



Norwegian University
of Life Sciences

Master's Thesis 2022 30 ECTS

Faculty of Landscape and Society (LANDSAM)

Mexican Drug Wars: Examining the Crime-Conflict Nexus

Agnes Oftedal Hansen

Global Development Studies

The Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric, is the international gateway for the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU). Eight departments, associated research institutions and the Norwegian College of Veterinary Medicine in Oslo. Established in 1986, Noragric's contribution to international development lies in the interface between research, education (Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes) and assignments.

The Noragric Master theses are the final theses submitted by students in order to fulfil the requirements under the Noragric Master programme 'International Environmental Studies', 'International Development Studies' and 'International Relations'.

The findings in this thesis do not necessarily reflect the views of Noragric. Extracts from this publication may only be reproduced after prior consultation with the author and on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation contact Noragric.

© Agnes Oftedal Hansen, August 2022

agnesohansen@gmail.com

Noragric

Department of International Environment and Development Studies

P.O. Box 5003 N-1432 Ås

Tel.: +47 64 96 52 00

Internet: <http://www.nmbu.no/noragric>

Declaration

I, Agnes Oftedal Hansen, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date..... 15/08/2022

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my warmest gratitude to my supervisor, Espen Olav Sjaastad. Thank you for your patience and valuable feedback throughout this process. In times of doubt and uncertainty you have given me the guidance and support necessary to keep going.

I would also like to thank my parents for always supporting me, and my friends for distracting me when I've needed a break from the thesis.

Abstract

The violence linked to drug trafficking in Mexico is sometimes recognized as crime and at other times as conflict. Traditional theories of what constitutes crime and what constitutes conflict, however, seem to fall short of explaining the escalating violence in Mexico. This thesis explores concepts and theories related to crime and conflict and critiques how these generally lack explanatory power in the case of Mexican Drug Wars.

Keywords: Mexican Drug Wars, Crime-conflict nexus, poverty and inequality, violence, War on Drugs

Abbreviations:

AFO – Arellano Félix organisation

CJNG – Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generación

DEA – Drug enforcement administration

DTO – Drug trafficking organisation

NAFTA – North American free trade agreement

PAN – Partido Acción Nacional (National action party)

PRI – Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party)

SIPRI – Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

TCO – Transnational criminal organization

UNODC – United Nations office on drugs and crime

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Research questions	3
1.2 Outline of thesis	4
1.3 Clarification of terminology	4
2. Methodology	6
2.1 Research design	6
2.2 Sources	7
2.3 Thesis structure: Why a non-traditional approach is necessary	9
3. Mexico's drug-industry	11
3.1 Emergence and growth	11
3.2 Increasing level of violence	14
3.3 Why are the level of violence increasing?	17
3.4 The War on Drugs discourse	20
3.5 A just war?	22
4. Concepts: differences between crime and conflict	25
4.1 Violence	25
4.2 Crime	27
4.3 Conflict	31
4.4 The crime-conflict nexus	32
5. Motivations and impacts: conflict, poverty, and inequality	37
5.1 Greed versus grievance	37
5.2 Drugs as a primary resource	39
5.3 Poverty, inequality, and the conflict trap	41
6. Conclusion	43
References	45

1. Introduction

There seems to be a real and lasting correlation between drug trade and violence. The illegal production, trafficking and consumption of drugs fuel insurgencies and disrupt peacebuilding, and drug related violence plagues cities and areas throughout the world. However, as several researchers have noted, there remains some definitional issues related to this kind of violence (Shirk, 2015; Parakilas, 2013; Gil, 2021). Parakilas, for example, states that “[w]hile the broad linkages between violence and the drugs trade have been widely remarked upon, there remains significant definitional confusion about specific instances in which large outbreaks of violence have been tied to narcotics trafficking” (Parakilas, 2013, p. 1). There seems to be a lack of explanatory power for drug-related violence in traditional understandings, where it is linked to discourses on conflict, war, and criminality. Therefore, attaining greater definitional clarity is essential for future policy and research. The aim of this thesis is to elucidate the relationship between the drug trade industry, organised crime, violence, and conflict as well as how it is related to notions of poverty and inequality. By using the drug-industry in Mexico as a case-study, I will attempt at broadening the understanding of the relationship between the illegal drug trade, violence, and inequality.

The contemporary struggle between Mexican drug trade organisations and the Mexican government has reached a critical point, with a death toll in several areas comparable to Afghanistan during its failed state years and war-torn Iraq. In 2019, Mexico saw a record high number of more than 34,500 intentional homicides¹, a national rate of 29 per 100,000 (Beittel, 2022). The average number of murders per day equalled just over 94 people. In addition to the death toll being significantly high, the manner in which the violent attacks are carried out has become particularly gruesome during the past decade. Police officers, journalists, politicians, and civilians have more commonly become victims of the ever-growing grasp of drug organisation violence.

In August 2010, the bodies of 72 migrants were discovered on a ranch in Tamaulipas state. They were allegedly kidnapped by the Los Zetas drug trafficking organisation (DTO) and killed for refusing to traffic drugs (CNN, 2022). In 2011, on the 15th of September, *New York Times* reported that two people were murdered and hung over a bridge in Mexico, a sign on their bodies said, “This will happen to all internet snitches... be warned we’ve got our eyes on

¹ In addition, an estimated 100,000 people have been reported missing and never found since 1964 (*Gobierno de México, s.v. “Registro Nacional de Datos de Personas Extraviadas o Desaparecidas, RNPED”*).

you” (Goodman, 2011, para 1). The alleged reason for their murders was that they had spoken out over Twitter and Facebook against different drug trafficking organisations operating in the areas in which they lived. The 8th of August 2019, Mexican police found 19 bodies in Mexico City. Nine of the bodies were hanging from an overpass next to a banner threatening rival DTOs (CNN, 2022). Hanging bodies from places where they are visible has become a common way for Mexican DTOs to intimidate rivals.

Since 2006, estimates vary on how many have been killed, from 100,000 to 350,000 in drug-trade-related violence (CFR, 2022; Kumar, 2012; CNN, 2022). The above examples are just a few of many cases of the brutality occurring almost daily in Mexico.

The violence seems to grow exponentially, and an end is not in sight. Several attempts have been made by the Mexican government to stop the drug trade. One of the most explored approaches during the last twenty years has been the increased level of military intervention. It started in 2006, when the Mexican president at the time, Felipe Calderón, declared a War on Drugs, and deployed an extensive military force to fight the production and trafficking of drugs (Shirk, 2011). The results, however, have not been great. Many have criticised Calderón’s attempt and claim that the involvement of the military has only made the problem worse: the rise in violence and death count after the onset War on Drugs in 2006 is indicative that increased military actions may have contributed to greater instability and violence within Mexico (O’Neill, 2009; Keefe, 2012).

As homicide rates in Mexico continue to grow, the Mexican drug trafficking organisations have been intensely discussed and debated among various scholars, politicians, and criminal justice agencies. Nevertheless, a viable long-lasting solution has not been agreed upon. The military interventions have not been particularly effective and thus leave policymakers and researchers with one main question: how can drug violence in Mexico be understood and stemmed? Perhaps one problem is that we do not know how to categorise the drug related violence in this country.

Many various concepts and characterisations of violence have emerged as researchers try to explain the nature of the increasing violence in Mexico. But the conflict seems to be an example of the “non-conventional” conflicts the 21st century has seen the rise of. In these conflicts, traditional notions of what constitutes conflict, organized crime and terrorism seems to have become outdated. Evidence from contemporary conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan has demonstrated how “conceptions of organised crime as exclusively profit-driven and hierarchically, almost rigidly, structured, no longer apply” (Boers and Bosetti, 2015, p. 3). And

the lines that once separated organized crime from conflict and conflict from terrorism are increasingly blurred (Boers and Bosetti, 2015).

Thus, existing theories on violence are falling short when it comes to classifying and explaining the key differences between high-scale violence involving organised crime and other types of violent conflict such as armed conflict or civil wars. Given the regional trend of high homicide rates in Latin America, it is necessary to develop new concepts that can be useful, theoretically, and empirically, to study the violence resulting from involvement in organised crime, gangs, and other non-state actors. This thesis is aimed at contributing to such development by discussing how the current discourse falls short of comprehending/explaining the actual situation.

A sharp distinction is frequently drawn between criminal activity and violent conflict. This extends also to the scholarly literature that seeks to explain their underlying causes. With respect to factors such as poverty and inequality, there is now a general agreement among those who study conflict quantitatively that inequality plays no role, while poverty does. For crime, the opposite conclusion is often reached (Lichbach, 1989; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Østby, 2008). This thesis will attempt a re-examination of these assertions, using the Mexican Drug Wars as a case.

1.1 Research questions

The study will examine similarities and differences between criminal activity and violent conflict. It will do so via a case study that contains elements of both: the Mexican drug trafficking organisations. By looking into the history of a group of organisations whose activities at times can be described as crime, at other times as conflict, I will attempt to answer the following research question: What is the relationship between the illegal drug industry, crime and conflict?

In order to answer this question, I will elaborate on the following objectives:

1. The history of the Mexican drug trafficking organisations, and reasons for the violence they are associated with.
2. The foundations for the distinction made between crime and conflict, and their relevance to the case study

3. How poverty and inequality relate to the formation and activities of the drug trafficking organisations, and the implications of these relations for established wisdom and theory

1.2 Outline of thesis

This thesis is an essay-styled paper with thematic structure where I discuss findings along the way². It is divided in three parts which are concentrated on the following aspects: the history of Mexican drug trafficking organisations, the crime-conflict nexus and the implications of inequality and poverty on illegal drug trafficking.

The methodology used in forming and answering the research questions and the various sub-themes is presented in chapter 2. Here, I explain what case studies are, why sources collected by others are used, as well as defend why the study necessitates a thematic approach. Then, chapter 3 goes directly into the case itself. By presenting the history of the Mexican drug trade organisations as well as the developments in the environment in which they operate, I aim to meet the first objective of this paper. Chapter 3 will lay the basis and create context for the subsequent chapters in which I discuss concepts and theories relevant to the Mexican case. More specifically, chapter 4 explains different concepts as they relate to the violent drug industry in Mexico and is focused on the nature of violence (the *how*'s of violence). It presents the crime-conflict nexus and discusses whether these concepts are sufficient explanations in the drug related violence in Mexico. Chapter 4, then, aims at meeting the second objective of the study. The third objective is dealt with in chapter 5. The chapter covers the motivations of violence (the *why*'s) and presents different theories that have been used to understand the underlying causes of the escalating violence in Mexico. The chapter then goes into a more in-depth discussion of the linkages between crime, conflict, inequality and the illicit drug industry. This sets the stage for the conclusion where I dwell on the implications of these findings for my thematic interest in the relationship between crime and conflict.

1.3 Clarification of terminology

Popularly, the violence linked to the narcotics trade in Mexico is attributed to “cartels”. By definition, a cartel is a monopolistic price fixing organisation. Though common, terming the Mexican drug trafficking organisations as cartels is not necessarily accurate, or at least the

² Thus, it does not have a standard IMRAD-structure.

definition fails to include both smaller and bigger organisations. There is no evidence that any drug trafficking organisation in Mexico is capable of either fixing prices or has monopoly status (Astorga & Shirk, 2010). Another, perhaps more accurate term, is “Drug trafficking organisation” or DTO. DTO’s are complex organisations with highly defined command-and - control structures that produce, transport, and/or distribute large quantities of one or more illicit drugs (UNODC, 2010). Some people prefer the term TCO, Transnational Criminal Organisation - because it more correctly signifies how large criminal organisations increasingly diversify their operations across borders and involves different criminal aspects from drug production and trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering and so forth. The term is used to shed light on the international aspect of criminal organisations and illuminates how they do not only operate within borders of the state, but across borders, often reaching far beyond them (Longmire, 2011). Increasingly, policy documents and academic scholars refer to the Mexican DTOs as TCOs due to their increasing international reach as well as the increasingly intricate global market in which they operate.

In this thesis, however, I will use the term DTO. I see this term most fitting for my thesis for two main reasons. First, it is the national drug related violence and crime in Mexico that I use as my case. And second, a big part of this thesis is concerned with the historical developments of the Mexican DTOs, and thus it makes more sense to call them DTOs rather than TCOs, as the transnational aspect of their operations (in the scale we see today) are relatively new. One can also claim that the Mexican DTOs are a sub-category of TCOs.

That said, some groups involved in drug trafficking either self-identify as “cartels” or are widely known by a name which includes the word, as with the Guadalajara and Gulf Cartels. In those cases, I will use the word cartel as part of the name (descriptively) rather than as a category of organisation³.

³ When citing different authors and literature on the field, TCO, DTO and cartel will be used interchangeably.

2. Methodology

This chapter deals with the methodology used in forming and answering my research questions. I argue for a case-study approach anchored in analysis of existing sources (document analysis) to explore the crime-conflict nexus in Mexico. Thus, in line with George & Bennet (2004, p. 5), I understand a case study to be a “detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to [...] test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events”. I will discuss whether the established theories on crime and conflict give satisfying explanations when it comes to understanding drug related violence, crime and conflict in a given country, namely Mexico. Thus, instead of focusing on a specific historical episode, I focus on a particular country and a particular phenomenon, drug trafficking.

In this sense, the case study is not a standard one, in which theories are tested on real life scenarios or in which theory is derived from a case. Still, one might argue that it is typical that conflicts related to the illegal trade in drugs does not fit well established theory.

