

## *La mafia muere: Violence, drug trade and the state in Sinaloa, 1940-1980*

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### Abstract:

The article examines the rise in violence in the state of Sinaloa between the 1940s and the 1980s. It analyzes the shifting structure of the drug trade and the changing roles of federal and state authorities, bringing both observations together. By looking at the changing nature of the drug trade and its relationship to state authorities from the 1930s through to the 1970s, the article attempts to understand why Sinaloa experienced such an upsurge in violence during the period, and to engage with three broad conceptual debates: the role of violence and coercion in Mexican state-making, a more particular debate about the (subnational) historiography of the 1960s, and 1970s; and, finally about the relationships between violence and (organized) crime. In doing so, it contributes to a significant paradigm shift from approaches that prioritized non-violent forms of state-making and political mediation, and with a strong focus on national institutions, towards one that systematically examines the role of coercion, violence, repression and criminal networks in the workings of Mexican state power and state-making. *Keywords:* Mexico, Sinaloa, history, drug trade, state formation, violence.

Resumen: La mafia muere: Violencia, tráfico de drogas y el Estado en Sinaloa, 1940-1980

El artículo examina el aumento de la violencia en el estado de Sinaloa entre 1940 y 1980. Analiza la estructura cambiante del tráfico de drogas y los roles fluctuantes de las autoridades federales y estatales. Al observar la naturaleza cambiante del tráfico de drogas y su relación con las autoridades estatales desde la década de 1930 hasta la de 1970, el artículo intenta comprender por qué Sinaloa experimentó un aumento de la violencia durante el período y aborda tres debates conceptuales generales: El papel de la violencia y la coacción en la construcción del Estado mexicano, un debate más particular sobre la historiografía (subnacional) de las décadas de 1960 y 1970, y, finalmente, sobre las relaciones entre violencia y crimen (organizado). Al hacerlo, contribuye a un cambio de paradigma significativo desde enfoques que priorizaban formas no violentas de creación de estado y mediación política, con un fuerte enfoque en las instituciones nacionales, hacia uno que examina sistemáticamente el papel de la coerción, la violencia, represión y redes criminales en el funcionamiento del poder

estatal mexicano y la creación de estado. *Palabras clave*: México, Sinaloa, historia, tráfico de drogas, formación de estado, violencia.

## Introduction

At 3 pm on 30 January 1976 the rat-at-tat of automatic gunshots rang out through the city of Culiacán. The noise could be heard kilometres away. Dozens of gunmen, armed with AR-15s, M-16s and Browning pistols, ducked behind cars or sheltered behind buildings before opening fire on their rivals. Shoppers zigzagged for cover; drivers screeched to halt, dropped to the floor, or slammed their cars into reverse; those lucky enough to be inside cowered and listened to the gunfire interspersed with the occasional pained shout of a fallen *pistolero*. Two police cars approached the mayhem. Bullets pinged into their sides; their drivers braked and fled. Then, after around 30 minutes, the shooting stopped. Gunmen dragged their dead and dying *compañeros* into the working cars and sped away. What they left resembled a war zone. Outside the Nuestra Señora del Carmen church, an ice cream seller lay on the ground, groaning and clutching his bleeding leg. Just down the road, a young man – the only one the armed men had left behind – lay slumped against a wall. His head had been blown clean off (Figueroa Díaz, 1991).

No one knows how many died on 30 January 1976. The official count stood at two dead and four injured. But witnesses claimed that there were far more. The confrontation between the Quintero and Lafarga clans – two families intimately linked to the drug trade – made the international press. “Mexico torn by gang warfare over narcotics” read the headline in the *Los Angeles Times* on January, 30, 1977. It also passed into Sinaloa folklore, commemorated in the narcocorrido composer Paulino Vargas’s “Corrido de Lamberto Quintero” (Figueroa Díaz, 1991). Though the scale of the 30 January clash was something different, shootouts, violence, and impunity were not. During the 1970s the rate of homicides in Sinaloa, and particularly in Culiacán, rose dramatically. By the end of 1976, the *New York Times* claimed that murders in the state capital averaged 2.7 per day.<sup>1</sup> As the local groups sang the song *La mafia muere*: “Ya la mafia se está terminando/Por la sangre que fue derramada/Solo el luto y familias llorando” (The mafia is ending/Because of the blood that was spilt/There is only mourning and families crying).<sup>2</sup>

In this article, we examine this rise in violence and seek the reasons for it, both in the shifting structure of the drug trade and the changing roles of federal and state authorities. In doing so, we stand in a long line of commentators on the Mexican drug war, who have studied this localised upsurge in violence to draw conclusions about Sinaloa, the drug trade, and anti-narcotics policies in general. For some the violence emerged from a generational shift among Sinaloa’s drug traffickers and the appearance of a group of young, aggressive, and well-armed heroin and marijuana wholesalers less attached to the old agreements and codes of conduct adopted by their predecessors (Enciso, 2015; As-

torga, 2016; Figueroa Díaz, 1991). For others the blame for the violence lay closer to the Mexican state. During the early part of the decade, the Mexican federal authorities sent secret service operatives and soldiers to Sinaloa to crack down on an emerging alliance between radical students and peasants. In 1976 they were joined by Federal Judicial Police (PJF), more soldiers, and Drugs Enforcement Administration (DEA) advisors, who launched Operation Condor, a broad and forceful crackdown on the drug trade.<sup>3</sup> Gradually, counterinsurgency and counternarcotics combined and interacted in unintended and violent ways (Ortiz Pinchetti et al. 1991; Osorno, 2009; Craig, 1980; Cedillo, 2017).

This article brings these two approaches together. By looking at the changing nature of the drug trade and its relationship to state authorities from the 1930s through to the 1970s, we attempt to understand why Sinaloa experienced such an upsurge in violence during the period. To do so, we split the article into three sections. In the first, we examine the available data on Sinaloa homicides in the 1970s. In the second section, we look at the history of both the drug trade and murder in Sinaloa. Though the state started to produce and export opium from the 1930s onwards, violence connected to the drug trade was minimal. The scale was small; the trade rested on existing socio-economic hierarchies and networks; and the regulation of the industry was in the hands of a single actor – the state judicial police. When outbreaks of violence did occur, they either concerned different social issues, like land reform, or revolved around shifts in regulation caused by usually short-lived incursions of federal forces. The third section looks at the shifts in the trade and in Sinaloa politics in the 1960s and 1970s, a period during which the U.S. appetite for narcotics grew exponentially. This democratized the drug trade, lowering the barriers and increasing the benefits of involvement. But it also generated competition as new traffickers upset old, existing hierarchies. No doubt this competition would have generated violence whatever the context. However, it also coincided with a sea change in the way that the drug trade was regulated. The state judicial police were increasingly and violently removed from control by various federal agencies, including the PJF, the DFS and the army. These developments overlapped with a substantial increase in the illegal exportation of arms from the United States to Mexico. Though shifts in the drug trade and its regulation made murder more likely, the large-scale proliferation of automatic and semi-automatic guns pushed homicides from the tens into the hundreds.

