligible, is particularly noticeable as we leave the local and social spheres and draw closer to the central gradients embodied by security institutions. In other words, whereas a lot of progress has been made in furthering our empirical and theoretical understanding of how criminal economies enable the regulation of social life at local levels, we have studied much less the role that criminal economies have played in more ‘macro’ historical events generating national and transnational hierarchies. Using Mexico as a case study, and building on a framework that updates and expands the discussion of “banditry” as a key actor in the political and security process, this thesis has hopefully contributed to partially filling this gap by rendering more visible the ‘macro’ logic that drives, in particular, the capitalist state to instrumentalise criminals in more recent historical periods.

The logic of co-opted banditry in the state-making process

As noted by Tilly, robbing, looting, raping, and similar ‘crimes’ were a trademark in the war economy of the feudal and early modern periods because they represented ‘easy’ currency for the cash-pressed rulers seeking to expand and centralise political geographies in Europe⁷³⁰. This thesis has shown that the instrumentalisation of predators and criminals continued to weigh heavily when the orientation of security apparatuses shifted inwardly. In this

⁷³⁰ Tilly, Charles. "Cities and states in Europe, 1000–1800." *Theory and Society*, vol. 18, no. 5, 1989, pp. 563-584; Also: Tilly, Charles. "Armed Force, Regimes, and Contention in Europe since 1650." *Irregular Armed Forces and Their Role in*

respect, the thesis took a step back to look more closely into the role of banditry in the aggregated security dynamics of emergent liberal states. It argued that the unprecedented intensification of banditry in the 18th and 19th centuries— amply recorded in the literature — was often (although not always) closely related to the liberalisation of economic relations and the collapse of premodern governance resting on ‘irrational’ fetters to capitalist accumulation. In effect, as noted by Hobsbawm, banditry as a social phenomenon tends to become acute at the end of ‘long’ socio-economic cycles because of the economic disruption that underlines these transitions... hence its connection with the rationalisation of economic relations driving the rise of nation-states⁷³¹. What Hobsbawm underestimated, however, was the historical role of banditry – generated by economic dislocation brought about by the liberalisation cycle – in the logic of re-building a body politic able to command substantial authority over the means of violence. Rather than a ‘social’ rebel challenging capitalist transformation, successful bandits were successful when servicing the capitalist process, a key observation put forward by the revisionist ‘bandit’ literature initiated by Anton Blok. The only way in which the emerging and feeble liberal state could police an alienated economic landscape was by co-opting some of the preying actors it had itself generated. Multiple reasons, all predicated on austerity, rendered co-opted banditry the prototypical security apparatus for emerging liberal elites. Bandits, as noted in this thesis, were often the seminal police bodies generating through violent means a capitalist social order.

The importance of co-opted banditry in a liberalisation process reflects the security challenges intrinsic to any process that rests on social dispossession. First, the liberalisation of economic relations (in land and labour) sets in motion unprecedented economic turmoil, driving swarms of dislocated lumpen into the ‘easy life’ of banditry. The collapse of the old order, and the anarchic conditions that follow, mean that no authority is available to secure from these predators the property and capital now in the hands of a new ‘liberal’ class. The members of this class have little option but to resort to bandit groups in order to confront the

Politics and State Formation, edited by Diane E. Davis and Anthony W. Pereira, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 37-81.

⁷³¹ Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Primitive rebels: Studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries*. Manchester University Press, 1971.

security challenges (including the prevalence of banditry itself) that mark this transition. A key thing to note here is that, because co-opted bandits continue to prey under the protection of their capitalist masters, they represent a particularly attractive form to generate formal and informal security apparatuses from the point of view of their enablers: securitisation *on the cheap*. Banditry in the 18th and 19th centuries was used by emerging elites for a multiplicity of purposes, aimed often at ‘pacifying’ or ‘policing’ the interests of the social group inheriting power from the old system.

The uses given to co-opted bandit gangs were diverse and contingent on the particular and heterogeneous social conditions where, often, capitalisation generated them. These included, for example, using bandits as bodies to eliminate the residues of the old regime, or to guard the wealth and property inherited by the capitalist class, or to form early national policing systems, or to target separatism and ethnic nationalism, or to enforce work relations, secure borders, rig elections, etc. Co-opted bandits, incorporated as policing bodies, embodied often the emerging state’s ‘shook-troops’ to repress the antagonisms generated by the ‘enclosures’ deployed in the countryside. When the liberal class reinvented itself as the industrial class, bandits, often behind blue uniforms, became instruments to contain a labour movement triggered, in turn, by the liberalisation of working conditions. At every turn, banditry represented a security apparatus tapping into predatory economies to police increasingly capitalist forms of economic relations in a context of limited state capacity (austerity). While the noted purposes that led liberal states to co-opt bandits were diverse and contingent on context, a key contribution advanced in this work has been to show that the historical aim behind the co-optation of banditry allows for historical synthesis and extends, in similarly varied forms, to the policing and securitisation dynamics of the contemporary world.

The general ‘logic’ underlined in this framework pertaining to state-making and state theory sought to make better sense of the determinants and aims behind the co-optation of bandits and their predatory economies in global history. These historical cases and theoretical points of reference help to anticipate the logic behind forms of paramilitarism and parapolicing supported by state protection rackets in transnational drug economies a century later. A contribution of this thesis has been to assert the poorly noticed global input that these ‘bandit’

economies *continued* to enjoy in the global expansion of U.S. security interests, an instrumentalisation that echoes the role of brigands and filibusters in the logistics of former empires. Akin to all economies associated with preying, banditry and crime, the reasons that gave transnational drug markets their *key* importance were that they represented the swiftest, richest, *lowest*-barrier alternative to expand the security capabilities of those who happened to protect them. Resembling in key ways the logic of co-opted banditry in the 18th and 19th centuries, the main aim behind the co-optation of transnational drug markets during the Cold War was, likewise, to develop security capabilities ultimately deployed to contain the alienation implicated by a more ‘global’ period of social dispossession.