Christian Lund (2014) argues that the same empirical reality can be used to make a number of different cases. Thus, Lund emphasizes that “on what” something is a case, depends on the aims of the scholarship and that “certain features [of the empirical realities] are marked out, emphasized, and privileged while others recede into the background. (Lund, 2014 p. 224).

Violence and drug-related conflict in Mexico has not been subjected to academic scrutiny by very many scholars. This has some implications for the research design. This study relies heavily on news reports, NGO documents, studies made by official research institutions and policy documents from the American and Mexican governments. These sources are assessed in a qualitative fashion. As the emphasis of the thesis is placed on a rapidly evolving system of criminal groups and the political reactions of two governments, a qualitative approach allows for a clearer and more in-depth narrative. In summary, the available data and the objective of this thesis necessitates a qualitative methodology.

2.1 Research design

After deciding on the topic to research, I had to narrow the scope of my thesis into a doable endeavour within the limitations of a master's thesis. To do so, I reflected on the research topic and my research question. As a way to get started, Bueger suggests the following two-step approach:

The first step is to study an arrangement by zooming in on a distinct element. This can be a distinct type of relation, practice, an object, a concept or a site in which different practices prevail. The second step is then to zoom out to gather an understanding of the effects of the element and what resources it requires to produce it (Bueger, 2017, p. 333)

These two steps correlate with my research question: The first step resonates with my intention to zoom in on a particular relationship, the relationship between crime and conflict in the Mexican Drug Wars. The second step, zooming out, asks what this can tell us about the crime-conflict nexus in general.

The study asks both *how*- and *why*-questions. Yin suggest that case studies are fitting when those type of questions are asked. “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the object of study and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003, p. 18). Yin further identifies three things to consider when evaluating whether case studies can be considered relevant: type of research question, the extent of control of events, and the degree of focus on historic versus historical events (Yin, 2009,2003).

Case studies are effective when the interest is in investigating holistic, multivariate processes and conditions (Yin 2003). This is because case studies can illuminate both change and diversity of complex social phenomena. In relation to this thesis and the objectives it aims to answer, these characteristics of case studies are fitting. The emphasis of the study is to discuss relationships and categories, on the particular problem of drug trade and drug related violence in Mexico and on understanding this situation theoretically. The questions are also defined as to identify processes, change over time and the importance of a broader historical context.

2.2 Sources

The thesis relies solely on sources produced by others. The case at hand reviews both historical and contemporary events. Given that I am interested in the Mexican Drug Wars from approximately 1980 until today, I view document analysis suitable. The difficulty of researching the Mexican case makes the quantity of the directly relevant literature relatively narrow (nevertheless, steadily increasing). To comprehend the history and development of the Mexican Drug Wars, I have utilised a set of various sources, from official Mexican and U.S. documents, newspaper articles, journal articles, specialised blogs, NGO statistics and academic papers to get a more accurate picture of the situation. One can therefore say that the information is accessed by proxy. A focus on text and reports can be justified insofar as they provide insight to the practices and discourse of the Mexican Drug Wars (Pouliot, 2013).

One advantage to this method is that it allows for extensive and thorough engagement with a large body of literature. It provides a great opportunity to study the interplay between various stakeholders.

Additionally, it is less time and cost consuming than collecting primary data (Bryman, 2012). Instead of for example travelling to Mexico and interviewing DTO members and law enforcement agents, I find information on these online, in state documents, newspaper articles and through published academic literature exploring the drug related violence in Mexico. In the case of this study, this is also the safest and more secure option, as it would have been potentially dangerous and difficult to reach and meet with the people involved in this industry. Utilising sources produced by others also enables me to compare the current situation with older data, in this way I can explore and compare the situation historically. This enables me to see and create context both for the theoretical problems as well as the development of the empirical case.

Nevertheless, there are a few challenges to discussing the Mexican Drug Wars through secondary sources. For instance, solely relying on written documents and articles could possibly result in a text-based bias. To avoid this, I try to include as many varying sources of documents representing 'all sides' in the Mexican Drug Wars. Still, the sources are limited to text that already exists and that are available. Consequently, the chosen research design could potentially prevent me from capturing non-articulated or hidden (classified) operations or practices. To avoid this, it could be possible to supplement the study with semi-structured interviews with key figures in the Mexican Drug Wars, which also would increase the triangulation of my findings.

However, due to the broad, complex and sensitive case at hand, I deemed it infeasible that interviews would provide me with particularly important information to answer my research questions. Some documents already include interviews with 'drug lords', decision-makers and civilian population. Thus, interviews with various participants would be of limited added value for my endeavour.

When looking at different sources of information, it became clear to me that statistics and numbers vary greatly with regards to homicide rate, drug traffic profits and even number of active DTOs. Thus, statistics and numbers are only used to a limited extent in this thesis.

As for the collection of sources, this related first and foremost to the timeframe under consideration. A shortcoming is that the Mexican DTOs operations are not necessarily well

documented, impunity is high, and crime and violence not necessarily reported. It is also difficult to track drug shipments and profits as the illegality of the business makes those involved strive for secrecy and concealment of their operations. Quantifying levels of crime and especially organised crime is difficult. Crime data is inherently problematic as it very much varies on local and national reporting as well as the divergence between data provided by different sources (Stepanova, 2010). Thus, I have chosen to follow what Lund, claims to be the normal way to carry out research in social science, namely that the researcher “is constantly, sometimes aimlessly, moving back and forth between observations, generalizations, abstractions, and theorization rather than following a neat trajectory from one square to the next as hopscotch from start to finish”. (Lund, 2014. P. 231)

2.3 Thesis structure: Why a non-traditional approach is necessary

The last point in this chapter deals with the structure of the thesis itself. The arrangement of the thesis is not a classical one (i.e. IMRAD), which tests theories to a case or derives new theories. Rather, the aim of the thesis is to discuss, explore and evaluate key concepts and theories. I will use the Mexican Drug Wars as a case in order to question key concepts, normative frameworks, empirical observations and theoretical constructions surrounding crime and conflict.

As it is exactly the problem of defining and categorizing the violence in Mexico the thesis seeks to illuminate, it does not make sense to look at one or two specific theories and apply it to the case. Central points in this thesis are the broad relevance of literature and the difficulties the case poses in terms of established literature. Additionally, the case is extremely complex and posing one or two overarching theoretical frameworks would not be sufficient in analysing all aspects of the case.

Therefore, I have chosen to apply a theme-based structure to my thesis. The structure will enable me to examine the case using many different theories and concepts from varying fields by exploring the Mexican Drug Wars through them. The thesis has a loose and gradual integration of a range of approaches (e.g. discourse analysis), normative frameworks (e.g. just war), and theoretical constructs that are all relevant to the case and the function that it serves – a critique of established terminology, theory, and associated empirical assertions. The findings will be discussed along the way.

Now that this has been settled, I move directly to the first part of my investigation, which is concerned with the history of the Mexican drug trade organisations, the historical and political reasons for the high level of violence they are associated with and the discourse surrounding it.

3. Mexico's drug-industry

“Poor Mexico, so far from God, so close to the US”

Porfirio Diaz⁴

Telling the story of the Mexican drug trafficking industry is no easy task. First of all, this is due to the fact that the Mexican DTOs have been in constant flux. They have expanded, splintered, forged new alliances and allegiances, battled each other for territory and changed organisation structure the past decades (Beittel, 2020). In addition, the operations of the DTOs are usually not well documented, as is commonly the case of illegal matters. Sources of information vary greatly, and many are biased or untrustworthy, affected by governments' own interests, Mexico's low levels of press safety, and the DTO's attempt at hiding or misleading politicians, competitors, or the public (Lakhani, 2022). Moreover, because the situation in Mexico cannot really be understood without including the role of the US, one has to include American politics when presenting this history, as will be illuminated in the following.

3.1 Emergence and growth

Mexico has a long history of supplying intoxicants into the United States. The practice roots back to prohibition, when Mexican rum runners would send alcohol across the border for individual profit. Later, other intoxicants followed. Mexico's good climate for cultivating cannabis presented Mexican farmers with the opportunity to make money on selling marijuana on the American illegal market (Felbab-Brown, 2020). The pharmaceutical industry is partly responsible for the fact that Mexican heroin was traded there as well: During WWII, Mexico had supplied the United States with legal medical opioids. When the demand for morphine declined after the war, the poppy was processed into heroin which supplied the *illegal* U.S. market. During the 1970s the use of Mexican heroin flourished in the States but then started to decline, due to U.S.-sponsored eradication campaigns as well as to the rise of cocaine

⁴ Porfirio Díaz was a Mexican general and politician who was president of Mexico for seven terms, for a total of 31 years. The period from 1876 to 1911 is often called the *porfiriato*, after his prominent position in Mexican politics (Skatvik, 2022). The quote is attributed to Díaz in various sources, but exactly when he said it, is unclear. Although articulated before the drug trafficking industry in Mexico gained momentum, the quote is well-known in Mexico and often used to describe the relationship between Mexico – a poor drug producing country and the United States – a rich drug consuming country (For instance by Carroll, 2011 and Parakilas, 2013).

consumption (Felbab-Brown, 2020). Cocaine was mostly produced in Colombia, but the trade of it was closely connected to Mexico, as we will see.

Between 1970 and 1980 just over 60,000 drug overdoses resulting in deaths in the United States were registered by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Hedegaard & Miniño, 2017). Consequently, the consumption of illegal drugs was seen as a major health threat by the U.S. government. President Nixon announced drug abuse to be “public enemy number one” and declared *War on Drugs* (in 1971). The focus of his drug war was mainly national and health related. Nixon increased federal funding for drug control agencies as well as treatment efforts (BBC, 2021b). The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) was established in 1973 to consolidate efforts to control drug abuse. At the same time the inflow to the USA of illegal drugs continued, especially the inflow of Colombian cocaine, which by the 1980s had gained massive momentum in the country (Corcoran, 2013).

When Reagan gained U.S. presidency in 1981, he greatly expanded the War on Drugs. His focus turned to the producing countries of illicit drugs and their trafficking routes. U.S.’s law enforcement demanded thus patrolling of the common Colombian trafficking routes through the Caribbean and Miami, as an attempt at stopping the inflow of illegal drugs to their country. However, rather than abandon their income source, the Colombian traffickers changed trafficking routes and increasingly trafficked their flow through Mexico (Boulossa & Wallice, 2015).

In 1985, a U.S. DEA officer stationed in Mexico was tortured and killed allegedly by the Mexican DTO Guadalajara. The murder gained massive attention in the States, and the drug related issues in Mexico could no longer be ignored or swept under the carpet by the U.S. government. One year later, President Reagan issued a National Security Decision Directive that declared drug trafficking a national security threat. This allowed the U.S. Department of Defence to participate in a wide range of anti-drug operations, particularly along the Mexican-U.S. border (Boulossa & Wallice, 2015). Reagan also implemented the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act⁵, requiring that any country who were to receive U.S. assistance would have to cooperate with U.S. anti-narcotics efforts and take steps considered sufficient for this (Boulossa & Wallice, 2015). If the country in question did not meet the criteria — and Mexico was a clear

⁵ The U.S. congress passed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 which established a set of minimum mandatory prison sentences for different drug related offences. Interesting, but outside of the scope of this thesis is the critique this act received due to its unequal penalties for typical “rich people” drugs such as cocaine vs. “poor people” drugs such as crack. It resulted in many more African Americans (who usually had lower-socio economic status) ending up in prison. Claims that the war on drug was a racist institution started to emerge (Britannica Encyclopaedia, 2020).

target — it would be kicked out of all foreign aid programs (Corcoran, 2013). Additionally, the United States would block any loan requests that Mexico could make to international development institutions (such as the International Monetary Fund).⁶

In spite of Reagan's efforts to combat the Mexican drug traffic, it thrived in his period as never before. This was not least due to the emerging collaboration between Mexican and Colombian illicit drug-industries. A development towards a more organized Mexican drug-industry was a prerequisite for this collaboration. In the 1980s Mexican smugglers had exported homegrown marijuana and other illegal substances to the United States for decades. However, it was not until now that the big Mexican drug trafficking organizations started to emerge. One of these early organizations was the Guadalajara cartel (Cártel de Guadalajara), founded by Miguel Angel Félix Gallardo⁷, or “el padrino” (the godfather) in the late 1970s. Gallardo was a former police officer from Sinaloa who moved to Guadalajara in the 1970s to escape the Mexican government's *Operation Condor* (an eradication campaign in the Sierra Madre Mountain range launched by the Mexican army). During the 80s, Gallardo became Mexico's liaison with the infamous Colombian cocaine trafficker, Pablo Escobar of the Medellín cartel. This collaboration led to massively increased profits for the Mexican DTOs, as the Mexican drug lords now could profit from both their homegrown intoxicants and from Colombian produced cocaine which they helped traffic through Mexico into the States (Keefe, 2012).⁸

Ironically, it can thus seem like the U.S. efforts to shut off the supply chain of illegal drugs flowing into their country might have contributed to the fact that Mexican DTOs could grow wealthy and powerful. While shutting off the stream of illicit drugs in one part of their country, the U.S. government simultaneously made another route far more attractive. Since the Mexican DTOs had to team up with the Colombian ones in order to meet the demand for drugs in the United States, they were able to expand and profit like never before (Boulossa & Wallace, 2015).

When Félix Gallardo of the Guadalajara Cartel was arrested in 1989, his organisation eventually broke into the Sinaloa, Juárez/ Vicente Carrillo Fuentes organisation, and the Tijuana/Arellano Félix organisation. Together with the Gulf Cartel, these formed the main

⁶ Thus, the United States - the world's largest consumer of illegal drugs – now functioned as a judge of other countries' progress in solving a problem that the United States did not manage to solve themselves.