Our historical analysis of the Sinaloa case is framed by three broader conceptual debates: about the role of violence and coercion in Mexican state-making and social change in general; a more particular debate about the subnational historiography of the 1960s and 1970s, and, finally about the relationships between violence and (organized) crime. First, recent scholarly work on the historiography of twentieth century state-making has opened up a creeping but significant paradigm shift from an approach that prioritized non-violent forms of state-making and political mediation and with a strong focus on na-

tional institutions towards one that systematically examines the role of coercion, violence, repression and criminal networks in the workings of Mexican state power and state-making (Pansters, 2012; Gillingham et al. 2014; Pensado et al. 2018; Aviña, 2014). The latter perspective can account for “the successful elimination of violence at the national level...[and]...its displacement to the provinces” (Knight, 1999: 107). The case of Sinaloa substantiates the claim that relatively peaceful transmissions of national power after 1940 through institutional mechanisms was sustained, at least partly and sometimes decisively, by coercive and violent mechanisms of control and conflict resolution in sub-national domains. This problematizes the shifting dynamics and relationships between federal, regional and local power domains. Informed by Cold and Dirty War literatures about Latin America and Mexico, our analysis is attentive to the processes and actors operating in the coercive and violent zone of state-making (Gilbert et al. 2008; Gilbert et al. 2010; Herrera Calderón et al. 2011).

Second, this article contributes to our understanding of the 1960s and 1970s in Mexico, a period during which profound changes in Mexico’s society and economy came to fruition, affecting the authority of political and state institutions (Loeza, 2005: 118-119; Pozas Horcasitas, 2014: 18). It has been argued that since World War II modes of state-making and regime-building, partially sustained by coercive practices of governance, in conjunction with Mexico’s particular development model, generated multiple points of contention that resulted in a new politics of articulation of social and political subjects (Pensado et al. 2018). As the workings of state power are particularly visible in societal extremities, “where it becomes capillary, that is, in its more regional and local forms and institutions,” these also become sites where state power is contested (Foucault, 1980: 96; Rubin, 1997). Capillary sources of contradiction and contestation accumulated over time and across Mexico (Snodgrass, 2014: 191; Alegre, 2013; Mendiola García, 2017: 119-138). The Cold War, especially the Cuban Revolution, provided a language of polarization and radicalization to both discontented opposition groups and entrenched state elites, which put in motion the vicious circle of the Dirty War (Keller, 2015; Alegre, 2013; Loeza, 2005: 122-126). Our study of Sinaloa demonstrates that campaigns against drug cultivation and trafficking became an additional source of violence, making the distinction between combating guerrillas, social mobilization, and drug trafficking almost impossible. While aware of the significance of agrarian strife and radical student movements for understanding the social, political and violence dynamics at the time, for reasons of space in this article we concentrate on the changing forces within the drug trade and its relations with state actors.

Therefore, and thirdly, this article builds on the literature about the connections between crime, illegality and violence. Some years ago, Snyder and Durán Martínez developed a conceptual framework to study the relationship between illicit markets and violence, and applied it to Colombia, Burma and Mexico.<sup>4</sup> The main objective was to explain the variation in violence in differ-

ent illicit markets and through time. The authors argue that such variation can be explained by the existence of “state-sponsored protection rackets,” which they define as “informal institutions through which public officials refrain from enforcing the law or, alternatively, enforce it selectively against the rivals of a criminal organization” (Snyder et al. 2009b: 254). For such rackets to emerge, the relationships between the social and territorial organization of illicit markets and of law enforcement structures and agencies are crucial, as well as the question of regime stability. With these variables a useful typology is constructed of relations between state protector(s), such as different police forces or the secret service, and criminal organizations(s), such as rivalling drug trafficking organizations. The case of Mexico is brought to bear as a state-sponsored racket that operated from the 1940s to the 1980s, “resulting in relatively low levels of violence during this period” (Snyder et al. 2009b: 262). It broke down during the 1990s, generating a significant increase in violence. While the conceptual framework is helpful because it can account for the consequences of competition among law enforcement agencies about illicit markets involving different criminal groups, the historical account glosses over what concerns us here, namely the outburst of violence in the mid-1970s. This article strives to complicate Snyder and Durán Martínez’s analysis by using elements of their own toolbox, most importantly the shifting power relations between federal and subnational state protectors operating in an illicit market that was itself undergoing transformations.<sup>5</sup>

### Counting the dead

Reading the Sinaloa newspapers during the mid-1970s, you have little doubt that violence in the state was getting worse. While this section concentrates on violence in the state’s capital, our analysis will later widen to include the rural and *sierra* regions of the state. The 30 January confrontation was the tip of the iceberg. In the city of Culiacán shootouts were frequent. On 28 January 1977 an *ajuste de cuentas* between *narcotraficantes* in Tierra Blanca left two dead and two wounded. Three days later, there were two conflicts in one day. In the afternoon four youths in a Dodge Dart fired on two couples in a van injuring one in the head. A couple of hours later fighting broke out between the judicial police and drug traffickers on Paseo Niños Heroes in the city centre. So were one-off shootings. On 24 February 1977, Red Cross doctors treated a child for a bullet wound in his leg, a 52-year old man who was shot after a fight with a neighbour, and a 23-year old man who had shot himself while cleaning his weapon. A representative of the Federal College of Doctors, who visited Culiacán in 1977 concluded that the prevalence of violence had “gradually driven many to a state of social neurosis” (Guevara Martínez, 1977).