Transnational drug markets and the state-making process

A useful angle from which to approach the *key* importance of transnational drug markets in the ‘macro’ political dynamics of the 20th century is to step back and grasp just how central the narcotics economy has been in the logistics of empire all along. In addition to its unequalled importance in generating favourable trade balances for British imperialism, opium monopolies represented the most important source of revenue in most European colonies in Asia throughout the 19th century. This *key* commodity alone was the second source of revenue in the British Empire in India. It represented 60% of taxes in the Straits Settlements, 40% in British Malaysia, 40 to 60% in French Indochina and 70% in Dutch Java⁷³². The importance of narcotics as a low-barrier economy to fund the administration of empire is remarkable. Moreover, its key role in the logistics of imperialism underlines the unmatched, intrinsic value that *vice* possesses as a political economy in ‘macro’ political configurations, rendering more intelligible the role that, a century later, transnational drug markets would play, for example, in the clandestine economies of ‘colonial’ counterinsurgency.

⁷³² Brook, Timothy, and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, eds. *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952*. University of California Press, 2000; Wong, John Yue-wo. *Deadly dreams: Opium and the Arrow war (1856-1860) in China*. Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 409; Deming, Sarah. "The economic importance of Indian opium and trade with china on Britain's economy, 1843-1890." *Economics Working Papers*, 25, 2011; Richards, John F. "Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 36, 2002, p. 401; Hinton, Wilfred. *Government of Pacific Dependencies: British Malaya*. Institute of Pacific Relations, 1929, p. 17, cited in: Bailey, Warren, and Lan Truong. "Opium and empire: Some evidence from colonial-era Asian stock and commodity markets." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2001, pp. 173-193.

In this regard, no other work has been more influential in advancing a new paradigm to study the macro-political implications of the transnational drug market than Alfred McCoy's doctoral thesis "*The politics of heroin*"⁷³³. The findings reported by McCoy gave foot to a growing body of literature aimed at making sense of the links between drug markets and U.S. security during the Cold War period. McCoy's key original contribution lies in documenting the extent to which protection rackets in the global drug trade after WW II supported in direct and indirect ways the global reach of the U.S. security apparatus. Covert exploitation of protection rackets in the transnational drug trade represented a mechanism that, first deployed in French Indochina to combat nationalist guerrillas, adapted the more transparent exploitation of vice economies in the service of old colonialism. Justified by the global threat of communism, this more recent instrumentalisation of banditry was deployed in multiple theatres in South East Asia, South America, Central America and Central Asia, in order to cope less with communism than with the social antagonisms generated by the expansion of U.S. capital. A key thing to note in this regard is that the establishment of protection rackets in the interconnected geographies of the global narcotics business aligned the most important 'bandit' economy of the period with the interests of the U.S. security establishment. Handled more directly by appendant security bodies, including state and non-state actors, this instrumentalisation translated as ever into weapons, ammunition, soldiers, as well as intelligence capabilities, counterinsurgency infrastructure and parapolicing bodies generating a global order reflecting U.S. interests. The instrumentalisation of 'bandit' economies during the Cold War expanded in less visible ways the ability of hosts to repress political opposition, militant unions, communist and socialist parties, guerrilla movements and other manifestations of social antagonisms. The direct and indirect use that the U.S. national security apparatus made of transnational criminal economies was so regular that it drove to a considerable extent the shifting geography of the global trade in the second half of the 20th century.

The instrumentalisation of criminals to advance the interests of capital points, more gener-

⁷³³ McCoy, Alfred W. *The politics of heroin: CIA complicity in the global drug trade, Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Central America*. Lawrence Hill Books, 2003 [1972].

ally, to the hidden contradictions involved in the construction of liberal hegemony. The instrumentalisation of banditry noted in this work embodies a legal *ambiguity* enabling an ‘exception’ to break the rule of law (in dictatorships this question is irrelevant) to promote a range of national security interests in a political order purportedly guided by the positivity of the rule of law. These contradictions surface most often, as the cases that I have analysed tend to suggest, from clashes between the security apparatus and the justice system, for as Hannah Arendt suggests, “the principle of separation of power [...] actually provides a kind of mechanism, built into the very heart of government, through which new power is constantly generated”⁷³⁴. What this shows is that the power of these ‘deep’ structures in the security apparatuses of liberal states is not absolute but can be challenged because, and only because, of the separation of powers that liberalism, paradoxically, entails. It was, after all, the division between the executive branch and the justice system in the U.S. system that allowed outsiders to grasp the ‘exceptional’ mechanisms embodied, for example, in the exploitation of contraband markets by the DFS to fund counterinsurgency activity (triggered by a ‘loose’ FBI indictment), or the involvement of the DFS in drug markets (generated by the DEA’s investigation of the murder of Enrique Camarena), or the use of cocaine markets to fund the Nicaraguan Contra (revealed by a major congressional investigation by the U.S. Senate) or the puzzling arrest of Genaro García Luna (indicted by the FBI). In other words, the tensions between the rule of law and the security apparatus render, at times, aspects and traces of these ‘exceptional’ entanglements—their underlying logic, and their intimate connection with economic liberalism—a bit less ‘deep’. As Schneider and Schneider noted with regards to the light that the *Maxiproceso* brought into Cosa Nostra’s input into the political system in Italy (leading to the collapse of the First Italian Republic in 1992), “[i]t is precisely at historical moments of transparency when it is possible to see the weaving-together of illegality and legality occurring amongst states and societies. It is then that the state as a power