⁷ From here on referred to as Félix Gallardo.

⁸ Cocaine has a higher value per volume ratio and is worth substantially more than marijuana as user doses are smaller and cost more. Corcoran (2013) sums this up by stating that as the drug trafficking market changed dramatically, the profits for Mexican DTOs exploded. This tendency was further reinforced when many Mexican DTOs started to insist on payment in product instead of cash. At this point they became wholesalers and not only subcontractors, with exploding revenues to match (Corcoran, 2013).

DTOs in Mexico during the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s (Beittel, 2020). Since then, these formerly large and relatively stable organisations have fractured into many different groups and organisations, and at the same time completely new actors on the Mexican drug market have emerged (Corcoran, 2013). Today, The U.S. Congressional Research Service (Beittel, 2022) recognises nine major DTOs: Arellano Félix Organization (AFO), the Sinaloa Cartel, the Juárez/Vicente Carrillo Fuentes Organization (CFO), the Gulf Cartel, Los Zetas, Beltrán Leyva, La Familia Michoacana, Los Rojos and Cártel Jalisco Nuevo Generación (CJNG). Still, researchers disagree on how many DTOs are operating in Mexico today, with estimates varying from 20 to 200.

The rapid increase in the quantity of drugs transported through Mexico has resulted in huge profits for these DTOs. In 2012, it was estimated that the Sinaloa Cartel generated revenue of approximately \$USD 3 billion each year (Keefe, 2012). But as the level of profit in the Mexican illegal drug-industry has been continuing to reach ever more high peaks, so has the level of violence.

3.2 Increasing level of violence

During the 1980s, the Mexican DTOs were able to operate and coexist relatively peacefully without major instances of violence. Scholars point to the formation of so-called *plazas* as one of the reasons for this. They were established to make it possible to manage the new market in which the DTOs now operated and were based on an agreement between the leaders solidifying which DTO could control which area. A plaza is not necessarily a fully demarcated territory but can be translated as a geographical area of influence. The establishment of plazas made it possible to form a system based on corruption of state officials in which the illegal drug industry could flourish without the need of heavy violence which have characterized later periods. As Campbell states, “[t]he cartel that has the most power in a particular plaza receives police and military protection for its drug shipments” (Cambell 2009, p. 23-24). The amount of money the DTOs made, made it easy for them to pay bribes to public officials in the plazas for protection.

Collaboration between DTOs and corrupt state officials did not only occur at local levels, as many researchers have stated. Felbab-Brown, among others, argue that the peaceful coexistence between DTOs was possible due to their agreement with members of state authority, dominated by the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) (Felbab-Brown 2017). Hernández, as well, claims that the government and the DTOs were becoming increasingly entangled (cited in Vulliamy, 2013). Several other researchers have touched upon the fact that the political system was not only permissive, but protective of the illicit drug

industry (for instance Gutiérrez-Romero & Oviedo, 2014; Astorga & Shirk, 2011; Buscaglia, 2013) due to the lack of power switching (the stable domination of the PRI party), weak checks and balances and the widespread corruption. Hernández has called this political system a “mafocracy” when writing about how the Guadalajara cartel was protected by the Mexican government during the 1980s (cited in Vulliamy, 2013, para 12).

However, in the 1990s the PRI domination was met with growing political opposition, resulting in electoral reforms in 1997 and electoral victories for opposition parties at the sub-national level. In 2000, the National Action Party (PAN) won the election, and PRI’s rule of 71 years was officially ended⁹. The end of PRI’s rule contributed to rock stability in the DTOs division of territories and power, and turf wars between drug lords was now a fact. This coincided with a development which led to a much more violent culture within the DTOs themselves.

During the 80s and 90s, the DTOs were transformed from loosely associated groups of traffickers to fully-fledged criminal organisations with operations beyond narcotics.¹⁰ DTOs began to hire private armies of enforcers to protect their market shares through any means necessary, becoming increasingly violent as the decade progressed and as competition became fiercer (Beittel, 2020).

This development can be exemplified by Los Zetas, a powerful emerging group that began to challenge the dominance of the four big DTOs in the 2000s. Many of the people in Los Zetas were ex-members of special forces and had later worked as a private army for the Gulf Cartel, before they entered the trafficking business for themselves. The change from enforcement to trafficking did not alter their methods, which continue to be based on the use of extreme violence. The Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas, who had once been one entity, were suddenly in hyper violent conflict with each other. Some researchers claim that it was the Zetas who transformed the Mexican drug trade from simply buying and selling drugs for a profit to include kidnapping, torture, human trafficking, and murder. However, gradual intensification of internal friction in the DTO resulted in the fragmentation of Los Zetas, and La Familia Michoacana DTO was born.

Beittel states that such fragmentation of the “traditional” DTOs has led to several “smaller, highly fractured, competitive, and often ultra-violent groups” (Beittel, 2022, p. 36).

⁹ Until 2012 when they won the election again and were in power until 2018.

¹⁰ This trend has continued. The last decade has seen a change in organisational structures and diversification into criminal activity such as kidnappings and money laundering (Beittel, 2020). This diversification in different criminal activities is called poly-crime (Caunter, 2021).

This extreme rise in level of violence had sooner or later to become an urgent matter for Mexican politics, and during the PAN president Vicente Fox's presidency (2001-2006), it was firmly set on the agenda. Under his rule, at least 8,901 people were executed by DTOs (mostly DTO members, but also some policemen and military personnel). Fox responded by increasing the security expenditure in areas mostly affected by the violence. But it was not until PAN's second term starting in 2006, however, that they really intensified Mexico's drug control strategy (Gutiérrez-Romero & Oviedo, 2014). Critics claimed that the winner of the election in 2006, Felipe Calderón, had rigged the election. To regain legitimacy, President Calderón decided to deploy the military to put an end to the growing problem of drug violence (Gutiérrez-Romero & Oviedo, 2014, p. 4), and thus he launched *his* version of the War on Drugs, the *guerra contra el narco*.

This *guerra* was an eradication strategy based on immense military power which was deployed to stop the drug traffickers. Instead of focusing on seizing drugs, as many of his predecessors had done, Calderón deployed more than 40,000 soldiers to tackle the DTOs in several areas (CNN, 2022). During his presidency from 2006 to 2012 more DTO leaders were arrested or killed than ever before (Gutiérrez-Romero & Oviedo, 2014), among them twenty-eight top tier DTO kingpins. Additionally, over 36,000 other people were arrested for drug-related offences (Gutiérrez-Romero & Oviedo, 2014, p. 1), a number of arrests that more than triple the number arrested under the previous administration of Vicente Fox (Shirk, 2011), and already at the end of the first year of Calderón's drug war, 284 federal police commanders had been fired for alleged corruption (CNN, 2022)¹¹.

However, although efforts against the DTOs intensified, so did their countering violence. Although Calderón's *guerra contra el narco* temporarily seemed to reduce violence in 2007, the violence ignited again in 2008, reached record numbers in 2010 and again in 2017, and it continues to grow. By 2021, Mexico had 18 out of the 50 most violent cities in the world, according to the non-governmental organisation Citizens Council for Public Security and Criminal Justice (Security Magazine, 2019). The top eight most violent cities in the world were all in Mexico. Estimates on how many drug-related homicides took place during Calderón's

¹¹ For instance, in 2008, the head of Mexico's federal police, Victor Gerardo Garay was forced to resign under suspicion of corruption. Imprisonment of corrupt official state officers has since been a continuing trend, as exemplified by the following two cases: Genaro García Luna, who was a Secretary of Public Security in Mexico during Calderón's administration was arrested in 2019 with counts of cocaine trafficking conspiracy, making false statements and corruption. He allegedly permitted multimillion-dollar bribes and permitted the Sinaloa Cartel to operate with impunity (US Department of Justice, 2019). In 2020, Salvador Cienfuegos Zepeda who was a Mexican defense secretary under President Enrique Peña Nieto, was arrested by U.S. authorities on charges of international drug trafficking and money laundering (Kahn, 2020).

presidency (2006-2012) vary from 34, 000 to 120,000 (Gutiérrez-Romero & Oviedo, 2014; Reynolds, 2012; Beittel 2022; CNN, 2022).

3.3 Why are the level of violence increasing?

Several researchers agree that Calderón's drug war was largely responsible for the increasing of drug-related violence and homicides in Mexico. However, there is no consensus as to *why* his guerra had these results. The three studies mentioned below, by Guerrero-Gutiérrez, Dell and Ríos and Sabet respectively, illustrate this:

Guerrero-Gutiérrez found that after the government's arrest of a DTO leader, drug related violence intensifies in that DTO's area of operation over the next three months. He understands this intensification as a result of the power vacuum the arrest creates and sees the violence as fights over leadership. He estimates that over 85% of drug-related homicides can be explained by the aftermath of a competitor DTO-leader being killed or arrested (Guerrero-Gutiérrez, 2011).

Dell has another explanation. She finds that the probability of experiencing drug-related homicides increases by nine percentage points in the municipalities where the PAN party won the local election. She explains this trend by the fact that the PAN-mayors are more likely to ask for federal support to fight the DTOs and claims that their strategy fuels the DTOs violence (Dell, 2011).

According to Ríos and Sabet, it was the change in the political environment during the late 1990s and early 2000s that led to an increased need for the DTOs to protect themselves with violent means. They recall how under PRI's 71 years in power, the government would also arrest and sometimes kill DTO-leaders without the DTOs retaliating with violence. They explain the violence seen under the rule of the PAN party as a result of decentralization: For the first time, many municipalities did not share the same local party as the federal administration, and coordination between the DTOs and the local and federal government became increasingly difficult. DTOs were in some municipalities forced to make new agreements with new political actors and armed themselves to protect their organisations and their territory or to confront new rivals (Ríos & Sabet, 2008).

Other researchers find the explanation of the ever-increasing levels of drug-related violence in Mexico in U.S. laws and politics. Dube et al., for example, illuminate how the U.S. Federal Assault Weapon Ban expired in 2004 and show how this affected the DTO's access to firearms. In most states in the United States the law lifted the prohibition of military-style

firearms. In states bordering Mexico, California retained the pre-existing firearm ban while Texas, New Mexico and Arizona adopted the new law. Dube et al. find that

[T]he 2004 expiration of the U.S. Weapons Ban exerted a spill over on gun supply in Mexican municipios near Texas; Arizona and New Mexico, but not near California, which retained a pre-existing state-level ban. We find that Mexican municipios located closer to the non-California border states experienced differential increases in homicides, gun-related homicides, and crime gun seizure after 2004 (Dube et al. 2013, p.1).

In their study, Dube et al. show how U.S. gun laws have consequences beyond the borders of the United States. Violence increased in areas of Mexico located close to U.S. states where selling assault weapons became legal. This has been described as the *iron river* of firearms transported both legally and illegally into Mexico. President Calderón frequently criticized the United States for providing criminals in Mexico with an almost unlimited access to weapons. He told CNN “We live next to the world’s largest drug consumer, and all the world wants to sell them drugs through our door and our window. And we live next to the world’s largest arms seller, which is supplying the criminals” (Payne, 2011).¹²

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) must also be mentioned as a possible reason for the escalating drug-related violence in Mexico. NAFTA, launched in 1994 and replaced by United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) in 2020, was a trade pact intended to make free trade between the three North American countries possible. It gradually eliminated most tariffs and other trade barriers on products and services (Bondarenko, 2022) as well as contributed to more open borders between the United States and Mexico. According to United States Department of Transport, 2.8 million trucks crossed the border in 1994 and the number was 4.3 million by 2001. Today the border between the United States and Mexico is the most crossed border in the world with around 350 million crossings every year (United States Department of Transport, 2022). As a result, the border became increasingly difficult to control, which the drug trafficking industry benefited from. The violence and instability connected to it was thus stimulated.

Critics have also pointed out that the agricultural sector of the United States’ increased dominance with NAFTA, and consequently many Mexican farmers could not generate enough

¹²According to a congressional report from 2011, around 70 percent of firearms seized in Mexico and “submitted to the ATF [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives] for tracing came from the United States. The report covers 29,284 firearms submitted in 2009 and 2010” (Payne, 2011, para. 2). According to some sources, as many as half a million firearms are transported into Mexico from the United States a Year (BBC, 2021b). It must be added that in 2021, the Mexican government brought a lawsuit against US-based gunmakers and wholesalers, including Smith & Wesson, Beretta, Colt, Glock and Ruger. But insecurity persists as to what this lawsuit will achieve, which is why it is not included in this thesis.

income due to the devaluation of their crops and inability to compete with U.S. farmers. Some farmers then had little choice but to opt for the cultivation of marijuana and poppy plants rather than legal crops to make ends meet (Financial Times, 2015), to the benefit of the Mexican violent drug-industry.

Castillo et al. (2012) point to yet another reason for the increased violence in Mexico, namely the change in Colombian drug control strategy. In 2006, the Colombian strategy focused on seizing illegal drugs and destroying cocaine processing labs. Consequently, some Colombian DTOs decided to relocate to Mexico. Moreover, as the supply of cocaine was reduced, prices on the U.S. market increased and the drug trade industry became even more lucrative (Castillo et al., 2012).