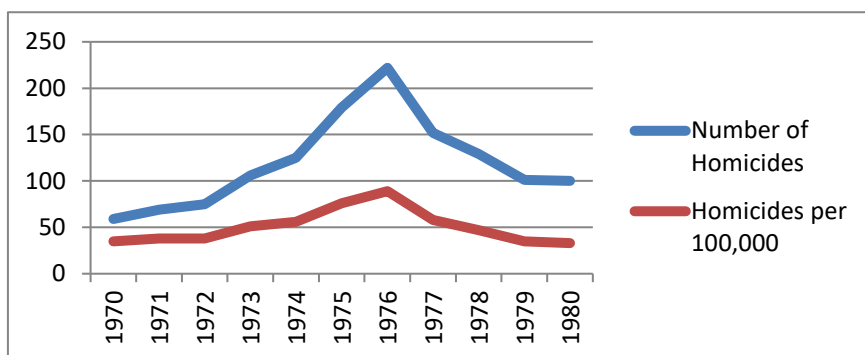
Yet, despite this general sense of insecurity, finding definite numbers on the number of murders or violent deaths in Sinaloa or Culiacán during the era is a tough job. Manipulating homicide statistics for political gain has a long history

(Denyer Willis, 2017). During the 1940s and 1950s, national homicide statistics were routinely underreported in order to attract investment and offer the impression of a functioning judicial system (Piccato, 2014). Even today, as the deaths connected to the drug war rack up, homicide reporting remains controversial (David et al. 2017). During the 1970s, homicide statistics in Sinaloa experienced a similar level of misrepresentation. Just like today, some actions favoured over-reporting. From late 1976 onwards the authorities often defended the deployment of the military in Culiacán as a response to what it claimed were spiralling homicide figures.<sup>6</sup> Yet other actions favoured under-reporting. DFS agents, PJF policemen, and the Mexican army tortured and killed victims suspected of drug trafficking or guerrilla involvement and then hid their bodies in unmarked graves or flew them over the Pacific and dumped them out to sea (Ortiz Pinchetti, 1991). Or as during the 30 January confrontation, drug traffickers collected the bodies of their fallen so they could take them back to their communities. At times, the authorities also announced low or dropping homicide figures in order to justify recent and controversial policies of militarization and repression. Thus in November 1977, the *Los Angeles Times* reported Mexican officials claiming that Condor was “a great success”. The governor of Sinaloa claimed, “Life is coming back to Culiacán... There are people in the streets, the cafes are full. Women and girls walk the streets alone at night. It’s the old way.” Homicides had fallen, he claimed, to four a month.<sup>7</sup>

Shifting and conflicting aims produced wildly varying homicide figures. The most common figure, wheeled out in the early months of Operation Condor and repeated by its boosters throughout the campaign, was that during 1976 murders in Culiacán had reached 2.8 (if you read the *Los Angeles Times*) and 2.7 (if you read the *New York Times*) per day.<sup>8</sup> If true, the figures were extraordinary. They put the murder rate at a staggering 985 a year or 394 per 100,000.<sup>9</sup> The Mexico City national newspaper, *El Sol de México*, was almost equally alarmist. When star reporter, Ricardo Urioste, travelled to the state in the same year, his informants in the state government claimed that there were 543 murders or 217 per 100,000 (Enciso, 2015). In contrast, figures from the Civil Registry were more modest. They show a rise from 59 murders in 1970 or 35 per 100,000 to a peak of 222 murders in 1976 or 89 per 100,000. This was a sharp rise; a tripling of the homicide rate in just six years. And in comparative terms, it was still very high. In 2017, Culiacán would have been the sixth most violent city in the world and the fifth most violent in Mexico. However, these same figures also point to the relatively short duration of the violence. Homicides only edged over 50 per 100,000 for the five years between 1973 and 1978. And by 1980 they were below their 1970 levels.<sup>10</sup> The exact number is impossible to ascertain. The high figures quoted by the various newspapers are clearly absurd. The Civil Registry numbers are probably low-ball estimates. They do not account for the bodies recovered by the Quintero and Lafarga families or the students and peasants disappeared by the authori-

ties. But, they probably offer a more realistic view of the levels of violence in the city during the period.

Figure 1: Homicides in Culiacán, 1970-1980



Source: Registro civil de Culiacán

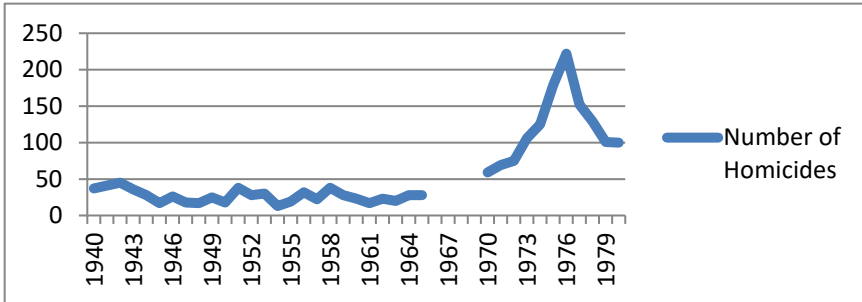
### Homicide and history, 1940-1970

Commentators claim that there always has been an inextricable link between the Sinaloa drug trade and violence. For the snooty elites of the state capital, it was a matter of class. Highland *rancheros* were short on refinement, quick to temper, and proficient with a gun. According to the mayor of Culiacán, the criminals had “come down from the *sierra*”, were “particularly ignorant and spendthrift” and were “easily recognizable by their peculiar form of clothes and walk”.<sup>11</sup> For security experts, it is the organization of the trade. The former head of the Mexican security services, Guillermo Valdés Castellanos, argued that violence is always in the DNA of the narcotic business (Valdés Castellanos, 2013: 130).

Yet, gazing back over the three decades leading up to the outbreak of violence in the mid-1970s, two things become clear. First, Sinaloa and the state capital had been at the heart of the Mexican drug trade since at least the early 1940s. Federal Bureau of Narcotics reports, Congressional investigations, PJJ annual reports, the confessions of border drug smugglers, and countless news articles all emphasized the state’s predominance in the growing of opium poppies, and at least since around 1947 the production of morphine and heroin. Second, from the early 1940s to the 1970s, violence in the state was relatively low. During the 1950s, criminologist Alfonso Quiroz Cuarón tried to discover the true figures for homicides by avoiding official statistics and tabulating those mentioned in the Civil Registry. He found that the average for Mexico as a whole was 38.2 per 100,000. But, there was enormous regional variation. Ten states had murder rates over 50 per 100,000. In comparison Sinaloa was only the sixteenth most violent, with a rate of 33.7 per 100,000, just above Querétaro and considerably less than the national average. Civil Registry figures for

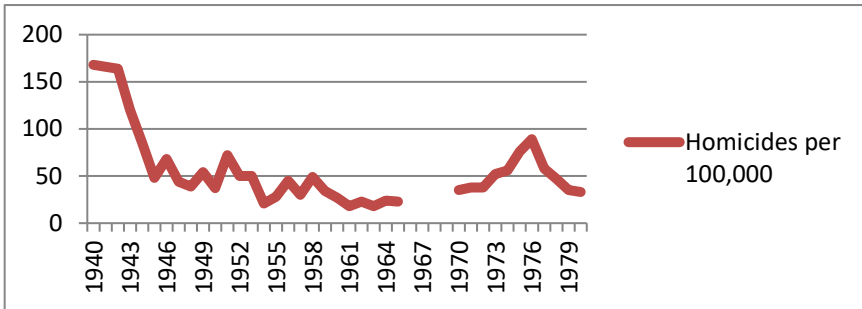
the city of Culiacán show a similar pattern. For thirty years, the murder rate in the city was around 40 per 100,000 or around the national average.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 2: Number of homicides in Culiacán, 1940-1980