⁷³⁴ Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*. Penguin Books, 1990, pp. 151f.

system shows its other, more covert end”⁷³⁵. Importantly, although these ‘moments of transparency’ uncover some aspects of what makes the ‘exception’ (i.e. enabling crime) both possible and permissible, they also underline how the ‘exception’ is a key security process supporting policing and securitisation at local, national and transnational levels involved in capitalist transformation.

The analysis hopefully rendered more visible the predicaments that drive the historical process, often inevitably, to instrumentalise criminals. The fact that the state-making process and organised crime share the exact same root — bud from the same plant — explains why they look so alike at so many levels. The contribution here has been to make better sense of the historical logic driving more contemporary forms of co-opted organised crime in the making of Mexican modernity. Building on these global patterns, the thesis looked at the role that criminal economies played in the state-making process in modern Mexico. To do so, it made use of ‘historical moments of transparency’ (declassified archives, unsealed judicial records, FBI investigations, DEA testimonies, PJF conversations) to make better sense of the relationship between transnational organised crime and the state-making process under the PRI regime.

The PRI and the political economy of crime

Taking a step back, chapter two noted that co-opted banditry in Mexico played a notable role in the securitisation process that followed the breakdown of the colonial order and the rise of the liberal state in the mid-19th century. State collapse, budgetary austerity and social anarchy led emerging Mexican liberal elites to instrumentalise some of the very preying generated by the economic process that enabled their ascent to generate capabilities to pacify the antagonisms attached to this new order. Once again, the structural ‘rebooting’ of the state-making process enhanced the importance of *preying* as a political economy deployed to secure this

⁷³⁵ Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. "Is transparency possible? The political-economic and epistemological implications of cold war conspiracies and subterfuge in Italy." *States and Illegal Practices*, edited by Josiah McC. Heyman, Hart Publishing, 1999, pp. 169-198, p. 194.

transformation. By protecting and allowing bandits to ‘prey’ in more targeted ways, the liberal state brought down the costs of securing tense social relations. Half-bandit, half-police, the first federal police in Mexico, Los Rurales, was not only the body deployed to secure new property relations but, more concretely, the state’s arm to repress class antagonisms generated by the liberalisation of land and labour. The social antagonisms created by the liberalisation process in Mexico, generated in particular by the swift and brutal (U.S.-led) capitalisation of the rural economy (as Alan Knight and John Mason Hart have observed) were successfully dealt with through co-opted banditry for a number of decades. The bandit continued to prey by virtue of the services it provided to the dominant class, and the position of this class rested on services provided by the bandits. The extreme liberalisation of economic relations in the 19th century became, nevertheless, too grand to be contained. The result was the 20th century’s first major social eruption, the Mexican Revolution.

Once the violent period of the revolution had ended, the coalition of surviving military *caudillos* began to lay down, one by one, the foundations of a national state. Political centralisation in the early decades after the revolution was stimulated by two fundamental processes: mass incorporation to state-controlled organisations and the federalisation of taxation. Regarding mass incorporation, Chapter 2 noted how the populist program of *Cardenismo*, giving land to peasants and benefits to labour in return for affiliation to the state, laid down the early infrastructure of social governance under the PRI party. By reversing in notable ways the capitalist process that triggered the Mexican revolution, Cardenismo brought social stability to the country. In other words, Cardenismo represented a period in which the emerging PRI state mitigated labour and peasant demands namely by supporting them. This allowed the regime to establish, nevertheless, the basis of a corporative system that could be used, rather than to enable, to curb and mitigate social demands. With regards to the federalisation of levies, the regional dispersion of the revenue system began to be reversed by a progressive centralisation of taxation powers, a transfer pretty much complete by the end of the 1940s. State revenue and the origin of patronage began to orbit closer to the federal state, discouraging centrifugal tendencies and encouraging the ‘centralisation of abuse’ embodied by the

president and the *familia revolucionaria*. Centralisation of taxation made states and *municipios* more reliant on the federal government, strengthening executive power and laying down channels to intervene in regional politics. This made formal and informal intermediary bodies (like *caciques* and *charros*) more dependent on the party elite than on their social bases —hence *inclining* the decision-making process in a more *top-to-down* direction. Similarly, the federal government's more assertive role in criminal economies, particularly in the border region, did not displace but certainly undermined the power of regional powers by bringing this 'key' economy (critical in regions like Tamaulipas, Baja California, Sonora and Sinaloa) to support the party hierarchy.

Once the populist policies under Cardenismo had laid down the foundations of the corporative structure, the structure turned decisively to the right, enabling the perdurable capitalist orientation that characterised the single-party regime thereafter. After the administration of Cárdenas, the PRI state made itself much more available to the interests of capital, especially after the presidency that opened in Mexico the Cold War period, the administration of Miguel Alemán. *Alemanismo* gave the PRI state its intense pro-capitalist orientation with two important long-term consequences. On the one hand, the merging of the PRI elite and big business hampered in important ways (especially because of massive tax breaks) the state's ability to generate revenue (Mexico was one of the worst-performing fiscal economies in Latin America for decades). This fiscal pit, in turn, generated the very austerity that made rent-seeking such a salient pillar in generating the PRI national structure. In other words, by severely hampering the state's ability to generate revenue, *Alemanismo* drove the state apparatus to support itself through systematic abuse of authority. This entailed the identification of public office with a tool *expected* to generate personal rents, often even *reporting* a portion of these rents back into the system. The extent to which these predatory and extortionist practices supported the reproduction of power in modern Mexico represented, thereafter, a form of global trademark characteristic of the PRI regime.