The DTOs that operated before the 2000s tended to have hierarchical structures with a clear leader figure and were often bound by familial ties (Beittel, 2020). Now, especially after the launch of the War on Drugs, the DTOs tend to adopt a flatter structure and tend to be loosely networked (Beittel, 2020). Additionally, some of the U.S. demand for Mexican drugs has shifted after several U.S. states decided to legalise cannabis which has led to an increased demand for plant-based and synthetic opioids (Panner, 2012; Beittel, 2020). Among scholars, there is little consensus on what impact the fragmentation of the DTOs will have. Morris Panner argues that

The business is moving away from monolithic cartels toward a series of mercury-like-mini-cartels. Whether diversification is a growth strategy or a survival strategy in the face of shifting narcotics consumption patterns, it is clear that organised crime is pursuing a larger, more extensive agenda (Panner, 2012, p. 1).

Some claim that the fragmentation, diversification, and evolution into poly-crime should be seen as evidence of the organisations' growth and vitality. Others argue that it might be because U.S.' and Mexican drug control measures are working, cutting profits for involvement in the drug business or creating a response to the shifting drug consumption patterns in the US. But the drug control policies of both Mexico and the United States have not managed to reduce the inflow of illegal drugs into the U.S., nor to reduce the violence levels or stop the growing homicide rates in Mexico (Beittel 2022; Gutiérrez-Romero & Oviedo).

3.4 The War on Drugs discourse

The expansion of the War on Drugs and its effects on the illegal drug industry can also be seen through the lens of the Cold War. Throughout Latin America, the United States supported market liberal, conservative and capitalist leaders often at the expense of democratic ('leftist') tendencies. Some scholars argue that it was, in fact, the anti-left politics that undergirded the expansion of the War on Drugs during the 1970s and 1980s. Christina Johns (1991), for example, questions the real reasons why the U.S. decided to invade Panama in 1989 under the Operation Just Cause, which resulted in the expansion of U.S. military involvement in the War on Drugs. On a similar note, Peter Kraska (1993, 1999) explains the motive behind the increased military activity in the War on Drugs as a need for U.S. armed forces to become socially useful and present in the post-Cold War era.

Perhaps some of the confusion on how to understand the drug related violence in Mexico can be blamed on American president Richard Nixon's term of his counter-narcotics policy: The War on Drugs. In 1971, the rhetorical simplicity of this phrase and its appeal to a common cause may have served a distinct political purpose (BBC, 2021b). It was mainly aimed at users of illicit drugs in the United States and came as a response to the growing use of recreational drugs, overdoses, and the social issues that they were linked to. However, in the intervening decades, this rhetoric has been used to justify and explain an excessive amount of military, paramilitary, and law-enforcement activities worldwide, and maybe particularly in Latin America. President Calderón continued with 'war rhetoric' when he declared the Guerra contra el narco in 2006.

Describing these 'campaigns' as a war has several virtues as a rhetorical strategy: it implies a purpose, national unity, or a sense of moral clarity. Historically, American presidents in particular have deployed the metaphor of war to a variety of ends not necessarily related to violence. For example, in 1964, Lyndon Johnson called for a "War on Poverty", which did not imply the deployment of the U.S. army (Cooley, 2020). Similar declarations of war on inanimate subjects – terror, cancer, COVID, climate change – can militarise non-military issues.

This thesis examines the usage of "war" as a metaphor for dealing with irregular violence. In this perspective, two notable and current instances are the War on Drugs, which Richard Nixon proclaimed in 1971, and the War on Terror, which George W. Bush announced in 2001. These two 'metaphors of war' share some significant similarities, such as their vagueness and openness to interpretations as well as their lack of a clearly constructed or

specified enemy. Calling these strategies “war” illuminates the need for a more nuanced way of articulating a typology of organized violence (Parakalis, 2013).

How do we research the drug related violence in Mexico and its response when we do not have the sufficient vocabulary or sufficient categories in which to fully understand the situation? When crime is fought with metaphors of war, the distinctions between crime and conflict become increasingly blurred.

Furthermore, what started as a rhetorical “War on Drugs” increasingly has become militarised, simulating an actual war, and having the same consequences as one too. Both counter-narcotics policy and the narcotics trade itself has spread far beyond a rhetorical call against a public health threat resulting from the consumption and production of illegal drugs. The War on Drugs has become a real and deadly set of military efforts which seemingly has resulted in even more violence on the side of the DTOs (Vulliamy, 2013).

Additionally, both the War on Drugs and the War on Terror have resulted in what criminologists call profiling. Members of certain ethnic, religious, or socio-economic groups have been labelled as possible terrorists and drug dealers or consumers, solely based on their looks or social status (Welch, 2004). This type of profiling fuels questionable measures in both of these ‘wars’. The matter is again complicated by government secrecy. Using religion, nationality, gender, or socio-economic status as a proxy for suspicion is unfair and contributes to inequality. Additionally, such targeting can easily antagonise the very communities “whose cooperation with law enforcement agencies could produce important leads for investigation” (Human Rights Watch, 2002, p. 12). Thus, profiling, and other tactics disguised as the War on Drugs may produce an array of contradictions that undermine efforts to detect actual underlying causes and drug trafficking activity (Welch, 2004). One of those contradictions involves the potential elevation of criminal organizations to the status of legitimate adversary. As David Keen puts it,

[t]hose who wish to facilitate peace will be well advised to understand the nature of war. Yet the label war is one that often conceals as much as it reveals. We think we know what a war is, but this in itself is a source of difficulty: Throwing a label at the problem of conflict may further obscure its origins and functions; and the label, moreover, may be very useful for those who wish to promote certain kinds of violence. The idea of war can confer a kind of legitimacy upon certain types of violence, given the widespread belief that certain kinds of war are just and legitimate (Keen, 2000, p. 19).

In the following, I will focus on how one might evaluate the War on Drugs and the use of violence in the fight against Mexican DTOs.

3.5 A just war?

The War on Drugs is, like the War on Terror, often called a criminal justice movement. Yet, both strategies have been intricately destructively linked to race, ethnicity, social status and power balances between countries (Welch, 2004).

More and more research on the case of Mexican DTOs has been published since president Calderón started his *guerra contra el narco* in 2006. Much of this research is concerned with the rise in homicide rates and violence, and generally which implications the deployment of more military has had for the Mexican situation and its escalating violence. Some researchers have looked to the Just War framework in order to analyse whether the deployment of more military can be considered “just” under this framework. Is the drug trafficking industry and its violence eligible for such a military response?

This subchapter focuses on the Just War framework and brings forth some studies which have used this framework in their analysis of Mexican DTOs and government responses to violence. In simple terms, the Just War framework is “a paradigm that evaluates the justness of military action” (Welch, 2004, p. 37). Just War framework, one can say, aims at providing a guide to the right way to act for states in potential conflict situations, based on a set of principles that appeal to a plurality of ethical perspectives. As such, it is a conceptual framework that works as a normative tool rather than a theory that positively sets out to explain how the world works.

According to Sterba (1991), just war theory “can also apply to a wide range of defensive actions short of war” (p. 36). Though originally a metaphor, it is easy to argue that the War on Drugs has been militarised to the point where the Just War framework is applicable. The Just War framework can assess the militarised anti-drug (trafficking) strategy and it “offers an opportunity to develop alternatives that are non-invasive, nonviolent, and contribute to a justly arranged society” (Welch, 2004, p. 11).

Several authors have looked to Just War theory in order to try to understand the response to organised crime in Mexico (the War on Drugs). Just war theorists presume that some wars can be justified (Welch, 2004). In other words, it is a framework which evaluates whether violence is legitimate.

The Just War framework is composed of two fundamental elements: *jus ad bellum* (justice of war) and *jus in bello* (justice in war). The principles underlying *jus ad bellum* are necessary in determining whether a warring faction has just reasons for military action. *Jus ad bellum* rests on six criteria which must all be satisfied for a war to be considered just. It includes

just cause, legitimate authority, right intention, proportionality, last resort and having a reasonable chance of success (Sagdahl, 2022). All of these criteria must be met in order for the war to be considered just, “if one or more of these criteria fail to be upheld, the military action is deemed unjust, unjustly fought, or both” (Welch, 2004, p. 37). These criteria might have the advantage of flexibility, but that also makes them open to broad and varying interpretations.

Jus in bello comprises the criteria of proportionality and discrimination. Proportionality is that the military action is meant to be proportional to the “offence” which triggered it and weighs the relative harms caused by military strategies against those of not doing anything. Discrimination refers to the issue of regulating violence so that it does not affect civilian populations. Both aspects of just war theory—jus ad bellum and jus in bello—provide a foundation for evaluating the justness of a specific military action, including the justness of its methods and means.

Evaluating the War on Drugs in the just war framework. First, we need to resolve who the ‘militarizer’ is, is it the Mexican or the U.S. government?

The just war framework was developed mainly for international conflicts but also contains internal elements, since an important reason for international intervention is the internal suppression and abuse of a citizenry.

Second, we have to evaluate whether there exists a just cause for a militarised response. One of the key points in the just war theory is that it “permits a measured use of violence in response to aggression” (Sterba, 1991, p. 35). According to Sterba, “just cause is usually specified by three requirements: there must be substantial aggression; non belligerent correctives must be either hopeless or too costly; belligerent correctives must be neither hopeless nor too costly” (Sterba, 1991, p. 35).

Two key points can be questioned here. First, does the drug problem in the United States constitute a just cause for a militarised response in Mexico? And second, is the level of violence in Mexico a good enough reason for the US to implement military strategies at home and abroad as a response to this violence? Scholars and policymakers disagree on this matter (Welch, 2004).

Welch (2004) argues that there is not enough substantial aggression for military action to be considered just. He claims that the situation lacks a substantial aggression that would otherwise permit a measured use of violence. Further, he states that the non-belligerent correctives are neither hopeless nor too costly. Welch looks at other alternatives to the violent and militarised response deployed by both the U.S. and Mexican government and concludes that education, health focus, fighting poverty and unemployment and so forth are measures that

have not been explored to a degree where militarised response is the only option left. He calls for the “greater application of the medical, educational, and preventative models” (Welch, 2004).

The U.S. has not only interfered in Mexican drug control policies. The 1989 invasion of Panama which was operated under the guise of the U.S. War on Drugs. In light of both historic and recent events, there remains serious moral, diplomatic and judicial questions about the use of the military in the US drug control policy. According to Johns (1991, 1996), the invasion of Panama and other Central and Latin American countries in the name of drug control, reveals how the United States conducts political and military activities which clearly violates both international law as well as human rights.

Among a host of atrocities and violations of just war principles (e.g., just cause, last resort, proportionality, and discrimination), the lack of legitimate authority behind military action in Panama and other Latin American nations remains a key problem in U.S. drug control policy abroad (Welch, 2004).

The War on Drugs might have succeeded in capturing small and some big scale drug dealers/lords, but it seems to have failed to reduce the consumption of illegal drugs (which, one would think, is its true goal and reason for onset). It has also failed in its attempts to stop violence. If this is truly the case - why does the “war” keep going?

If we truly want to see an end to the extremely violent practices ravaging the Mexican society, shouldn't we look for better ways of addressing the problem? As stated in the introduction to this thesis, it is my conviction that we lack an adequate discourse for doing so. I will therefore continue my exploration by examining other ways of framing the relationship between drug-trade and violence. More specifically, I will now examine whether theories concerning crime and conflict can lead to a better understanding of the Mexican drug-related violence.

4. Concepts: differences between crime and conflict

At a conceptual level, this thesis seeks to explore the relationship between two basic topics: crime and conflict. The drug related violence in Mexico represents a confluence of these two phenomena. Therefore, a discussion of how violent crime and conflict differ and why they sometimes fall short of explaining the violence in Mexico, is necessary. This chapter is concerned with the nature of violence, while chapter 5 will deal with some theories of its underlying motivations.

I start by exploring the concept of violence. This will lay the basis for understanding two of its fundamental expressions which constitutes the main base in this thesis: crime and conflict. The chapter ends with a discussion of the crime-conflict nexus and discusses its potential shortcomings in the case of Mexico.

4.1 Violence

Violence, as a concept, can be defined in many ways and can include a variety of actions or stem from different motivations. The conceptualization of violence varies in terms of how broad it reaches or how much it encompasses i.e., the concept of “cultural violence” or the term “psychological violence”. Although such notions of violence are important contributions in a moral or cultural sense, they fall outside of the remit of this thesis - which centres around an understanding of violence used to obtain economic gains or, eventually, to dictate rules. Here, I will only discuss drug-related violence in Mexico

For these purposes and for a clear analytically useful approach, the thesis limits the understanding of violence to intentional acts that physically harm human beings. This understanding is in line with The *Oxford English Dictionary* which defines violence as “behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something” (Simpson et al., 2017).

Two central questions when we consider the concept of violence is *how* the violence is carried out and *why* people act violently. What is the *nature* of the violence? And what are the *reasons* for it?

A person who tried to answer these questions is Thomas Hobbes (1588- 1679). Hobbes' book *Leviathan* is still central to modern, theoretical understanding of violence. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes identifies three main causes of 'conflict' between humans: competition, diffidence, and glory. He then states that violence is a result of the desire for three qualities: safety, gain and reputation. Hobbes sees violence as an emotional response but also recognizes that it can function as a means to achieve something, e.g economic gains. According to Hobbes, it is self-defence or self-preservation that is the prominent end of every action (Hobbes, 1651/1998). Therefore, acting violently is the 'natural condition of mankind' and a state of law and order must be in place to avoid anarchy and unrestrained violence.