Source: Figures from 1940-1965 from Centro Cultural Isidro Fabela, Archivo Alfonso Quiroz Cuarón, Box 14. Figures from 1970-1980 from Registro Civil de Culiacán<sup>13</sup>

Figure 3: Homicides per 100,000 in Culiacán, 1940-1980



Source: Figures from 1940-1965 from Centro Cultural Isidro Fabela, Archivo Alfonso Quiroz Cuarón, Box 14. Figures from 1970-1980 from Registro Civil de Culiacán

The question remains – how? How did Sinaloa sustain a thriving narcotics industry and relatively low levels of violence. The answer, we argue, lies in the size of the trade, its organization, and its relationship to the state. First, between 1940 and 1970, the drugs industry in Sinaloa was relatively small. Poppy growing and opiate manufacture may have outpaced those of other Mexican states. But, after European and Asian sources returned after World War II, Mexican opiates only made up a small percentage of the U.S. market, around 5 per cent during the 1950s, only creeping up into double figures during the next decade (Schneider, 2008: 79). In fact, for much of the period, peddlers on the Mexican border were forced to buy white European heroin rather than the cheaper, but irregular, Sinaloa product.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, until the mid-1960s, the cross-border marijuana trade was extremely limited and spread much more evenly between growers throughout the northern states.<sup>15</sup> Second, the early Sinaloa drug industry was organized in a way that sustained rather than upset the regional matrix of social and economic relations. This integration of the



opium trade into Sinaloa's existing socio-economic relations militated against ruptures between rival smuggling groups. Horizontal links of family and community protected growers and chemists from competition and betrayal. Vertical links between those lower down the trade and the capital-rich wholesalers prevented conflicts both with potential independent traffickers and with the existing Sinaloa elites.

In terms of horizontal relations, the key network was the family. Up in the *sierra*, peasants worked and weeded the poppy fields, and tended the plants as families. Harvesting, in particular, was a family job, which involved women and children. As one grower observed to "get [the gum], you need a very delicate hand. The women were the most wanted, the children as well, all the family helped with the harvest" (Fernández Velázquez, 2018: 98). Beyond the fields, the family remained crucial. Processing the opium gum into a consumable derivative – whether smoking opium, morphine, or heroin – was also organized in family units. In fact, the knowledge and the equipment needed to do so was passed down from generation to generation. In Badiraguato, one of the most famous processing families was the Urias Uriarte clan. The patriarch, Miguel Urias Uriarte, first set up a rough rural heroin laboratory in the hamlet of Bacacoragua in the late 1940s.<sup>16</sup> Soon other family members, including Urias Uriarte and Uriarte Araujos learned the technique and established other laboratories in Colonia 6 in Culiacán. When one of the group was busted in 1971 he explained that his family had always worked as chemists. He had learned how to produce smoking opium and then heroin from his father (Fernández Velázquez, 2018). In fact, even the business of smuggling the product up to the border was structured on a family basis. In 1948, Tijuana cops made one of the first big busts of Sinaloa opium. The mule? Dominga Urias Uriarte from Bacacoragua, Miguel's sister.<sup>17</sup>

Outside the family, the other network, which structured the trade was the community. In fact, these overlapped heavily. Endogenous marriages were common; ranches in the *sierra* were extremely small and, as a result, often contained only a handful of intermarried families.<sup>18</sup> Though land use was individual, communities worked together to gather the opium gum (if it was a big harvest), stockpile it into a single mass, and sell it all at a set price to the local wholesaler. The gains were then distributed among the families according to how much gum they had contributed to this community pot.<sup>19</sup> As one grower remarked, the system kept prices relatively low, but "the cooperation was for that, for buying the harvest from all the people". No doubt, some did try to go it alone, to avoid the set community price and find a buyer down in Culiacán or Los Mochis. But these were the exception (Fernández Velázquez, 2018). In fact, community cooperation even extended to the payment of bribes. In 1941, for example, the local military authorities arrived to shake down the opium growers of Santiago de los Caballeros. They demanded 100 pesos and 6.5 kilos of gum. The peasants split the payoff between them. The richest growers – who also acted as wholesalers – gave the most. Fidel Carrillo and Gil Caro gave 1.5

kilos between them. Hector Elenes, from the relatively well-off Elenes clan, gave 400 grams. In contrast, most of the villages gave between 100 and 200 grams.<sup>20</sup>

As the example above suggests, the drug trade may have been organized along community lines, but it did not eradicate inequality. In fact, the Sinaloa narcotic industry also rested firmly on existing vertical relations. This was most obvious in the *sierra*. Here, those who bought the opium in bulk were members of the village elite. Some were village merchants. They were comparatively rich, had capital to invest, and knew networks of buyers in Culiacán, Los Mochis, and even further afield. During the early 1940s, merchants like Ignacio Landell from La Lapara, Alejo Castro from Rincón de los Monzones, or Roberto Méndez from Mocorito went from buying up limes, papayas and piloncillo to purchasing opium. As they did so, they moved into Culiacán, bought up lands and businesses in the valleys around, and started to mix with the state elite.<sup>21</sup>

Others were classic revolutionary *caciques*, who had harnessed their military record, their control of armed men, and their contacts with urban politicians to carve out areas of local influence. By 1940, these had the money to buy up large quantities of opium and the political power to escape persecution. Perhaps the most famous *caciques*-turned-opium wholesalers were the leaders of the Carabineros de Santiago. The Carabineros were an Obregonista cavalry regiment from the mining village of Santiago de los Caballeros. During the Revolution they had forged a reputation for sharpshooting and bravery. After the conflict, their chiefs became the effective *caciques* of the municipal seat of Badiraguato. Fermín Fernández, for example, ran the company after the previous commander, his father, died in 1915. By late 1930s, he was in his fifties and was made municipal president three times in 1936-1937, 1938 and 1941-1942. During the same period, he became the town's principal opium wholesaler and political intermediary. In 1941, locals claimed that he was buying up opium from individual farmers, sharecropping another 50 poppy fields, and organizing the payments of bribes to the local military leader (Aguirre, 1992).<sup>22</sup>