On the other hand, the resumption of capitalist accumulation (a process that the Mexican revolution had halted) called for an expansion of the repressive capabilities of the state. The creation of the Dirección Federal de Seguridad, which partly filled this gap, aimed at two

goals. In the short term, it created the repressive capabilities necessary to neutralise the obstacles opposing the political reorientation brought under Alemánismo (social movements like Cardenismo, Henriquismo, the Railroad Union, the Communist Party, etc.). In the long run, it laid down the ability to anticipate and address more surgically the tensions and antagonisms that the pro-capitalist agenda of the PRI was to bring about. The expansion of security capabilities to deal proactively and reactively with social protest was the logic behind the creation of the DFS and would continue to embody its core mandate for the entire Cold War period.

Like the PRI system in general, the DFS economy became supported by predatory activities. Protecting or directly running ‘bandit’ economies, particularly in contraband and transnational drug trafficking, represented the initial capital that brought the DFS into existence. The state, once again, had ‘integrated’ the bandit to advance a particular form of socioeconomic order in a more extended geography. In this regard, Chapter 2 noted how the very establishment of the DFS was predicated on the creation of a protection racket in the drug and contraband business operated by DFS agents. Carlos Serrano, the power figure in the early DFS — a career bandit who had worked with Alemán since his early rise in the state of Veracruz — not only used his position and credentials to assert the position of the DFS in criminal markets but led an assault on social leaders that, as McCormick points out, may very well represent the true beginning of the *Guerra Sucia* in Mexico⁷³⁶. Criminal rackets in contraband, drug trafficking, and other illegal domains represented a key income supporting the life of a fiscally deprived security apparatus. The use of these activities was known, endorsed and enabled by a U.S. security apparatus in the process of building a regional security bureaucracy guided by American interests. In this regard, the instrumentalisation of banditry to advance its Cold War agenda in Mexico would replicate mechanisms deployed elsewhere.

Despite being factually situated above the law, an apparatus that *legalizes the illegal* or *enables the exception* can clash with the very mandate of law enforcement. Tensions between

⁷³⁶ McCormick, Gladys. "The last door: Political prisoners and the use of torture in Mexico's Dirty War." *The Americas*, vol. 74, no. 1, 2017, pp. 57-81.

institutions can lead to ‘historical moments of transparency’, but this is only possible where a functional division between the executive and the judiciary exists. This makes the logic of criminal entanglements and other notable aspects in the history of the state in Mexico – a state defined precisely by its unparalleled *lack* of division of powers – incredibly difficult to document. To narrow this gap, the thesis began drawing on ‘moments of transparency’, rendered by the U.S. justice system, to make better sense of who, in praxis, enjoyed the ability to enable banditry in Mexico, a focus that challenged the equivocal division of *police* and *bandit* that informs public views. A unique window into these ‘purposely obscured’ depths was, as noted by Chapter 3, the tensions generated by the clash between the justice system and the national security apparatus in the Nazar Haro case, concerning grand-scale contraband at the U.S. border. The director of the DFS, Miguel Nazar, was indicted by the FBI for heading a major contraband ring at the U.S.-Mexico border, a racket dating back to at least the mid-1970s. Using official memorandums obtained through Freedom of Information requests at the National Security Archive in Washington D.C., the thesis was able to document not only Nazar’s leading position in these transnational rackets but, even more importantly, the effective mobilisation and intervention of the U.S. security apparatus to protect its client from U.S. law enforcement. Triggered by an ‘exception’ turned legitimate in the national interest, the episode underlined the direct or indirect use that the U.S. security apparatus made of criminal economies to fund appendant security bodies abroad. It also illustrated how the U.S. security establishment, much more than the DFS or Nazar himself, represented the ultimate keystone that supported protection rackets aimed at containing and repressing social discontent in its sphere of influence. The cost of protecting Nazar from law enforcement, although politically high, was proportional to the role that Nazar played for two decades as the leading Mexican partner of the U.S. security establishment and main architect of repression during the dirty wars. Chapter 3 noted that Nazar, trained in counterinsurgency at the School of the Americas, created and headed the Brigada Especial Antiguerrillas. Under multiple names, BEA represented from 1965 to 1982 the regime’s central vehicle in its war against rural and urban guerrilla and its ‘social bases of support’. Like the DFS more generally, BEA supported its activities by protecting or tapping directly into the ‘exception’ embodied by the instrumental bandit. For example, Col. Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro, BEA’s

leading field operator (trained in counterinsurgency at Fort Bragg) used the drug business to support paramilitary activity in the guerrilla-dense sierra of the state of Guerrero. According to declassified documents from the Archivo General de la Nación, and corroborated by first-hand testimonies, Acosta established an aerial drug-trafficking corridor from Guerrero to the U.S. border. The operation made use of military planes employed, concurrently, for counterinsurgency operations. Moreover, declassified documents also note that, by tapping into the *key* economy of opium production in Guerrero, Acosta was able to run paramilitary squads (such as the little-known *Grupo Sangre*) to suppress insurgency in the most impoverished sierras in Mexico. The chapter also showed how the highest-ranking members in BEA (Francisco Sahagun Baca, Francisco H. Quiroz Hermosillo, Arturo Durazo Moreno, among others) were concurrently tasked by the PRI party with running extensive protection rackets in criminal economies and deploying the state's repressive agenda. These actors headed Mexico's secret police until the early 1980s.