Other, more recent publications have focused on the character of violence itself. The Dutch anthropologist Anton Blok (2001), divides the concept of violence in two: instrumental and expressive. This distinction was first introduced by Feshbach (1964), who defined expressive violence as aggressive behaviour that takes place as a reaction to frustration or ego-threats and with the primary goal of harming the victim. Instrumental violence was, for him, an aggressive behaviour that occurs "when the offender aims to achieve a goal (e.g., money, personal belongings, sex, territory) and uses aggression as a means to this end" (cited in Thijssen & de Ruiter, 2011, p. 59). Instrumental violence, then, represents a violent act as a function to an ulterior end, usually obtaining something from the victim or those indirectly affected by the act (Salfati, 2000, pp. 266-267). Expressive violence functions as an emotional outlet and the intent of the offender is to harm the victim or "blow off steam". Blok differentiates these two types of violence to illuminate the *symbolic* purpose and meaning of violence. He claims that even informal violence (for example a bar fight) entails symbolic importance and is tied to conceptions of honour (Blok, 2001). Also philosopher Allan Bäck who has written about the symbolic or moral component of violence, states that "Violence [...] contains a moral component associated with engaging in actions that harm another person and attempting to force that person to act as you want" (Bäck, 2009, p. 223). In this thesis both practical and moral/symbolic implications of violence are at stake. In fact, the moral implications of violence have clearly contributed to deciding which forms of violence is considered legal and which is not.

Viewing violence as both expressive and instrumental is helpful in this study since it allows for an examination of acts of violence considering both the perpetrator's goals, what they accomplish – and, how. In Mexico drug related violence can also be seen as highly symbolic - for example 'corpse messaging' has become common. In fact, while earlier studies

on Mexico's drug related violence understood this violence as mostly expressive, lately instrumental and symbolic understanding gain terrain. Meneses-Reyes and Quintana-Navarrete (2021), for example, have studied this change in Mexico and suggest that it is partly a result of the government's attempts to fight organized crime and the increased availability of firearms.

It must be recognized that nothing in these conceptions of violence implies any scale. Violence encompasses an extremely broad range of possibilities: constituted according to the rules above, an "act of violence" might be a single thrown punch, or it can be the detonation of an atomic weapon in a city that might kill tens or hundreds of thousands. But when we increase the scale of violence from an individual confrontation to a group or state effort, the instrumental and expressive implications of such an action change significantly. For this thesis, then, it is necessary with a conception of large-scale violence or group violence.

When considering group violence, or collective violence, the well-reputed sociologist Charles Tilly claims that "With collective violence, we enter the terrain of contentious politics, where people make discontinuous, public, collective claims on each other" (Tilly, 2003, p. 23). Tilly defines contentious politics as "interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interest, in which governments appear either as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties» (Tilly, 2008, p. 5). He also notes that the existence of violence-actors does not necessarily entail the active use of violence; rather, "given sufficient reputation or coercive power, the threat of violence or simple intimidation may suffice to attain the same goals" (Tilly 2003, pp. 34-36). In the case of the Mexican drug trafficking organisations, it is often the threat of violence just as much as actual violence which enables them to gain and hold on to their power. Violence and threat of violence are both central in understanding illicit drug trafficking.

We have now established a basic definition of violence, with some specifics relevant to the case study at hand. This definition consists of intentional human acts causing harm to other humans, with three aspects: instrumental meaning, expressive meaning, and a moral component. The next task is to explore some of the varieties of collective violence, starting with (violent) crime.

4.2 Crime

The term crime, in itself, does not necessarily denote violence. Criminality, by definition, is *the violation of law*. In this understanding, what is considered criminal is not something intrinsic but rather something that varies across countries, legal systems, and cultures as well as through time. Social constructivist theories begin with the premise that what is

considered criminal is culturally and historically variable. Thus, the social reaction to an act and its actor determine whether it's considered criminal or not.

[R]eactions to crime depend not only on the violation of a rule or law, but on who breaks it, the time and place in which it is broken and the degree to which others are motivated or have the authority to make sanctions" (Donnermeyer et al., 2015, pp. 20-21).

Conflict criminologist Austin T. Turk views criminality as a label that is affixed to persons "because of real or fancied attributes and justified by reference to real or fancied behaviour" (Turk, 1966, p. 340). He states that "a person is evaluated, either favourably or unfavourably, not just because he does something, or even because he is something, but because others react to their perceptions of him as offensive or inoffensive" (Turk, 1966, p. 340). With this statement, Turk sheds light on a frequently forgotten detail, that criminalisation, or becoming a criminal, is not necessarily synonymous with engaging in criminal/ illegal behaviour. And more important to this thesis, potentially also the opposite: that engaging in criminal behaviour does not necessarily make you a criminal in a sense that you are punished or lose popular support. Turk thus also focus on the difficulties of differentiating conflict and crime when he states that:

[T]he problem of relating conflict and crime is one of accounting for the assignment of criminal status, which means that actual offensive behaviour is treated, not as the phenomenon to be explained, but instead as one of a number of variables related to the probability of criminalization (Turk, 1966, p. 341).

Two categories of crime are most relevant to this paper: organised crime and transnational crime. Concerning organised crime, some authors focus on the groups that are involved in criminal activities, while others focus on the illicit activities and markets in which these groups engage (Boer & Bosetti, 2015, p. 3). Ekaterina Stepanova defines organised crime as "self-perpetuating illegal activity carried out by a structured group over a period of time for material benefit" (Stepanova, 2010, p. 37). In this thesis, organised crime is defined in line with Boer & Bosetti (2015) as "any group, with some degree of structure, whose primary objective is profit and whose methods include illegal activity, the use and/or threat of violence, and the corruption of public officials" (p.3). This definition captures also some of the key components of organised crime: "its i) collective action; ii) pecuniary objective; iii) violent ways; and iv) corrupting and exploitative effects" (Ucko & Marks, 2022, p. 9).

The organised criminal networks connected to the illegal drug industry in Mexico have had increasing reach internationally during the past decades. They now are perhaps better

categorised as *transnational crime* due to their ever more intricate and multinational supply chain. Albanese (2017) in Oxford Bibliographies defines transnational crimes as “violations of law that involve more than one country in their planning, execution, or impact”. A slightly broader definition of transnational crime is laid forth by Stepanova as “criminal activity that is perpetrated by an organised criminal group that operates in more than 1 state; or that is substantially planned, prepared or controlled from or has direct or indirect effects in another state than that in which it is committed” (Stepanova, 2010, p. 39). Simply put, then, transnational crime is organised crime with an international reach. The multinational aspect of these types of crimes often makes them hard to prevent, prove and punish. They represent many forms of criminal activity such as drug trafficking and general trafficking in contraband goods, human trafficking, money-laundering, and even some forms of cybercrime.

Important to this thesis, is the criminal aspect of organised violence and drugs trade. Parakilas situates the global market for illegal drugs within two critical trends: “the existence of an extremely restrictive, all-encompassing prohibition regime and a globalised economy that makes the effective control of illicit international flows virtually impossible” (Parakilas, 2013, p. 9). Further, these trends are combined with high levels of wealth inequality, enabling narcotics to be produced relatively cheaply in poor countries (who are unable to either fully control their territory or unable to provide compelling economic alternatives) and then shipped to rich consumer countries and sold for massive profits. The incentives created by these trends has led to the formation of a type of conflict which has been called “The Market of Narcotic Violence”.

In 1961, the UN enacted the most thorough international drug prohibition measure to date: The Single Convention on Narcotics and Drugs. The ultimate goal of this convention was to render illegal the non-medical cultivation, trade and use of narcotic drugs globally (Buxton, 2008, pp. 22). Subsequently, the UN established the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for enforcing drug prohibition. UNODC aims to aid national law enforcement and counter-narcotics units in prohibition enforcement. In short, the ban on drugs and drug trade now has solid international consensus in the world today (Parakalis, 2013). What has been the consequences of this international prohibition consensus?

First, it shifts the international drug trade out of the legitimate (regulated legal marked) sphere into an unregulated, transnational criminal industry. The entire life cycle of the international drug trade, from production to consumption, is completely outside of the legitimate (economic) sphere. This creates a unique dynamic particular for the drug industry.

Whereas other often conflict-linked resources – i.e. diamond and timber – which are only illegitimate because of their provenance, narcotics are inherently illegal. International cooperation has been put into action to separate the legitimate and illegitimate sources of diamonds and timber (for example, the Kimberly Process for diamonds), but this distinction does not exist for narcotics. This is an important distinction as it makes other conflict-related resources easier to loot or launder, and so those who profit from these types of goods can profit from their trade at a relatively low risk themselves. Under the current international system, however there is no way to legitimise involvement in drug trafficking, and thus the risk of involvement in this industry, is oftentimes much higher than that of other goods sold illegally. As it seeks its own order, a wholly unlawful market, with no option of legitimate mechanisms of dispute resolution and contract enforcement, will operate according to a separate set of rules (Reuter, 2009). Mark Duffield draws a key distinction between "transborder trade," which refers to any type of international economic activity, and "parallel" or "informal" trade, which is fundamentally illegal to some extent (Duffield, 2000). While some forms of illicit trade can be camouflaged as legitimate transborder trade due to the complexities of modern trade, drug markets are by definition parallel activities (Duffield, 2000, p. 79).

Second, it permits nations to employ as much violence as they like in their anti-drugs strategies, legitimising the use of force in the name of narcotics control. The fact that narcotics are universally illegal, creates a space for states to define their counter-narcotics efforts using any amount of force they see fit. In other words, the worldwide consensus allows for a war mindset in the name of anti-narcotics. States that are part of the global economy cannot afford to publicly defy prohibition, limiting their options to a range from semi-tolerance to outright eradication. Under those conditions, countries like the United States, which have long regarded drugs as a security threat, are free to securitize and/or militarise their responses, confident that doing so will not strain relations with other countries bound by the same standard and unable to profit visibly from the narcotics trade. Delegitimizing the entire drug trade also allows governments to link narcotics to other sorts of completely abhorrent behaviour, such as terrorism.

Third, it creates an economic dynamic that encourages traffickers to employ violence, whether for political reasons or simply to generate big sums of money. Because states are permitted to employ wide violence in "defending" their citizens against the "danger" of drugs, drug traffickers have been incentivised to respond with a certain amount of violence. Furthermore, there is some evidence that there is a link between drug markets and violence.

Marijuana-only marketplaces are not typically violent (Reuter, 2009,), yet marijuana is less appealing as a smuggled resource, both because it can be cultivated nearly anywhere and because it is less lucrative per kilo than opium or coca goods (UNODC, 2009, p. 90). While there is no clear correlation between the existence of drug markets and the onset of conflict, Svante Cornell's study of conflicts in which drug production supports an anti-government force shows that there is a significant correlation between drug cultivation and the temporal extension of existing conflicts (Cornell, 2007, p. 208). To put it another way, while drugs by themselves do not obligatory cause violence, the volatile combination of their presence and an international black market can extend a conflict that would have otherwise ground to a halt.

4.3 Conflict

A central point in this thesis is the difference between violent conflict and violent crime. This section presents some different definitions and variations of what one might call armed or violent conflict. In 2020, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) recognized that armed conflicts occurred in at least 39 states in Mexico. An estimated 8400 conflict-related deaths were captured by the SIPRI database. To compare Syria was listed with 8000 such deaths (SIPRI, 2021, p. 29). According to the UN, armed conflict “involves the use of armed forces between two or more state or non-state organised armed groups” (N.A., 2001). Armed conflict refers to the deployment of organised violence and includes coup d'état, and intra- or inter-state armed conflict (Le Billon, 2001). An important point in categorising a situation as any type of armed conflict is the political component it entails, that the groups are fighting with explicit political goals. A common threshold is that the battle-related violence must cause at least 25 deaths in a given year. SIPRI categorises conflicts based on the annual number of battle-related deaths as respectively major (10 000 or more deaths), high intensity (1000-9999 deaths) and low intensity (25-999 deaths) (SIPRI, n.d.). In many cases, Mexico included, however, the threshold of annual number battle deaths or political motivation are not always helpful in understanding the severity of the violence as the number of violent deaths and homicides “can be higher in ‘peacetime’ than in ‘wartime’ (...) and economic motives play a significant role” (Le Billon, 2001, p. 1).

Contemporary conflicts are often complex “with multifaceted actors that have diverse and changeable objectives” (SIPRI, 2021, p. 32). This complexity manifests itself in the major challenge for the conceptual and legal categorization of armed conflict as well as in peacebuilding and conflict prevention measures.

These distinctions are important as it decides whether international law counts or not. In international law, armed conflict is defined and conceptualised differently depending on who the actors are (SIPRI, 2021).

Contemporary international law limits the conditions under which a State may resort to force. It restricts the means and methods of war allowed, regardless of the objectives pursued. A certain level and intensity of violence must be reached before a situation is qualified as one of “armed conflict.” Beneath that threshold, violent situations are called “internal disturbances” or “tensions.” Riots, isolated and sporadic acts of violence, and other acts of a similar nature are not considered armed conflicts (UN, 1977).

When we think about armed conflict, it is easy to limit it to the notion of war. Yet, the meaning and content of the word *war* has been debated in conflict studies and international relations. This debate has been particularly vigorous in the post-Cold War era, with its proliferation of irregular conflicts and unconventional warfare (Paraklias, 2013). At least in the Western World, much of this long-standing debate can be traced back to the Prussian strategist Carl von Clausewitz. In his widely cited words, he defines war as “not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce and carrying out of the same by other means” (Clausewitz, 1832/ 1989, p. 42).