In the lowlands the links between the drug trade and the licit economy were more difficult to discern. No doubt they did exist. Over the decades, there were frequent general accusations that drug money funded the expansion of the buoyant banking system, the well-irrigated agroindustry, and tourism (García Ibarra, 1974). But, direct naming was less common. During the 1940s, Sinaloa insiders and U.S. officials both concluded that Roberto Domínguez Macías was the state's biggest wholesaler of opium. Though he claimed to hail from Guaymas many believed that he was actually from California. During the early 1940s, he started to work as a servant for a Chinese family in Culiacán. After a few years transporting cans of smoking opium up to the family's contacts in Mexicali, Domínguez decided to strike out on his own. According to one version, he stole 5 million pesos by renegeing on a deal with U.S. traffickers and murdering their moneyman in Topolobampo, Sonora. This provided him with

ample capital to purchase great quantities of opium from the *sierra* wholesalers. But, he also moved into Sinaloa high society, buying the Hotel El Mayo in the centre of Culiacán as well as three other guesthouses, borrowing money from the city's major bankers, trying to start a hotel chain in Mazatlán, and eventually investing in mines up in the *sierra* (Espinoza García, 2010).<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Alejo Blancarte, a major *hacendado* from Guasave, and founder of the Sinaloa association of farmers was accused of partnering with his brother-in-law, Alfredo Díaz Ángulo, a doctor and hotel owner from the station town of Guamúchil. According to the claims, they bought up opium and smuggled it up to Nogales on the railway beneath mountains of tomatoes.<sup>24</sup>

If social integration reduced conflicts, the existence of a single arbiter or regulator of the drug trade not only regularized the relationship with the regional political authorities, but also prevented conflicts growing into fully-fledged blood feuds, which fits Snyder and Durán Martínez's scenario of one protector and several though interconnected illicit networks that is propitious for keeping violence under control. In contrast to the 1970s, when warring traffickers used competing authorities to snitch out their rivals, in the preceding decades this was impossible. There was only one arbiter in town and that was the state judicial police.

During the early 1940s, governor Rodolfo Loaiza reorganized the body and sent policemen to the *sierra* to take over control of the trade from the municipal cops. Initially the plan was a disaster. The state policeman in Badiraguato, Alfonso Leyzaola Salazar, skimmed too much, cut out the local wholesalers, and meted out violent punishments, including death, for those who refused to pay. In revenge, the old revolutionaries from Santiago de los Caballeros shot him and hung him (Smith, 2021: 115-116). But, within a few years, an arrangement was reached. Opium growers would pay local judicial police representatives barracked in their community in cash or opium gum. These would then hand the bribes up to the chief of the state judicial police. In return the local policemen would neglect to burn their poppies fields and the police chief would guide the soldiers and federal police, who made annual raids on the region, away from the growing areas.<sup>25</sup> The state police remained in charge of regulating the industry until the 1970s. In fact, such was the control of the state judicial police in Sinaloa, that U.S. drug agents remember being unable to visit the state for more than a few hours without being ran out of town.<sup>26</sup> Even the federal judicial police – who were nominally in charge of combatting the drug trade – treated it like a “privately owned fiefdom” (Barrio, 1985: 75).

By the early 1940s, the system that would govern the Sinaloa drug trade for a generation was in place. The trade was relatively small-scale, integrated into the socio-economic hierarchy, and regulated by the state police. It was also noticeably pacific. Outbursts of violence were either unconnected to the trade or revolved around attempts to upset this system. The spike in homicides, for example, between 1940 and 1944 concerned land reform not narcotics. It involved dozens of violent confrontations between armed *ejidatarios* and pisto-

leros backed by landowners. It culminated with the murder of Governor Loaiza in 1944 and the military's scorched earth manhunt for his murderer Rodolfo 'El Gitano' Valdés (López Álvarez, 2010; Anonymous, 1949; Ponce, 1993). Other upsurges in violence were connected to U.S. or Mexican federal interference in the Sinaloa arrangement. In 1947, a U.S.-led antinarcotics campaign forced the Sinaloa government to give up the police chief, Francisco de la Rocha, and his network of state policemen. Some were killed, presumably before they could speak out.<sup>27</sup> Four years later, the United States again appeared alarmed by what it described as a "bumper" crop of Sinaloa opium. An intensified antinarcotics campaign followed and weeks later, violence returned. Major Culiacán wholesaler, Jorge Favela Escabosa was arrested; José Mendez García, a Tijuana trafficker was shot in a restaurant in Culiacán; and his partner, Mariano Aguilar was found dead by the side of the road outside San Felipe.<sup>28</sup>

### **The 1970s: The reorganization of drug trafficking and violence**

If there was no intrinsic link between the drug trade and violence in the preceding decades, what changed? The most important shift was the drug market. The counterculture changed levels of drug taking in the United States dramatically. During the 1960s, the use of marijuana, hallucinogens, and heroin soared and during the following decade, markets in cocaine and amphetamines also rose. In 1967, 1.3 million Americans used marijuana for the first time. Four years later, over three million were puffing on their first joint. By the end of the 1970s, 56 million or nearly a quarter of Americans confessed to taking drugs (Valdés Castellanos, 2013: 130). This growing U.S. market transformed the Sinaloa trade forever. According to DEA estimates, by 1975, Mexico provided up to 95 per cent of the US's marijuana. At the same time, with the crippling of the Turkish-French route, the Mexican share of the heroin market also increased from 40 per cent in 1972 to 90 percent of the U.S. trade. Finally, by the mid-1970s, around a third of Peru's annual production of thirty-two tons of pure cocaine were smuggled through Mexico (Heath, 1981: 36). Such market dominance offered spectacular profits. According to Carlos Resa Nestares, between the presidencies of Gustavo Díaz Ordáz and Luis Echeverría Álvarez, cash from drug exports increased from 2.4 to 15.8 per cent of Mexico's legal exports (Resa Nestares, 2003: 57, 115).

The rapid rise in the value of the drugs market changed the geography of the Mexican trade. Peasants started to grow poppies and marijuana throughout much of Mexico and cocaine started to be shipped to the United States through the major airports. But, much of the new money flowed through Sinaloa. Here traffickers already had the fields, technology, smuggling networks, and political support to produce heroin; they soon adapted these to marijuana and cocaine. The shift in the scale of the trade had a two-fold effect on its structure. First, many more Sinaloans got involved. The marijuana trade, in particular, had very few barriers to entry. Anyone with a small plot of land or access to

communal property could plant a few hundred plants and sell the product to the thousands of U.S. surfers, hippies, and tourists who descended on the beach resort of Mazatlán every year.<sup>29</sup>

Second, expanding participation also generated competition. Marijuana smugglers competed with rip-and-run bandits, who sought to steal shipments and sell them on to U.S. hippies (Kamstra, 1974: 137). Heroin traffickers fought over access to peasant opium growers and reliable smuggling contacts at the border. Some existing traffickers clearly resented newcomers infringing on their trade; village or ranch monopolies on buying up product were a matter of honor as well as profit. And, as a result, competitors did employ violence. Most famously, Manuel Salcido Azuzueta ‘el Cochiloco’ quarrelled with another local trafficker, Braulio Aguirre, over the San Ignacio marijuana trade. In 1973, he kidnapped five of Aguirre’s men, tortured them, and then – allegedly at least – ran over their bodies with a bulldozer while they were still alive.<sup>30</sup> Yet, the violence generated “naturally” by competition should not be overstated. For decades, Sinaloa’s trafficking clans and gangs had operated on a discrete basis. And, in general, cooperation, not opposition, had marked their relations. Inter-marriage solidified ties. Now there were more of them. But, there was also a much larger market for drugs. Two key developments in particular require attention. For one, the growing importance of Sinaloa in the international drugs market started to draw attention from anti-narcotics warriors in Washington and their peers in Mexico, which launched a massive and violent campaign in the region (Operation Condor). It also caused, and second, a rising number of regional, national and international law enforcement actors operating in the area, which pluralized the market of “protectors”, thereby enhancing violent competition between and among law enforcement agencies and criminal organizations.