While official involvement in drug and contraband markets is well-established, the connection between the 'taxes' generated by these rackets and the actual activities that these rackets enabled has been missing in the historical analysis. The contribution of this thesis has been not only to document these obscured episodes more thoroughly but to show how they *replicated* and *connected* with patterns in parapolicing and counterinsurgency employed to target the 'internal enemy' elsewhere. Notwithstanding the vast differences separating these multiple social contexts, what these global patterns suggest is that state involvement in the drug business, rather than explicable through a localised, self-contained logic, points to broader geographies of power, reflects global hierarchies, and facilitates profound structural transformations. As the evidence presented in this thesis shows, behind the co-optation of bandit economies lied a high degree of elite agency, embodying a state of exception, to harness repressive capabilities by tapping into organised crime. Like co-opted banditry before it, these capabilities contained and suppressed, *on the cheap*, the very tensions associated with a *top-to-down* capitalisation process gravitating American hegemony. But even more so than 'America', what surfaces again and again when analysing historical co-opted banditry as a macro phenomenon is its regular use to repress the very social antagonisms of capitalist

change.

Narcotics production in Mexico, limited until the 1970s, gravitated around local political networks, state-level law enforcement agencies and other political brokers serving as the local synapses of the regime. Underlining the ancillary input of these markets in supporting federal security agencies after Alemanismo does not mean to suggest that the entire drug commodity chain came under the agencies' direct control. What is argued instead, as the cases analysed above tend to suggest, is that the creation of the DFS under Alemanismo, established along its central involvement in transnational drug circuits, gave the federal government an unprecedented platform to intervene in these markets, generating in turn security processes rooted in criminal markets as repeatedly demonstrated at the key historical junctures noted in this text. As Astorga suggests, the transnational drug market under the PRI, unlike drug markets in other geographies, was manufactured and regulated at the heart of the Mexican state. Carlos Serrano, founder of the DFS, is noted in intelligence cables as *the* decisive actor in the transnational drug business, and his central involvement in the drug trade would be replicated by other DFS directors enjoying an unrivalled capacity to consolidate, for instance, nation-wide drug trafficking organisations operating under direct DFS tutelage. Penetrating the national drug network during Alemanismo provided the DFS not only with an unrivalled capacity to serve as a central regulator of the drug trade, but to exploit this economy in accordance with the security mandate it embodied. This ability would also gear the subsequent capacity of the PJF to regulate the transnational business in a relatively centralised fashion, providing it with key operational income and allowing for drug violence to remain formidably low. The state, as a whole, 'integrated' drug markets, but the ability to oversee these markets, echoing global experiences, lay especially in the prominent position occupied by federal agencies attached to the executive within a national landscape composed of a mosaic of social, political and economic actors involved in the trade. Admittedly, further research is needed to understand the nature and extent of DFS involvement in the drug and contraband trade, especially in between the mid 1950s and the mid 1970s. Future insights generated by 'moments of transparency' will hopefully shed light onto the nature of DFS

involvement in the period in-between Alemanismo and Operación Condor. The latter, representing a moment in which DFS involvement in the drug trade edged the ‘integration’ phase suggested by Barnes, demonstrated nevertheless the rooted capacity of the DFS to effectively shape drug markets in accordance with the interests of the regime as a whole. As Snyder suggests, the consolidated protection racket embodied by the PRI party required a relatively centralised ‘institution of protection’ argued here to rest, in particular, on the shoulders of the DFS. What the DFS did enjoy after Alemanismo, and what regional actors lacked, was a nation-wide network of drug actors and informants, connections with international brokers, and an attachment to a U.S. security apparatus with a noted capacity to intervene global drug flows. An important point noted here is that the DFS did not merely ‘regulate’ drug and contraband rackets, but that its operational activities, like the PJJF subsequently, were supported to a large extent by its ability to extort the drug and contraband business along a multiplicity of actors at subnational levels. The limited output of the drug market until the 1970s, in combination with other criminal activities (such as contraband, car theft rings, among others) enabled key economies supporting the operational activities and routines of the DFS network. The multiple inputs of the drug economy into the political process of the PRI regime should be seen as part of a process noted by harmony rather than contradiction. Despite its limited input until the 1970s, extorting drug activities, along with many other forms of criminality, geared to an important extent the security capabilities of the PRI regime to address, in particular, the pacification of social antagonisms. In other words, the point is that drug markets, despite its limited global output until the early 1970s, were nevertheless ancillary to DFS operations, along with a much greater pool of criminal activity. As noted by Snyder, the consolidated protection racket of the PRI regime and the ability to regulate its key nodes allowed for the remarkably peaceful nature of the drug business until the downfall of the PRI regime and its key security agency. Rather than arguing that drug markets were fully controlled by DFS actors, what is argued here is that the agency’s capacity to extort transnational flows (and, in the 1970s, even drug production) contributed in a decisive way to deploying the peculiar but decisively capitalist order embodied by the PRI regime. DFS involvement in the drug, contraband and other criminal economies not only grew in accordance with the size of the drug market (leading to the DFS being labelled the actual *cartel*) but also in accordance

with the growing social antagonisms it was called to repress. Often portrayed as antagonistic actors, criminal economies were ancillary to state security processes, a development that echoes the more general role that ‘bandits’ attached to a ruling elite have historically played to consolidate its political clout and ability to affect social outcomes in historically significant ways.