Carl von Clausewitz wrote that war could be boiled down to its essence, combat: two competing forces using (any) means of violence against each other with the intention of disabling, disarming or killing the other (Clausewitz, 1832/1989). As banal as it may sound, it speaks to the means of violence as an instrument to achieve ‘something’, conducted in industrial means, such as war, or between for example street gangs. Between these two poles, lies an extraordinarily complex world of violence that does not fit neatly into either category. It is in this middle ground this case study falls.

4.4 The crime-conflict nexus

In both academic literature and policy papers there are significant unclarities when it comes to categorize and distinguish crime, conflict and violence. There are distinct archetypes of crime and war that encompass small-scale violence for economic gain and large-scale violence for political or societal gain, respectively. Many conflicts and security challenges, however, fall into a contested category between those archetypes, as is the case with drug related violence in Mexico. This can be seen as an outcome of increasing global economic and cultural linkages as well as countries' and international organisations' resultantly shifting risk-management approaches. Because social scientists and policymakers cannot agree on a common set of terms

or definitions for these "in-between" conflicts, policymakers have been forced to use inappropriate metaphors to describe their responses to social problems, leading to the mobilisation of possibly the wrong types of national resources to address the problems in question.

Mexican authorities clearly demonstrated this confusion: In 2008, President Felipe Calderón referred to the country's drug violence as "a war", but when asked for a definition of the violence, his government's national security spokesman demurred from that characterisation and used the term "a fight against organised crime" instead ((Ellingwood, 2008). The Mexican government complained when US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton used the term "insurgency" to describe the situation, triggering President Barack Obama to contradict her (Gallaher, 2016). The fact that there is so little agreement at the top levels of the countries most impacted on the fundamental, definitional matter of the violence does not augur well for a coordinated strategic response.

The 'nexus' between organised crime and violent conflict is a subject of growing international concern (Boer & Bosetti, 2015). Increasingly, researchers specialised in the studies of development, international relations, and peacebuilding are starting to include organised crime as a variable in their analysis. However, much is still to be understood about this relationship. Turk called out the problems of the crime/conflict nexus already in 1966. He states that "Discussions of crime and conflict have been characterised by imprecision in defining and relating the two concepts. This has contributed to confusion about the subject matter" (Turk, 1966, p. 338). This confusion still exists today. Traditionally, research on crime and conflict has been compartmentalised in disciplines and violent crime has generally not been included in analysis on political violence or armed conflict. One main reason for this, is that violent crime is not seen as being driven by the motivation of political change, but rather individual gain – it is seen as solely profit driven. "The study of organised crime in political science remains limited because these organisations and their violence are not viewed as political" (Barnes, 2017, p. 967). This even though organised criminal violence has caused as much violent deaths globally as armed conflict (UNODC, 2019). Heinemann and Verner (2006) describe the paradoxical reality which exists between legal understandings of conflict and high levels of violent crime:

With more than 140,000 homicide deaths per year, Latin America's homicide rate is twice the world's average, making it the most violent region in the world after Sub-Saharan Africa. Selected indicators such as homicide rates, injury rates, and the size of the private security sector would

suggest that some countries in the region exhibit war-like symptoms, despite being formally at peace. (Heinemann & Verner, 2006, p. 2).

In their words, a country can be formally at peace while experiencing conflicts with war-like symptoms such as high levels of violence and high homicide rates. In Mexico, this seems to be the case.

Criminal acts must be sentenced to enforce law and order. In Mexico however, impunity is a big problem. According to the Human Rights Watch report of 2022 and the nongovernmental group México Evalúa reports, only 5.2% of crimes in Mexico are solved (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The high level of impunity means that violence is almost seen as a legitimate way of achieving what you want. A representative from the think tank México Evalúa told the *Washington Post* that “You can use violence for whatever interest you have. It’s a low-cost, very efficient political, economic, or personal resource. It can be used with almost no judicial consequences” (Sheridan, 2022). Logically, when there are few chances to be caught and sentenced and potentially a very high economic gain to engage in drug trafficking, people really do not have a political incentive to abstain from violence.

One scholar, Nicholas Barnes, has published important works that may help us to understand the types of violence we can see in Mexico. He differentiates between four typologies of violence which together make up the criminal politics framework: confrontation, enforcement-evasion, alliance, and integration (Barnes, 2017). By doing this, Barnes seeks to break down the barriers between crime and conflict.

There are two typologies on the confrontational side of the spectrum. Barnes calls them “confrontation” and “enforcement-evasion”. Confrontation is the most competitive arrangement and describes situations in which organisations directly target or even kill state agents and the state uses highly advanced tactics to try to destroy the organisations. Enforcement-evasion arrangements are when criminal organisations do not directly use violence against state agents but also collaborate with the state. On the collaborative spectrum, we find the category of alliance which refers to contexts where organised crime maintains formal or tactic agreements that limit enforcement and allow both the state and organised crime to mutually benefit. The highest form of collaboration in this framework is integration - a situation where organised crime is directly incorporated into the state apparatus, allowing criminals to engage in violent and illegal activities with impunity. The criminal politics framework allows us to focus on interactions between states and violent organisations that are

“motivated more by accumulation of wealth and informal power and which seldom have formal political ambitions pertaining to the state itself” (Barnes, 2017, p. 973).

Barnes’s framework is helpful when analysing the drug trafficking industry in Mexico. Since its early days until today the industry has gone through all four stages in the framework. It is helpful because it enables us to include the role of the state as well as the agency of the DTOs. Some researchers have been quick to condemn the actions of the DTOs and are oblivious to the fact that there is a very evident political aspect to organised crime. Organised criminal groups cannot work in a vacuum, they rely on international trading markets, corruption, and negotiations with officials over resources, access to illicit markets, popular support, violence monopoly and so forth. “On the local level they negotiate over who is the dominant authority - who provides order, who makes the rules that govern society, who controls violence” (Barnes, 2017, p. 967). Such a framework is also important to include in the study of international politics as criminal organisations are now found in virtually every country in the world.

Like other non-state armed groups, they maintain a similarly broad and complex array of relations with the state. They have confronted state security forces directly, assassinated politicians, bureaucrats, and judges, and coerced numerous state agents while, in other circumstances, they have negotiated with, infiltrated and be supported by political parties, state agencies, and public security apparatuses (Barnes, 2017, p. 972).

Additionally, modern conflict settings and criminality are getting increasingly mixed. It is increasingly more difficult to differentiate between the two concepts as “states and other non-state armed groups have formed strategic relationships with criminal organisations to help them defeat common enemies and gain access to resources and illicit markets, as well as trafficking routes” (Barnes, 2017, p. 969).

An important function of Barnes’ criminal politics framework is that it connects politics and crime. The local relationships that criminal organisations need to form in order to survive, it has been noted, can provide authority and security to the local population in the absence of a capable state (Barnes, 2017;). Barnes holds that “Instead of segregating armed groups according to their putative motivations, we should understand the accumulation of the means of violence, even if not for the purpose of complete territorial hegemony, as an inherently political project” (Barnes, 2017, p. 973). In other words, crime and especially organised crime should have a bigger place in the study of politics and international relations.

And so, although criminal organisations (unlike other non-state armed groups) do not engage in “state-building activities” with the explicit goal of taking over or breaking away from the state, the consequences of their actions matter for understanding both global violence and the institutional trajectory of numerous states (Barnes, 2017).

In this chapter we have discussed various points of view on the nature of conflict and crime. In the next chapter, we will look deeper into the motivations behind conflict and crime; specially the greed vs grievance differences and discuss whether poverty and/or inequality can contribute to elucidate our knowledge.

5. Motivations and impacts: conflict, poverty, and inequality

The previous chapter was concerned with the *how's* of violence – its nature. This chapter will continue with the *why's* of violence, more specifically it will look at different theories and empirical findings concerning the motivations behind crime and conflict. The chapter starts by presenting a fundamental debate among scholars who study motivations behind violence, often referred to as the greed versus grievance debate. It illuminates how there exists disagreements on whether the motivations behind crime or conflict are economic and opportunistic or if they are rooted in feelings of unjustness or unfairness. Then, the chapter moves on to explore some theories dealing with resources as a driver for criminality and conflict. Lastly, the chapter ends by relating the above to notions of poverty and inequality and show how their mechanisms may have reinforcing effects.

The question of why people commit crime is both central and relevant to my research question. We need to have some understanding of why people decide to commit crime in order to understand how policies can work for or against it as well as to understand the structural implications of crime and counter policy. The emphasis is on identifying the specific drivers of violence, most of the theories discussed deal with the drivers of conflict but can also be related to crime.

5.1 Greed versus grievance

Ever since research on the drivers behind conflicts emerged, it has yielded varying, ambiguous or paradoxical results. One frequent assumption which has resulted in a vast amount of theoretical as well as empirical work has been that economic inequality or unequal distribution somehow fuels conflict. Yet, the results of the studies examining this relationship remained mixed. Qualitative studies have tended to assert that inequality is a major reason for conflict while quantitative studies are more reluctant to emphasise a strong relationship between the two (Østby 2008, Cramer 2005, Lichbach 1989).

Lichbach (1989) noted that inequality may increase conflict, decrease it, have an impact under certain conditions, or have no impact at all (Lichbach, 1989). Thus, there are no clear

relationship between conflict and inequality, nor conflict and poverty, according to him. Almost four decades after Lichbach's publication, and although significant improvements in- and quantity of research, this still seems to be the state of the art. However, various researchers have tried to diversify and specify Lichback's conclusions.

Horowitz (1998), for example, discussed the different motivations for violence in ethnic conflict. He divides between 'hard' and 'soft' conflicts, where the 'hard' position is characterised by "a notion of deeply embedded groupness, characterised by diffuse sentiments, altruism, and the willingness of individuals to make sacrifices" (Horowitz, 1998, p. 3). While the 'soft' position is linked to interests. He further uses *affective* and *instrumental* (or passion and interests) to describe the main differences in drivers for violence. He further claims that "while passion and interest sometimes operate separately, there are also reasons why they are so often found together" (Horowitz, 1998, p. 33). Horowitz expresses that both 'passion' and 'interests' may trigger a violent (re)action.

But researchers continued to wonder on what could best explain the motive for groups to mobilise to change their situation (Østby, 2008b). These types of discussions made researchers more interested in the political economy of conflicts. Themes like the fiscal foundations for conflicts, mobilization and financing, as well as the political motivations became more central.

When discussing why people engage in violent conflict, two main schools of thought now dominate the debate: greed and grievance (where greed is similar to Horowitz interests and grievance to his passion). Those who argue for opportunistic reasons based on calculations of cost and benefit, risks, and alternative income, belong to greed (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Others focus on the motives, often issues of inequality between groups and people's general feeling of unfairness to explain why conflict breaks out. This is often referred to as grievance (Østby, 2008; Stewart, 2008). Basically, then, greed links economic opportunities as a driver in conflict while grievances have to do with emotional motives, especially frustration or expectational deprivation.

Among the quantitative scholars many are skeptical to link inequality and poverty to conflict, Paul Collier (2000), for example, noted that "Inequality does not seem to affect the risk of conflict. Rebellion does not seem to be the rage of the poor. [...] Conflict is not caused by divisions, rather it actively needs to create them." (quoted in Cramer, 2005, p. 10). Fearon and Laitin's (2003) study on Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War supports the greed approach to explain violent conflict arguing that opportunities and feasibilities for economic gains due to

weak state structures and political instability are central elements here (Fearon & Laitin, 2003, p. 75). They found that when controlling for per capita income, “more ethnically or religiously diverse countries have been no more likely to experience significant civil violence in this period” (Fearon & Laitin, 2003, p. 75).

In 2004, Collier and Hoeffler continued the discussion on whether “greed” (opportunity) or “grievance” (motivation) best explains violent conflict. They found that per capita income and economic growth are significant predictors of civil war onset and tested these factors as proxies for greed and grievance. They concluded that conflict is motivated by greed and not grievance, thus that inequality does not predict conflict per se (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).

While qualitative scholars argued that grievances provoke conflict, quantitative scholars struggled to find significant correlations between the two.

This also holds for studies trying to relate crime and grievance. Skaperdas (1996, p. 180) argues that organized crimes more likely to happen in societies where there is a power vacuum due to lack of state authority or a protective and controlling state. Sale of illicit drugs (crime) makes potentially huge fortunes (greed). The lesser the state authority– or the more state officials are corrupt, the lesser changes for being caught for the crime. Thus, greed is enhanced in societies where state authority is lacking and possibilities for huge economic benefits present, e.g. selling illicit drugs.

5.2 Drugs as a primary resource

Scholars have suggested that both greed and grievance can be used to explain the rationale behind the operations of Mexican DTOs. Some scholars focus on how they are driven by economic gain and how they use violence as a means to achieve more profit as well as how the political climate in Mexico has historically enabled rebels and drug traffickers (Vulliamy, 2013; Sewel, 2013). Others focus on how poverty and social injustice leave people with few other options than to engage in the illegal drug industry to survive or, eventually, to rebel against political authorities to impose societal changes (Gutiérrez-Romero & Oviedo, 2014).

There exists extensive literature on how resources may impact violence and conflict. In the following, I focus on the resource curse theory which relates to the greed argument presented above. I will also briefly present the theory of resource scarcity.

The resource curse theory is based on the assumption that a global relative abundance of a specific resource can make the possessing country dependent on revenues from exporting this resource (Collier & Bannon, 2003). The resource curse can be defined as “The apparent paradox that an abundance of a natural resource is associated with declining national standards of living rather than prosperity” (Rogers, et al., 2013). The economic effects of the resource curse, such as economic stagnation, may have onward connotations for violent conflict.