The spectacular increase of the drug consumption in the U.S. combined with the successful U.S. intervention against the Turkish-French heroin connection, turned Mexico in the principal supplier of both marijuana and heroin. In the mid-1970s, Mexico also transited between 4 and 5 tons of cocaine, which constituted an estimated 35-40 percent of U.S. supply.<sup>31</sup> While drug trafficking “had already become one of the most important aspects of Mexico-United States relations” in the early 1970s (Craig, 1978: 121), Washington’s pressure on the Mexican government would become particularly intense during 1974 and 1975, leading to an intensification of the battle against drug cultivation and trafficking. Most importantly, they brought about a pluralization of armed actors and escalating violence in the main territorial target of these policies: Sinaloa, Chihuahua and Durango.<sup>32</sup> The forceful antidrug campaign launched in the mid-1970s – that eventually morphed into Operation Condor at the end of 1976 – rested on three pillars: new technologies (including infrared cameras, helicopters, new weaponry), more boots on the ground, and the massive use of defoliants. The key objective was to “stem the brown heroin tide, which had been inundating the United States market” (Heath, 1981: 32). The

operation was coordinated by the Procuraduría General de República (PGR), with its 600 federal judicial police officers at the time, but included the employment of thousands of soldiers, as well as Mexican secret agents, local law enforcement, and DEA agents. New helicopters dropped soldiers in known cultivation areas to destroy crops and arrest the growers, but military units also engaged in setting up road blocks, and in “ground sweeps” to discover and eradicate hidden *sembradíos*. So by 1975, in addition to increased competition among drug growers and traffickers caused by the new scale of the trade, it was the influx of distinct (federal) armed actors into the region that disarticulated existing social, political and security arrangements.

American counterparts invested particular trust in the federal judicial police “to shock hell out of a lot of *traficantes*” (Craig, 1978: 119). More in general, American observers interviewed by Craig were thrilled by Mexico’s unparalleled anti-drugs campaign, especially after José López Portillo was sworn into office in December 1976 (Craig, 1980: 350-353). Despite its huge logistical obstacles, the campaign results were “a resounding success,” even if the reported accomplishments may have been inflated: during 1977, soldiers and federal police in the Sinaloa, Chihuahua and Durango “critical triangle” allegedly destroyed nearly 44,000 plots of opium and 15,000 of marihuana, dismantled 20 laboratories, and confiscated 192 kilos of opium, 81 of heroin and 6 of morphine (Craig, 1980: 357). Wholesale and retail drug prices doubled. The purity of Mexican heroin arriving in the U.S. dropped dramatically, as did Mexico’s market share and the number of heroin overdose deaths in the U.S. (Heath, 1981: 63; Craig, 1980: 358).<sup>33</sup>

How did the campaign, and in particular “shocking hell” out of local traffickers and growers of poppies and marihuana, look like from the mountains of Sinaloa, and neighbouring Chihuahua and Durango? Since the army had moved into the *sierra* in force in the early 1970s, stories of armed confrontations between peasants and soldiers abounded. As early as 1971, soldiers shot up the village of El Realito, Badiraguato, leaving thirteen people dead (Osorno, 2009:153-154). So did tales of other atrocities including soldiers torturing, raping, beating and killing peasant families (Smith, 2013; Craig, 1980b; Enciso, 2015). During the second half of the 1970s, the PGR and the army managed a network of Condor operational bases throughout the region from where soldiers and judicial police would embark on search and destroy missions. Commanded by “aggressive, tough generals,” they deeply penetrated local social and political relations, and perhaps even became “the region’s governing force” (Craig, 1980b: 697). Local communities bore the brunt, ranging from abusive behaviour and corruption, to extortion, torture and murder. In 1977, a coronel in Guamuchil in northern Sinaloa was accused of profiting from the resale of cars and car parts confiscated in anti-drugs operations.<sup>34</sup> In San Javier de Abajo, in the municipality of Badiraguato, the leader of a military contingent detained people on charges of drug cultivation and then extorted them to be released. A dozen peasants from the region paid from 5 to 35 thousand pe-

sons for their release, sometimes after they had to sell some of their properties. Eleuterio Padilla, for example, sold 4 cows and 2 bulls to produce the 30,000 pesos required for his release. Others fled into the mountains in fear of being arrested.<sup>35</sup> In yet another case, a peasant accused of growing poppies complained he was offered to be released in exchange for sexual favours of his wife and daughters.<sup>36</sup>

Soldiers active in Condor operations found themselves in hostile environments. In an incident in Surutato, early January 1978, a sergeant was killed, and a few months later, in neighbouring Tamazula, Durango, an encounter between civilians and soldiers, who felt threatened, escalated and ended in the death of one of the civilians.<sup>37</sup> However, in most cases violence was perpetrated by military personnel and federal police against the local population. Already in 1980, Craig (1980b: 697-698) discussed the disregard for peasant rights during drug-related operations, and suggested that such violations occurred regularly. A U.S. military attaché told him that “Houses are ransacked, men beaten, women violated and belongings confiscated. These tactics...don’t exactly endear the military to the *campesinos*.” Although the author was right to identify the problem, his sole reliance on interviews with members of U.S. and Mexican officialdom, the latter of whom were mostly in denial mode, misjudged the depth of the violence recorded by different historical sources. For example, Jerónimo Díaz García from Toayana in neighbouring Chihuahua and others were arrested on 14 November 1978 accused of being involved in and knowing about cultivation and trafficking of *amapola*. They were first held, beaten and tortured in the region for twenty days, then transferred to Badiraguato, where they were submitted to similar treatment during another 21 days. Jerónimo, who describes himself as a poor peasant, was forced to sign documents and confess, after which he was transferred to Culiacán and imprisoned.<sup>38</sup> In another case, Benito Otañez Peña was arrested in April 1977 together with his 25-year-old son by soldiers of the sixteenth battalion. They were seriously beaten and his son died. In June 1977, a 40-year-old woman was detained in Culiacán by federal police, blindfolded and chained to a car’s steering wheel for 25 days. Occasionally she was taken out of the car to be tortured.<sup>39</sup>