Securitisation under the ‘War on Drugs’

Rather than aiming at a *‘guerra total’* on drug trafficking, I have argued that the ‘War on Drugs’ expands and deepens the global reach of the U.S. state security apparatus, aimed first and foremost at supporting, like past instances of co-opted banditry, capital’s dissemination in society. Focused on more recent developments (namely Plan Colombia) a similar conclusion has been advanced by Dawn Paley, who argues that the “war on drugs” has never aimed at making Prohibition effective but rather deployed as “a war strategy that ensures transnational corporations access to resources through dispossession and terror.⁷³⁷” For Paley, the war on drugs has enabled state terror on indigenous peoples, peasants, and the poor, to pave the way for transnational commercial interests and extractive industries. In addition to cloaking paramilitary and counterinsurgency campaigns to advance the interest of transnational capital, this thesis has shown the key and covert role of drug economies to support the security apparatuses deploying this agenda. In other words, drug enforcement has not only cloaked state repression but represented a crucial economy supporting repressive activities.

A recurrent mechanism for the expansion of U.S. global influence has lied in expanding the host’s security capabilities to address these antagonisms and embed American interests into domestic political processes. Chapters 2 and 3 noted that investments in the host’s security apparatus (military equipment, instruction, intelligence, policing systems) date back to the formation of America’s early regional empire. As McCoy has noted, the chief outcome of U.S. assistance to local policing has been to make security apparatuses less the result of com-

⁷³⁷ Paley, Dawn. *Drug war capitalism*. AK Press, 2014. (E-book)

promises generated between local elites and the local population and more the result of compromises between local elites and the U.S. state⁷³⁸. Martha Knisely has made the crucial observation that this type of interventionism is qualitatively different from previous ones in that, whereas earlier forms of intervention were irregular events coming from ‘outside’, the new form of intervention, deployed especially after WW2, embedded and rooted itself ‘within’ the security structures of the host state⁷³⁹. This not only gave the U.S. leverage to affect a crucial ladder to political power in regions like the Caribbean and Central America (national guards, constabularies, intelligence agencies) but made the local political elites supported by these security structures much more receptive to U.S. demands.

From this perspective, Chapter 3 noted the overlooked but crucial importance of *Operación Trizo/Condor* in Mexico: the pivotal U.S.-led operation that shifted a securitisation process legitimised by the threat of communism to the threat posed by drug markets. A key contribution of this work has been to note how the security infrastructure transferred to Mexico under the Condor programme aimed at expanding the limited abilities of Mexico to address entrenched peasant revolt in the sierras. A declassified memo laid down this covert agenda in very explicit terms, noting how the aim of U.S. transfers under Condor was to make available equipment to suppress peasant uprisings. As journalist Craig Pyes noted in his reports, “Mexico’s acceptance of the program had more to do with acquiring police hardware to suppress peasant insurgency movements than drug-enforcement”⁷⁴⁰. Confidential U.S. memos cited in Chapter 3 show how American security actors were concerned at this hour with the Mexican government’s inability to tackle its guerilla challenges. Amply documented in declassified memos held at the Archivo General de la Nación, the extent to which those in charge of Condor brutalised peasants in Sinaloa was, except for counterinsurgency campaigns in the state of Guerrero, unprecedented in post-revolutionary Mexico. It comes as no surprise that those commanding the army contingents assigned to Condor were also implicated in the student massacres of Tlatelolco and Jueves de Corpus — crucial social demonstrations against

⁷³⁸ McCoy, Alfred W. *Policing America’s empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the rise of the surveillance state*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2009.

⁷³⁹ Huggins, Martha Knisely. *Political Policing: The United States and Latin America*. Duke University Press, 1998.

⁷⁴⁰ Pyes, Craig. “Legal Murders.” *The Village Voice*, June 4, 1979.

the PRI regime. Underlining again the logic behind the *guerra total* narrative and its subsequent global mobilisation, those heading Condor not only brutalised communities suspected of guerrilla activity but established, in parallel, protection rackets in the narcotics economy that, as explained in Chapter 3, consolidated the ideal ‘integration’ type of historical control of drug markets under the PRI regime. After its successful deployment in Mexico (the historical testing lab for U.S. foreign policy), the ‘cloaked’ transfer of military equipment for counterinsurgency purposes would be employed, most notably, in South America. Rather than a vehicle conducting a *guerra total* against drug traffickers, Condor (as well as, subsequently, Plan Colombia) led to the expansion of the host’s *material* capabilities to repress social actors (through military transfers) but also expanded the state’s economies supporting this repression by allocating control of the drug business to the security apparatus and/or its proxies. The authoritarian, *top-to-down* orientation of governance under the PRI was suited to conceal the rationale behind these expansive drug enforcement campaigns. The regime was not only able to deepen its grip over the transnational drug market but able to control the drug trafficking *narrative* that informed public perceptions of the phenomenon. This narrative socialised thereafter the idea that drug trafficking was a self-contained, *de-politicised* phenomenon lacking macro-structural implications. As noted by Astorga and Zavala, a more folkloric representation of the *bandit*, closer to the ‘social’ bandit of Hobsbawm, came to define the terms that framed the public’s, the journalist’s, and the scholar’s interpretations of the drug economy⁷⁴¹.