Several authors have discussed the dependence of specific resources as a driver for conflict (See for example Le Billon, 2001; Ross 2003 and Fearon 2005). Le Billon, for example, claims that Post-Cold War conflicts are increasingly characterized by a “specific political ecology closely linked to the geography and political economy of natural resources” (Le Billon, 2001, p. 561). Natural resources like oil, gas, diamantes and gold have been most used as cases in what is known as the resource curse or the paradox of plenty, in which inequalities, poverty and lack of freedoms are central characteristics (Rogers, et al., 2013).

In 2003, Collier and Bannon (2003), listed 17 resources that were linked to active conflicts at that time. They found that in five of these resource curses conflicts illicit drugs were the main natural resource (Collier & Bannon, 2003, p. 17). They insist that at least since the mid-1990s, abundance of natural resources, especially in weak states, can play a key role in “triggering, prolonging and financing conflicts” (Ross, 2003, p. 17). Le Billion (2004) includes illicit drug trade as a natural resource in what he calls ‘Resource Wars’ (Le Billon, 2004).

Although various scholars have mentioned illicit drugs as a natural resource risking to create a resource curse, few have researched this thoroughly.

Among these few are Angrist and Kugler (2008) and Meia and Retrepo (2015) who study the economic impacts of cocoa production in Colombia. Angrist and Kugler (2008) explores the impact of cocoa on income and civil conflict in Colombia. They study the impact of exogenous upsurge in coca prices on violence levels and economics. They find that increased prices generate modest economic gains in rural areas where cocoa is produced. This is “primarily in the form of increased self-employment earnings and increased labour supply by teenage boys” (Angrist & Kugler, 2008, p. 1). Additionally, they find that rural areas with increased cocoa production experienced increased levels of violence. And concludes that their findings are consistent with the greed thesis in that civil conflict in Colombia is fuelled by the economic opportunities that “coca provides and that rent-seeking by combatants limits the economic gains from coca” (Angrist & Kugler, 2008, p. 1).

Mejia and Retrepo (2015), also applied the resource curse theory to study the drug trafficking industry in Columbia. They look at demand shocks for cocaine and explore its effect in Columbia. They find that in periods where cocaine is more profitable, the number of homicides increase. Additionally, this effect is higher in municipalities with a high suitability for growing coca. At the same time, in periods where alternative crops such as sugar cane, cocoa and palm oil are more profitable, this is associated with a reduction in violence.

In Mexico since the 1970s, marijuana and poppy production and trafficking of cocoa has contributed to substantial levels of violence (Felbab-Brown, 2017). The same dynamics between the illegal drug industry and violence can be seen throughout Latin America.

An important point to note is that, unlike other ‘conflict resources’ such as oil and diamonds, what makes illegal drugs relatively abundant is their illegality. The high market value is a result of the risks this illegality entails.

One other side in the literature on ‘Resource Wars’ is environmental security. This theory is, simply put, is based on the premise that resources are scarce. What is meant by ‘resource scarcity’? It can be explained as “imbalance between finite supplies and infinite demand” (Bayramov, 2018, p. 74). It basically means that there is insufficient supply of something to meet the demand for it. This is a broad definition, and within the resource scarcity literature there exists different interpretation of what it entails and results in. Homer-Dixon (1994,1999) is a frequently cited scholar within this school of thought. He claims that as the population on earth grows, there will be less available resources for each one.

5.3 Corruption, inequality, and the conflict trap

Mexico is not a particularly weak state. However, corruption is perceived as high (124/180 in Transparency International Corruption Index), which indicates that Mexico has one of the highest levels of corruption in Latin America. The increasingly international reach of the Mexican DTOs also means that the corruption has spread to businesses across the world. In 2021, the banking giant HSBC was massively fined for money laundering for the Mexican DTOs (BBC, 2021a). As author Anabel Hernández describes in an interview with *The Observer*, “It is not the mafia that has transformed itself into a modern capitalist enterprise, it is capitalism that has transformed itself into a mafia [...] the violence of the cartels is not the disease. They’re a symptom of the disease, which is corruption” (Sewel, 2013).

Mexico's systemic problems that led to the development and intensification of the DTO's operations, are still present and pressing. These include poverty, crime, and income inequality that are still prevalent. The structural factors plaguing Mexico's struggle for security include criminal impunity, entrenched corruption, and consistent demand for illegal drugs by drug users in the U.S. and Europe (Felbab-Brown, 2022). Since 1990, the rate of extreme poverty in Mexico has decreased from 9% of the population in 1989 to 3,1% of the population in 2020. Gini coefficient has also decreased since 1990 and was at 45.4 in 2020 (World Bank, n.d.).

Illicit drug sales and smuggling can be very rewarding. Many of the problems connected to the resource curse are caused by the volatility of resource revenues. The price on drugs is significantly higher than the production cost of illegal drugs, much because of the risks involved in its production and distribution. Hence, it is often more lucrative for individuals to partake in this industry rather than alternative options such as "getting a normal job". It is the risk that makes it profitable. And the risk is solely a result of illegality. Increased illicit economic activities could escalate the pure criminal act to become a conflict between two or more groups.

The conflict trap is when the "long-term risk of conflict in a country or region increases considerably after the first conflict onset" (Hegre et al.,2017). The conflict trap theory is based on the premise that conflict begets conflict. The pertinent drivers in the conflict trap are, according to Collier (1999), the reversal of economic growth, the creation of 'Rebellion-Specific' capital and the erosion of institutions. In Mexico, economic growth is relatively stagnant, drug trafficking is widespread and corruption a massive problem in political institutions.

6. Conclusion

The world is getting more and more complex which also applies to dynamics of conflict and crime. Heinemann and Verner (2006) has argued that globalisation of the economy and technological advances strongly influences the scale and scope of both criminal activities and violent conflicts. What seemed, a few decades ago, to be separate concepts are starting to merge, making new conceptual and theoretical understandings necessary. Not only has there been a marked increase in crime and violence levels since the 1970s, but also a change in its form. Since the 1990s, the most visible manifestation of violence is no longer overt political conflict but instead crime and delinquency. Inspired by these reflections by Heinemann and Verner, this thesis has used Mexican Drug Wars as a case to answer the research question, elaborated on page 3-4 in the thesis, namely:

What is the relationship between the illegal drug industry, crime and conflict?

To do so I have chosen not to write an IMRAD structured thesis, but rather an essay-styled thesis based on already existing sources, both primary and secondary. The rationale behind this decision is there are lots of contrasting theories and understandings of both crime and conflict, as I have shown in chapter 3 and 4, but none of them fits well to discuss the drug industry in Mexico. Donnermeyer et al., (2015, p.29) has also suggested that criminal behaviour is multidimensional and theoretical integration, e.g combining concepts from different theories and different disciplines, may be best suited for explaining criminal behaviour. In fact, maybe my most important finding in this thesis is that conventional theories and understandings of various concepts do not often find resonance when discussing drug industry in Mexico.

Another important issue at stake has been to sort out the role of violence in both crime and conflict. This is discussed in the light of the Mexican drug industry, presented also in chapter 3. Both physical, symbolic, and moral forms of violence have been discussed and I have concluded that symbolic violence – sometimes understood as honour -and threat of physical violence may be as important as actual physical violence when it comes to understand drug related crime and conflict in Mexico.

Chapter 5 discussed the underlying causes of the escalating violence in Mexico. Here I have tried to discuss crime, conflict, inequality in relation to the illicit drug industry in Mexico. Treating drugs as a natural resource, the thesis discusses whether greed or grievance can explain the motives behind drug trafficking in Mexico. Due to limited and uncertain sources on poverty and inequality in Mexico, especially related to the drug industry, this has been less discussed in the thesis than originally planned.

The 21st century has seen insurgencies transform into a variety of hybrid conflicts -with multiple participants, mixed motivations, and unclear battle lines. As I have demonstrated in this thesis, classical understandings of crime and conflict seem to lack explanatory power and greater definitional clarity is essential for future research.

References

- Angrist, J. D., & Kugler, A. D. (2008). Rural windfall or a new resource curse? Coca, income, and civil conflict in Colombia. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 90(2), 191-215.
- Albanese, J. (2017). *Transnational Crime*. Oxford Bibliographies in Criminology. doi: 10.1093/obo/9780195396607-0024
- Astorga, L. & Shirk, D. A. (2010). "Drug Trafficking Organizations and Counter-Drug Strategies in the U.S.-Mexican Context," Center for US-Mexican Studies Working Paper, USMEX 10-01. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8j647429>
- Bäck, A. (2009). 'Thinking Clearly About Violence,' in Vittorio Bufacchi, ed., *Violence, A Philosophical Anthology*, (Hampshire, Palgrave MacMillan, 2009)
- Barnes, N. (2017). Criminal Politics: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Organized Crime, Politics, and Violence. *Perspectives on Politics*, 15(4), 967-987. doi:10.1017/S1537592717002110
- Bayramov, A. (2018). Review: Dubious nexus between natural resources and conflict. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 9(1), 72-81. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euras.2017.12.006>
- BBC (2021a, December 17). HSBC fined £64m for anti-money laundering failings. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-59689581>
- BBC (2021b). "War on drugs", podcast in Witness history series. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct1x0v>
- Beittel, J. S. (2020). *Mexico: Organized crime and Drug Trafficking Organizations*. Congressional Research Service.
- Beittel, J. S. (2022). *Mexico: Organized crime and Drug Trafficking Organizations*. Congressional Research Service. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R41576.pdf>
- Berdal, M. & Malone, D. M. (2000). *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, (Boulder, Lynne Reiner).
- Boer, d. J. & Bosetti, L. (2015). The Crime-Conflict «Nexus»: State of the Evidence. *United Nations University Centre for Policy Research*. DOI: http://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:3134/unu_cpr_crime_conflict_nexus.pdf
- Bondarenko, P. (2022, March 13). *North American Free Trade Agreement*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/North-American-Free-Trade-Agreement>
- Boister, N. (2003). 'Transnational criminal law'? *European Journal of International Law*, 14(5), 953-976.
- Boullosa, C., & Wallace, M. (2015). *A Narco History: How the United States and Mexico Jointly Created the Mexican Drug War*. OR books. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt18z4gtv>
- Blok, A. (2001). "The Meaning of Senseless' Violence" in Blok, ed., *Honour and Violence*. Cambridge, Polity, 2001.
- Bueger, C. (2017). "Practice". In X. Guillaume & P. Bilgin (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of International Political Sociology* (pp. 328–337). Routledge.
- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2020, July 23). *War on Drugs*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/war-on-drugs>
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press.

- Caunter, D. B. (2021, October 19). *Poly-Crime: An overview of Transnational Criminal Organizations, global trafficking trends, routes and the confluence of crime*. UNODC & Interpol.
https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/CND_Sessions/CND_64/thematic_discussions/statements_slides/Day_1/6_CAUTNER_Interpol.pdf
- Campbell, H. (2009). *Drug war zone: Frontline dispatches from the streets of El Paso and Juárez*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Carroll, R. (2017, February 1). “So far from God, so close to the US’: Mexico’s troubled past with its neighbor”. *The guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/01/donald-trump-us-mexico-relations-history>
- Castillo, JC, Mejia, D., & Restrepo, P. (2020). “Scarcity without leviathan: The violent effects of cocaine supply shortages in the Mexican drug war”. *Review of Economics and Statistics* , 102 (2), 269-286.
- CFR Center for Preventative Action (2022, May 22). *Criminal Violence in Mexico*. Global Conflict Tracker. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/criminal-violence-mexico>
- Clausewitz, C. von (1832/1989) *On War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- CNN Editorial Research (2022, March 20). “Mexico Drug War Fast Facts”. *CNN*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/02/world/americas/mexico-drug-war-fast-facts/index.html>
- Collier, P. & Bannon, I. (2003). *Natural Resources and Violent Conflict: Options and Actions*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Collier, P. (1999). On the Economic Consequences of Civil War. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 51(1), 168–183. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3488597>
- Collier, P. (2000). “Rebellion as a Quasi-Criminal Activity”. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 44(6), 839–853. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/174593>
- Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2004). “Greed and grievance in civil war”. *Oxford economic papers*, 56(4), 563-595.
- Cooley, A. (2020, February 18). “War on Poverty” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/War-on-Poverty>
- Corcoran, P. (2013). “Mexico’s shifting criminal landscape: changes in gang operation and structure during the past century”. *Trends Organ Crim* 16, 306–328. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-013-9190-8>
- Cornell, S. E. (2007). “Narcotics and Armed Conflict: Interaction and Implications,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 30.
- Council on Foreign Relations (2021, February 26). *Mexico’s long war: drugs, crime and the cartels*. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/mexicos-long-war-drugs-crime-and-cartels>
- Cramer, C. (2005). *Inequality and conflict: A review of an age-old concern*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
- Cramer, C. (2003). “Does Inequality Cause Conflict?” *Journal of International Development*. 397-412.
- Dell, M. (2015). “Trafficking Networks and the Mexican Drug War.” *American Economic Review* 105, no. 6 (2015): 1738-1779. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.20121637>