Hundreds of similar and worse cases were chronicled by the Culiacán based Colegio de Abogados Licenciado Eustaquio Buelna in 1978. An open letter to federal Attorney General Oscar Flores Sánchez spoke of “la violación sistemática de los derechos humanos por parte de elementos de la Procuraduría General de la República en la detención de investigación de ciudadanos por la comisión de delitos del orden federal.” This claim was based on interviews with 457 convicts, 85 percent of whom were poor peasants and rural day laborers, in the Instituto de Readaptación Social of the state of Sinaloa in early 1978. Of this group, 90 percent was arrested without proper cause or accusations. Declarations of the convicts and family members provide evidence that many were “golpeados brutalmente y torturados inmisericordiantemente [...] en las celdas de la Policía Judicial Federal de esta ciudad [...] hasta lograr vencer su resistencia

física y moral, para que firmaran confesiones nunca rendida de mutuo propio.” The report lists seventeen ways with which soldiers and federal police tortured. In addition, it lists people murdered or disappeared as well as names of those frequently involved in torture sessions.<sup>40</sup> In view of this generalization of violence, it is unsurprising that at the end of October 1978, in front of Culiacán’s cathedral members of the Unión de Madres con Hijos Desaparecidos were in a hunger strike. While some opted for voice, others did for exit: Many peasants fled to cities at the Mexican border or the United States. In 1980, the population of Sinaloa’s rural municipalities, which should have nearly doubled given the high birth rate, barely reached their 1970 levels (Lizarraga, 2004).

### The pluralization of violent actors

Although the large majority of violence in the context of the state’s anti-drugs campaign occurred in the *sierras* of Sinaloa, Chihuahua and Durango, which together form a deeply integrated social, economic and cultural ecosystem, it formed part of a wider landscape of violence and violent actors. We identify two simultaneous processes: The multiplication of armed actors on the market of protection, and the multiplication of points of social contestation and resistance, especially involving peasants and students.<sup>41</sup> Both generated conflicts and violence. Operation Condor accentuated the presence of several armed federal actors in the region, which deeply upset regional arrangements between politicians, law enforcement and criminal actors in existence since the 1940s. In terms of the theory of state-sponsored protection rackets, this meant a pluralization of potential protectors of a growing and increasingly lucrative illicit economy. It exacerbated divisions between traffickers, who were able to ally with particular state agencies and snitch out on criminal competitors, giving rise to a scenario similar to what Snyder and Durán Martínez called one of “many protectors, many organizations,” which undermines the stability of existing state-sponsored rackets and increases the likelihood of violence (Snyder et al. 2009b: 257). After a while it became clear that the new protectors not only clashed with local and state police forces in the light of their official tasks, but because they moved into the drug trade themselves. Federal agencies invested in establishing themselves as the new regulatory force, willing to take the use of force to another level.

Until the beginning of the 1970s, local and state political authorities were connected to drug rings, especially through the state police. In 1971, federal agents reported that the head of the state police, Oscar Sánchez Díaz, was involved in taking and trafficking opium and marihuana.<sup>42</sup> A year later, agents found that drug traffickers were protected by the head of the state judicial police, Tomás González Verdugo, who even has his officers directly working for the traffickers as body guards and *burros*. One of his predecessors, Antonio Gárate Bustamante, who had been fired due to his “connections to the mafia” was now found to be involved in trafficking high power arms enjoying the pro-



tection of state authorities, and self-assured enough to threaten “fucking up” federal agents because they reported his illegal dealings.<sup>43</sup> Only a few months later, 17 officers of a special state police corps resigned because their director, Enrique Marcial García, enjoying the protection by the mentioned González Verdugo and the state’s Attorney General Cota Rivera, not only demands monthly payments from his force, but also because he shakes down some traffickers, sells their product, and then extorts them for not going to jail, all the while protecting other traffickers.<sup>44</sup> The degree to which state police were involved not only in drug trafficking, but in organized assault and robberies across the state, became clear when Marcial García’s subdirector, Melesio León Arrieta, was forced to resign after evidence had emerged that he and his men had assaulted and ravaged an American couple along the Culiacán-Guamuchil highway. The episode made federal IPS agents signal the depressed state of Sinaloa’s police forces, especially the judicial police.<sup>45</sup>

As pressure increased on the Sinaloa government, early 1975 it commissioned coronel Quintanar Romero to head the judicial police. After only four months on the job he filed a devastating report to the Ministry of Defense, which stated that Sinaloa faced a wave of crime and murder, 70 percent of which occurred in the valley of Culiacán. While criminal organizations fought each other for the control of the drug economy, the state police was unable to confront the situation. He therefore recommended to reorganize, equip, train, and discipline the judicial police, whose lack of resources drives them into the hands of the criminals. The result is that “se confunden las actividades de la policia con las de los maleantes.” The report concluded that the judicial police found itself under the influence of external political influence and *compadrazgos* (i.e. Sinaloa’s political elite), which over the years created virtually untouchable “internal mafias,” that operate on the basis of extortion and bribery. In sum, the judicial police is “inept,” because it is managed according to political interests.<sup>46</sup>

In a recent paper, Cedillo (2017: 10) wrote that with the arrival of Condor at the beginning of 1976, “the interweaving between the Sinaloan political class and narcocaciques [i.e. local and regional drugs based bosses] made impossible to hit one side without hurting the other.” While we have already examined the results of the operations of particular federal violent actors in Sinaloa’s serrano region, in the conflictive, insecure and violent valley of Culiacán all law enforcement agencies were active: The municipal police, the state judicial police, the federal judicial police, the secret police (DFS), the army, and DEA agents, and working together was not a given. There were even tensions between departments of the state government.<sup>47</sup> Despite the fact that the army started to patrol the Culiacán area, violence spread. A June 1976 report by political agents mentions that since March 1975 the capital Culiacán has seen at least three murders a day.<sup>48</sup>

Violence also started to reach high-level public figures. Early March 1977, the deputy chief of the Sinaloa judicial police, Alfredo Reyes Curiel, was

killed, allegedly because he extorted drug traffickers. Later that month, major Gustavo Sámano Velazquez, a military commander of Operation Condor, together with three federal judicial police officers were brutally executed in a drive-by shooting in Culiacán, supposedly because he had uncovered links between drug traffickers and their protectors among the police. The army suspected the state judicial police to be involved in the killing, and the commander of the ninth Military Zone, general Cervantes, was keen to hold them accountable. The incident increased the tensions between regional authorities, especially Attorney General Amado Estrada Rodríguez, and federal forces, as the former appeared reluctant to investigate the case.<sup>49</sup> A few weeks later, in an unprecedented turn of events, the army held Estrada, the director of the state judicial police, and a top-level politician incommunicado for a number of days. Then the army arrested judicial police officers working as bodyguards of governor Alfonso Calderón on suspicion of being involved in the murder of major Sámano.<sup>50</sup> General Cervantes probably overplayed his hand when he confronted governor Calderón with confessions and disappearing at least seven of the latter's bodyguards. He was soon replaced.