Banditry, neoliberalism and Mexico

According to Hobsbawm, the historical prevalence of banditry is especially intense at the end of ‘long’ historical cycles⁷⁴². Earlier I noted that a reason making ‘banditry’ particularly intense at certain historical junctures is the seismic dislocation in economic and social relations

⁷⁴¹ Astorga, Luis. *Mitología del “narcotraficante” en México*. México: Plaza y Valdés, 1995; Zavala, Oswaldo. *Los cárteles no existen: Narcotráfico y cultura en México*. Malpaso Ediciones SL, 2018, pp. 61-64.

⁷⁴² Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Primitive rebels: Studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries*. Manchester University Press, 1971.

that liberalisation brings about. Socio-economic dislocation inflates banditry because this activity represents the swiftest, richest, *lowest*-barrier economic activity for those shaken by proletarianisation. And because preying and banditry, more than any other rent-seeking enterprise, are contingent on developing and making use of the means of violence, predators and bandits are called to play an important role in the protection and security dynamics of structural transformation. In a context of state collapse, the security apparatus becomes integrated by drawing from these dislocated violent entrepreneurs whose ability to continue preying, in the long run, will obey their proximity with emerging economic interests and political patrons. As Blok noted, the more successful the bandit, the more likely it promotes the causes of the state.

Alan Knight and John Mason Hart have noted the extent to which the triggers of social mobilisation behind the Mexican Revolution were rooted in a particularly extreme, U.S.-led capitalisation process deployed in Mexico in the late 19th century⁷⁴³. A century later, a comparable wave in social violence, of a scale not seen since the revolution, emerged from a landscape framed by swift structural transformation transpiring growing social antagonisms. Led again by U.S. capital, the implementation of a radical *neoliberal* process in Mexico announced the end of a ‘long’ historical cycle — expressed in the PRI state — and the beginning of an accelerated period of capital accumulation driven by transnational interests. The neoliberal programme deployed in Mexico under the presidency of Carlos Salinas embodied the harshest example of a neoliberal ‘shock doctrine’⁷⁴⁴ deployed (arguably) anywhere in the world. Its implementation was followed by a collapse of 70% in minimum wages in the two decades that followed⁷⁴⁵. Poverty engulfed 90% of the rural population, where the termination of state subsidies and the arrival of U.S. agribusiness collapsed small scale agriculture⁷⁴⁶. Life in the cities experienced a palpable decline, and millions left the country to join the

⁷⁴³ Foran, John. "Reinventing the Mexican Revolution: The competing paradigms of Alan Knight and John Mason Hart." *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1996, pp. 115-131.

⁷⁴⁴ Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Knopf Canada, 2007.

⁷⁴⁵ Moreno-Brid, J. C., S. Garry, and A. Krozer. "Minimum Wages And Inequality In México: A Latin American Perspective." *Revista de economía mundial*, vol. 43, 2016, pp. 113-129.

⁷⁴⁶ Delgado Wise, R., R. García Zamora, and H. Márquez Covarrubias. "México en la órbita de la economía global del trabajo barato: dependencia crítica de las remesas." *Revista THEOMAI*, no. 14, 2006.

underclass of illegal workers in America. The privatisation process, surpassed in scale only by that of the Soviet Union, led to a sharp decline in basic social services. By the end of the century, seven million young people between the ages of 16 and 29 would have neither education nor employment⁷⁴⁷. Similarly, the deregulation of labour markets turned Mexico into the country where manufacturing jobs (aimed at capturing the exodus from the countryside) involved the longest working hours and earned the lowest real wages in the world. No other country in Latin America produced more poverty than Mexico during this period⁷⁴⁸. Even the *physical* appearance of the Mexican population, turned into the top destination for American cheap and unhealthy foods, synthesised the price of this neoliberal cataclysm. In this new economic landscape, hundreds of thousands shaken by the structural process crossed the line to tap into the swiftest, richest, *lowest*-barrier economic activities available to them: the economies of preying, crime, and most notably, drug trafficking. In his study on the effects of trade liberalisation on organised crime, Joel Herrera concludes that the workforce displaced by free trade policies represented in many regions of the country "the social base of production, distribution and violence linked to drug trafficking".⁷⁴⁹ For Salvador Maldonado, the effect of the structural transformation in the countryside (Michoacán) was an exponential increase in the number of people dedicated to the cultivation, processing and sale of drugs⁷⁵⁰. Largely ignored by most accounts of drug violence in Mexico, the unprecedented transformation framing this massive criminal spiral led not only to the generalisation of banditry but gave banditry a notable role in the security and protection dynamics of a decentralising state.

No longer contained by the PRI's ability to regulate drug markets, exerting control over these economies became contingent on developing the means of violence. Drug trafficking became the *key* economy generating the paramilitarised bodies that spread across Mexico. After fifty

⁷⁴⁷ Gamlin, J. B., and S. J. Hawkes. "Masculinities on the continuum of structural violence: the case of Mexico's homicide epidemic". *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2018, pp. 50-71.

⁷⁴⁸ Castillo Fernández, D., and J. Arzate Salgado. "Economic Crisis, Poverty and Social Policy in Mexico". *Critical Sociology*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2016, pp. 87-104.

⁷⁴⁹ Herrera, J. S. "Cultivating Violence: Trade Liberalization, Illicit Labor, and the Mexican Drug Trade". *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2019, pp. 129-153.