- Debusman, B. (2022, April 12). “Mexico’s fight to sue US gun manufacturers for \$10bn.” *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-61073823>
- Dixon, J. S. (2014). “What Causes Civil Conflicts? Back to “Grievance vs. Greed”” [Review of *Inequality, Grievances, and Civil War*, by L.-E. Cederman, K. S. Gleditsch, & H. Buhaug]. *International Studies Review*, 16(4), 668–670. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24758519>
- Donnermeyer, J., Coomber, R., McElrath, K., & Scott, J. (2015). *Key concepts in crime and society*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Duffield, M. (2000). “Globalization, Transborder Trade and War Economies,” in Berdal, Mats and Malone, David M., eds., *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, (Boulder, Lynne Reiner, 2000).
- Dube, A., Dube, O., & García-Ponce, O. (2013). “Cross-Border Spillover: U.S. Gun Laws and Violence in Mexico!”. *American Political Science Review*, 107(3), 397-417. doi:10.1017/S0003055413000178
- Ellingwood, K. (2008, December 19). “Extreme drug violence grips Mexico border city”. *Los Angeles Times*. [Extreme drug violence grips Mexico border city - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](https://www.latimes.com)
- Fearon, J. D., & Laitin, D. D. (2003). “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”. *The American Political Science Review*, 97(1), 75–90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3118222>
- Fearon, J. D. (2005). Primary commodity exports and civil war. *Journal of conflict Resolution*, 49(4), 483-507.
- Felbab-Brown, V. (2010). *Shooting Up: Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs*. Brookings Institution Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctt6wpgt0>
- Felbab-Brown, V. (2017). “Organized Crime, Illicit Economies, Civil Violence & International Order: More Complex Than You Think”. *Daedalus* 2017; 146 (4): 98–111. doi: https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00462
- Felbab-Brown, V. (2020, August 18). *Poppy, eradication and alternative livelihoods in Mexico*. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/08/18/poppy-eradication-and-alternative-livelihoods-in-mexico/>
- Felbab-Brown, V. (2022). *Nonstate armed actors in 2022: Alive and powerful in the new geopolitics*. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/02/01/nonstate-armed-actors-in-2022-alive-and-powerful-in-the-new-geopolitics/>
- Feshbach, S. (1964). “The function of aggression and the regulation of aggressive drive”. *Psychological Review*, 71, 257-72. 10.1037/h0043041
- Financial Times (2015, May 28). *Risky Life of Mexican Poppy Farmers*. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFYtT4A_5aQ&ab_channel=FinancialTimes
- Freedom House, (2022) *Mexico* <https://freedomhouse.org/country/mexico/freedom-world/2022>
- Gallaher, C. (2016). “Mexico, the failed state debate, and the Mérida fix”. *The Geographical Journal*, 182(4), 331–341. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44132379>
- George, A. L. & Bennett, A. (2004). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge (MA), MIT press.)

- Gil, R. Z. (2021). “The Debate about the definition of the Mexican Violent Conflict: towards a useful concept”. In *SocArXiv* <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/d9ync>
- Goodman, J. D. (2011, September 11). “In Mexico, Social Media Becomes A Battleground in the Drug War”. *The New York Times*.
- Guerrero-Gutiérrez, E. (2011, October). Security, drugs, and violence in Mexico: A survey. In *7th North American Forum, Washington DC*. sn.
- Gutiérrez-Romero, R. & Oviedo, M. (2014). *The good, the bad and the ugly: The socio-economic impact of drug cartels and their violence in Mexico*. Equalitas, Working Paper no 26.
- Heinemann, A. & Verner, D. (2006). *Crime and Violence in Development : A Literature Review of Latin America and the Caribbean*. Policy Research Working Paper; No. 4041.
- Hegre, H., Nygård, H. M., & Ræder, R. F. (2017). Evaluating the scope and intensity of the conflict trap: A dynamic simulation approach. *Journal of Peace Research*, 54(2), 243–261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343316684917>
- Hedegaard, H., M Warner and A.M Miniño (2017). *Drug Overdose Deaths in the United States, 1999–2016*. NCHS Data Brief No. 294, (US) Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db294.htm>
- Hobbes, T. (1651/1998). “Fra Leviathan” i Svare, H. (1998). *Filosofiske tekster*. Oslo: Pax. Pp. 122-129.
- Homer-Dixon, T. F. (1999). *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence*. Princeton University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7pgg0>
- Homer-Dixon, T. F. (1994). “Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases”. *International Security*, 19(1), 5-40. doi:10.1162/isec.19.1.5
- Horowitz, D. L. (1998). *Structure and strategy in ethnic conflict*. Paper presented at the Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics, Washington, D.C., April 20–21. [horowitz.pdf\(ceu.hu\)](http://horowitz.pdf(ceu.hu))
- Human Rights Watch (2022). *Mexico report*. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/mexico>
- Johns, C. (1991). “The War on Drugs: Why the Administration Continues to Pursue a Policy of Criminalization and Enforcement”. *Social Justice*, 18(4 (46)), 147–165. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29766647>
- Kahn, C. (2020, October 16). “Former Mexican Defence Secretary Arrested In The U.S. On Drug-Trafficking Charges”. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2020/10/16/924648182/former-mexican-defense-secretary-arrested-in-u-s-on-drug-trafficking-charges>
- Keen, D. (2000) “Incentives and disincentives for violence”, in Berdal, Mats and Malone, David M., eds., *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, (Boulder, Lynne Reiner, 2000).
- Keefe, P. R. (2012, June 15). “Cocaine incorporated”. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/17/magazine/how-a-mexican-drug-cartel-makes-its-billions.html>
- Kraska, P. B. (1993). *Altered states of mind: Critical observations of the drug war*. New York: Garland Pub.

- Kraska, P. B. (1999). "Militarizing Criminal Justice: Exploring the Possibilities". *Journal of Political & Military Sociology*, 27(2), 205–215. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45293821>
- Kumar, A. (2012, May 14). "49 Decapitated Bodies Found on Mexico Highway". *The Christian Post*.
- Lakhani, N. (2022, April 5). "Attacks on press in Mexico hit record level during López Obrador's presidency". *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2022/apr/05/attacks-press-mexico-lopez-obrador-presidency-report>
- Longmire, S. (2011). *Cartel: The Coming Invasion of Mexico's Drug Wars*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Meneses-Reyes, R., & Quintana-Navarrete, M. (2021). "On Lethal Interactions: Differences Between Expressive and Instrumental Homicides in Mexico City". *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(1–2), NP359–NP383.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517733280>
- Mejía, D., & Restrepo, P. (2016). "The economics of the war on illegal drug production and trafficking". *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 126, 255–275.
- Munro, A. (2022, March 3). *Joaquín Guzmán*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Joaquin-Guzman-Loera>
- Must, E. (2016). *When and how does inequality cause conflict? Group dynamics, perceptions and natural resources*. Doctoral dissertation for The London School of Economics and Political Science.
- N.A (2001). "Armed Conflict"
<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/docs/2001/15%20Armed%20Conflict.pdf>
- Panner, M. (2012). "Latin American Organized Crime's New Business Model," *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America*, Winter 2012.
- Payne, E. (2011, June 14). "Report: Many weapons used by Mexican drug gangs originate in U.S." *CNN*. <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/06/14/mexico.guns/index.html>
- Parakilas, J. C. (2013). *The Mexican drug "war", an examination into the nature of narcotics-linked violence in Mexico, 2006-2012*. Doctoral dissertation, The London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Pouliot, V. (2013). "Methodology: Putting Theory into Practice". In R. Adler-Nissen (Ed.), *The New International Relations Series. Bourdieu in International Relations: Rethinking key concepts in IR* (pp. 45–58). London: Routledge.
- Reynolds, C. (2012, August 25). "Mexico before and after Calderon's drug war". *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/travel/la-xpm-2012-aug-25-la-trb-mexico-before-and-after-calderns-war-20120823-story.html>
- Reuter, P. (2009). "Systemic violence in drug markets". *Crime, law and social change*, 52(3), 275–284. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-009-9197-x>
- Rios, V., & Sabet, K. (2008). *Evaluating the economic impact of drug traffic in Mexico*. Unpublished working paper. Department of Government, Harvard University.
www.gov.harvard.edu/files/Rios2008_MexicanDrugMarket.pdf
- Rogers, A., Castree, N., & Kitchin, R. (2013). "resource curse". In *A Dictionary of Human Geography*; Oxford University Press. Retrieved 29 Jul. 2022, from

- <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/acref-9780199599868-e-1574>.
- Ross, M. L. (1999). "The Political Economy of the Resource Curse" [Review of *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States; Natural Resource Abundance and Economic Growth; Winners and Losers: How Sectors Shape the Developmental Prospects of States*, by T. L. Karl, J. D. Sachs, A. M. Warner, & D. M. Shafer]. *World Politics*, 51(2), 297–322. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25054077>
- Ross, M. L. (2003). "Natural resources and civil war: An overview". *The World Bank Research Observer*, 1-37.
- Salfati, C. (2000). "The nature of expressiveness and instrumentality in homicide: Implications for offender profiling". *Homicide Studies*, 4, 265-293
- Sagdahl, Mathea Slåttholm: «rettferdig krig» i *Store Norske Leksikon*.
https://snl.no/rettferdig_krig
- Security Magazine (2019, March 15 "Citizen's Council Report Reveals 50 of the World's Most Dangerous Cities"; Security Magazine [Citizen's Council Report Reveals 50 of the World's Most Dangerous Cities | 2019-03-15 | Security Magazine](#)
- Sewell, G. (2013, September 5). 'Mexico's war on drugs is one big lie' – Anabel Hernández interviewed in the *Observer*. Verso Books. <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/1385-mexico-s-war-on-drugs-is-one-big-lie-anabel-hernandez-interviewed-in-the-observer>
- Sheridan, M. B. (2022, april 11). "The war next door: conflict in Mexico is displacing thousands". *The Washington Post*.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/11/mexico-displaced-people/>
- Shirk, D. (2011). The Drug War in Mexico, Confronting a Shared Threat. *Council on Foreign Relations*. https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2011/03/Mexico_CSR60.pdf
- Simpson, J. A., Weiner, E. S. C., & Oxford University Press. (1989). "Violence". *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- SIPRI (2021) *SIPRI Yearbook 2021. Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*.
[SIPRI Yearbook 2021, Summary](#)
- Skatvik, F. (2022). *Porfirio Díaz* in *Store Norske Leksikon*.
https://snl.no/Porfirio_D%C3%ADaz
- Stepanova, E. (2010). "Armed conflict, crime and criminal violence". *Sipri Yearbook*, 2010, 37. <https://www.kpsrl.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/sipriyb201002.pdf>
- Sterba, J. P. (1992). Reconciling Pacifists and Just War Theorists. *Social Theory and Practice*, 18(1), 21–38. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23557456>
- Skaperdas, S. (1996). *On the political economy of organized crime: Is there much that can be done?* Paper presented at the Centre for Economic Policy Research Panel, October, Helsinki. <https://www.socsci.uci.edu/~sskaperd/SkaperdasEoG01.pdf>
- Stewart, F. (2008). "Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: An Introduction and Some Hypotheses." in *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies*, edited by F. Stewart. (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan): 3-24
- Thijssen, J., & de Ruiter, C. (2011). "Instrumental and expressive violence in Belgian homicide perpetrator." *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, 8, 58-73.
- Tilly, C. (2003). *The Politics of Collective Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Tilly, C. (2008). *Contentious Performances* (Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Doi:10.1017/CBO9780511804366
- Transparency International (2022). *Corruption Index* (Mexico) <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/mexico>
- Turk, A. T. (1966). Conflict and Criminality. *American Sociological Review*, 31(3), 338–352. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2090822>
- Ucko, D. H. & Marks, T. A. (2022). *Organised Crime as Irregular Warfare: Strategic Lessons for Assessment and Response*. SOC ACE Research Paper No. 4. (Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham).
- UN (1961). *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961)* https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention_1961_en.pdf
- UN (1977). *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II)*
- United States Department of Transport, (2022) *How many cars cross Mexico-us border every year?* [Border Crossing/Entry Data | Bureau of Transportation Statistics \(bts.gov\)](https://www.bts.gov/border-crossing-entry-data)
- UNODC (2009) *World Drug Report 2009*, [untitled \(unodc.org\)](https://www.unodc.org/wdr2009/)
- UNODC. (2019) *Global Study on Homicide* Vienna, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2019/July/homicide-kills-far-more-people-than-armed-conflict--says-new-unodc-study.html>
- UNODC (n.d.) *Drug trafficking* <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/drug-trafficking/index.html>
- Vulliamy, E. (2013, September 1). ‘Mexico’s War on Drugs is one big lie’. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/01/mexico-drugs-anabel-hernandez-narcoland>
- Le Billon, P. (2001). “The political ecology of war: natural resources and armed conflicts”. *Political Geography*, 20(5), 561-584. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298\(01\)00015-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(01)00015-4)
- Lund, C. (2014). “Of What is This a Case?: Analytical Movements in Qualitative Social Science Research”. *Human Organization*, 73(3), 224–234. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44148783>
- O’Neil, S. (2009). “The Real War in Mexico: How Democracy Can Defeat the Drug Cartels”. *Foreign Affairs*, 88(4), 63–77. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20699622>
- Oxford bibliographies (2009). “Transnational Crime”. *obo* in Criminology. doi: 10.1093/obo/9780195396607-0024
- Welch, M. (2004). *Ironies of Imprisonment*. SAGE Publications. <https://www.perlego.com/book/1005145/ironies-of-imprisonment-pdf>
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. (fourth edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.
- Østby, G. (2008a). "Inequalities, the political environment and civil conflict: evidence from 55 developing countries." *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict*, 136-159. Springer
- Østby, G. (2008b). “Polarization, Horizontal Inequalities and Violent Civil Conflict”. *Journal of Peace Research*, 45(2), 143–162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343307087169>



Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelig universitet
Noregs miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet
Norwegian University of Life Sciences

Postboks 5003
NO-1432 Ås
Norway