⁷⁵⁰ Maldonado Aranda, S. "Drogas, violencia y militarización en el México rural: el caso de Michoacán". *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, vol. 74, no. 1, 2012, pp. 5-39.

years of a relative monopoly of violence, the means of violence became disjointed, protracted, disordered... partly because the underlying *key* economies contingent on the means of violence were no longer managed by the security systems of a single-party regime, and partly because the socioeconomic triggers that drive economically-displaced people into these activities extended greatly after *Salinismo*. The central state lost control of a vital economy for its security services when this economy began to fund the security apparatuses of adversarial, non-state actors. Following the policies deployed by *Salinismo*, the surge of banditry in Mexico triggered two notable responses by the post-PRI neoliberal state. The first was a comprehensive expansion of the state's internal security apparatus, predicated on the narrative of the *guerra total* on drug cartels embodied by actors like Genaro Garcia Luna. This expansion in security capabilities was supported by a massive reorientation of public spending invested in militarised policing capabilities and supported by the U.S. through direct transfers under what was labelled 'Mexico's version of Plan Colombia', the Merida Initiative. Eventually, the political and economic empowerment of the armed forces, vested in policing the antagonisms of Mexican society, was the corollary of this process. The second response of the neoliberal state to address the generalisation of banditry, much less visible, was the co-optation of banditry itself. Compelled by the force of circumstances, emergent economic interests had no alternative but to come to terms with some of the banditry generated by their ascent in order to secure this new economic order. Banditry contained banditry. The police and the bandit continued to blend. Framed by a decentralising power structure, unstable, contingent and problematic alliances between the state and drug trafficking organisations turned Mexico into the most violent internal conflict of the 21st century.

What had formerly constituted an economy ancillary to state security became, amidst political decentralisation, an economy supporting non-state security actors. This swarm of detached violent capabilities emerged first in the state of Tamaulipas, the most notable historical corridor for transborder criminal activity in Mexico. As noted in Chapter 5, the historical embeddedness of transnational organised crime and the political process in Tamaulipas reflects the input of criminal rackets in the consolidation of political modernity in 20th century Mexico more generally, originating as an economy supporting regional *caudillos* (1920s to

1930s), to a state racket in support of a centralisation process (1940s to 1980s), to a protection racket captured by Salinismo (1980s and 1990s), followed by the collapse of the state racket and the rise of non-state security apparatuses supported by the drug economy. In addition to the drug economy, these non-state security actors began to tap into whatever low-barrier economy was made available. This led to a swarm of preying, extortion and violence that engulfed all of Mexico, but that Tamaulipas experienced first.

This swarm was called *Los Zetas*. Immediately after the end of the Salinas administration, the leader of the Gulf Cartel, now lacking political patrons, was promptly arrested. His lieutenants had little option but to provision themselves with their own security capabilities. They needed to expand their security capabilities to address the challenges posed by an increasingly hostile environment and an increasingly unsympathetic if weaker state. To procure itself with security, the organisation recruited poorly-paid elite members of the Mexican Armed Forces, demobilised Guatemalan kaibiles formerly used as U.S. proxies in Guatemala's civil war, and effervescent gangs spreading out from the collapsed world of the border *maquilas*, to form the country's first 'autonomous' security apparatus after half a century. This paramilitary organisation was Los Zetas, which in 2010 broke from its employers to form an autonomous organisation. Like any other state-making 'process', Los Zetas faced the challenge of constantly having to expand revenues in order to meet their security requirements. This led Los Zetas to 'tax' a wide spectrum of economic activity in Tamaulipas. The successful deployment of these extortion rackets, implemented with soldierly and brutal methods, allowed Los Zetas to interact in a much more *horizontal* fashion with local authorities – authorities that, after the collapse of the PRI regime, gained greater room in political autonomy. Like its predecessors, Los Zetas continued to provide Tamaulipecan authorities with payments, campaign contributions, gifts, services, but unlike all of its predecessors, they were now in a position to be able to gear their own membership in state and local police bodies. As noted in court records, by the early 2000s, the leaders of Los Zetas were ticking candidates for local office shoulder-to-shoulder with the leading politicians of the state. The challenge that Los Zetas posed to the Mexican state became fully evident when, in 2008, the state-making process drove the bandit to secure additional sources of revenue, hence expand

its tributary reach into new regions in Mexico, most notably the state of Michoacán. It was at this hour when the federal government, no longer under the PRI party, grasped the size and nature of a monster that, created by the state, was now in a position to turn against it. The drug war in Mexico officially began with mass deployments of troops and national police contingents in Tamaulipas and Michoacán around this time to neutralise the threat posed by Los Zetas. Less visibly manifested, however, was that the nature of the threat posed by Los Zetas encouraged alliances between the neoliberal state and other 'bandits'. This led to a protracted new phase in the instrumentalisation of drug markets in Mexico, characterised by shifting, constantly dividing and very problematic alliances between the federal state, local politics and the drug business.

Despite their violence and cruelty, bandits and criminals like Los Zetas ought to be seen as objective manifestations of the economic systems which they inhabit. As Hobsbawm noted, the bandit represents a form of social protest reacting against a world invested in its destitution. The criminal embodies the yearning of a class struggling to survive a death sentence imposed by processes far beyond its reach. The input of banditry in the capitalist world that paradoxically has alienated him has been a key process in the making of our capitalist modernity. This thesis is a contribution to note not only the paradoxical input of the criminal in policing and in generating this modernity but also a reminder of the modern antagonisms synthesised by the criminal.

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