The killing of major drug lord Pedro Avilés, a few months later, in September 1978, corroborated the shifts taking place within Sinaloa's world of crime. Together with several others, he was gunned down outside Culiacán by federal judicial police allegedly because they ignored a checkpoint.<sup>51</sup> At the time, Avilés, known as the Lion of the *Sierra*, was thought to coordinate marihuana and poppy cultivation and trafficking with major players in the neighbouring states of Durango and Sonora. His death inaugurated a reorganization of criminal networks in the region and facilitated the emergence of a new generation of drug lords (Osorno, 2009: 127).<sup>52</sup>

Finally, there were the guns. Just like today, the transnational industry, which actually caused the bulk of deaths connected to the drug trade, was in arms, not narcotics. And the principal supplier was not Mexico but the United States. Expertise with the rifle or the pistol had long been a respected quality in Sinaloa's highland communities. Some members of the Carabineros of Santiago could take out the eye of a deer at 100 yards or kill two rabbits with a single shot (Aguirre, 1992). In *El Diario del Narcotraficante*, an insider's tale on the emerging drug trafficking business, the protagonist spends days up in the *sier-ra* practicing his marksmanship (Nacaveva, 1967). During the 1950s and 1960s a series of *despistolerización* campaigns cut into old supplies. Governor Sánchez Celis (1963-1968) even claimed to have confiscated over 14,000 guns during his six-year term.<sup>53</sup> Yet, during the 1970s, the combination of outside threats and the easy availability of arms in the United States pushed gun ownership up once more. When soldiers raided Santiago de los Caballeros – population 240 – in November 1976 they netted 76 automatic weapons, 27 pistols, and over 2000 rounds of ammunition.<sup>54</sup> And between the Santiago de los Caballeros firefight and February 1977, soldiers confiscated another 1000 guns.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, these guns were new. Most were M1s, M16s, AR15s, and AK47s. Often they were exchanged directly for narcotics, just as stolen cars had been during the preceding years. In March 1976, for example, Culiacán police seized 19 AR15s, two M1s and nine pistols, arrested the president of the National Society for the Protection of Animals, and charged him with smuggling guns into the country and swapping them for drugs. Most armaments were bought at border gun stores in the United States. A February 1976 survey of 36 Texas shops found that they had sold 9.2 million rounds of ammunition in just seven months. Over 8 million rounds were sold to people, who gave their addresses over the border in Mexico.<sup>56</sup> The availability of guns democratized violence. What had been the preserve of a thin tier of drug traffickers, killers, soldiers and policemen extended throughout Sinaloa society. Fights, which might have pitched half a dozen shooters against one another shifted into mass shootouts like the 30 January massacre of 1976.

## Conclusion

The article examined the shifting relationships between drug trafficking, violence and the state in Sinaloa during the heydays of Mexico's one-party regime and state-led developmentalism. Several broader scholarly debates provided the context to understand our case study. Studying the transformation of the market and the organization of Sinaloa's drug trafficking industry, as well as of its complex connections to state agents leads to several conclusions. First, the analysis of the specificities of the Sinaloan case contributes to our understanding of the conformation, features and significance of coercion and violence in state-making, the broader forces that shape it, and the changing interplay between different (armed) actors through time. Second, the increase in drug trafficking induced violence in Sinaloa during the late 1960s and 1970s further substantiates the idea that the Mexican state became overwhelmed not only by large national conflicts but also by myriad capillary sources of contestation and resistance. The state reacted to these developments in ways that upset previous social, political and criminal arrangements, with its subsequent rise in violence, so graphically portrayed by the opening salvo of *La mafia muere*: "Culiacán capital sinaloense/ convirtiéndose en el mismo infierno/fue testigo de tanta massacre" (Culiacán, the Sinaloa capital, was becoming like hell/as it witnessed so many massacres). While our case study drew particular attention to how changes in the drugs industry and crime-state arrangements prompted an increase of violence during the 1970s, Sinaloa also had its share of social and political violence, in particular involving peasants and students, as was the case in many other parts of Mexico. In fact, Sinaloa constitutes an example of how counternarcotics operations became entangled with counterinsurgency. Third, this article has identified the need to refine Snyder and Durán Martínez's theory of the illicit market-violence nexus, and specifically the role therein of state-sponsored protection rackets. While making use of their con-

ceptual toolbox, we identified the key role competition between federal and regional state protectors played in the operation of an illicit market that was itself undergoing transformations, and that together explain the significant increase of violence in the 1970s. The latter finding also corrects Snyder and Durán Martínez's historical claim that Mexico's state-sponsored protection racket, which guaranteed relatively low levels of violence, only broke down in the 1990s. The case of Sinaloa clearly shows that particular regional histories contradict this claim.

Finally, our analysis explains this particular historical dynamic. It demonstrates that by the early 1940s a drug trade system was in place that would govern Sinaloa for a generation, one that was relatively small-scale, integrated into the socio-economic hierarchy, and regulated by the state police. It was also noticeably pacific. However, by 1975, increased competition among drug growers and traffickers, spurred by the new scale of the trade, in combination with the heavy-handed intromission of (federal) law enforcement agencies into the region, leading to a pluralization of armed actors and their fierce competition about controlling the state-sponsored protection racket, ended up disrupting previously existing social, political and security arrangements. It was this that caused local groups to sing about all the blood spilled in the streets of Culiacán. In many ways, what happened there in the mid-1970s was an early sign of what was to come.

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## Notes

- 1 *New York Times*, 28 December 1976.
- 2 The corrido *La mafia muere* was written by Pepe Cabrera. According to Wald (2001: 79) it is Cabrera's most famous composition.
- 3 This anti-drugs campaign should not be confused with the 1970s and 1980s US-backed Operation Condor of political repression in Latin America's southern cone.
- 4 The authors published two similar articles, one in which they contrasted the case of Mexico with Colombia, and in the other with Burma, see respectively Snyder, R. & Durán Martínez, A. (2009a) and (2009b). Recently Durán Martínez (2018) has enriched this approach conceptually and empirically.
- 5 Variations in drug related violence during the recent period of the militarized war on drugs in Mexico (post-2006) have been explained by the partisan use of law enforcement, or by confrontational law enforcement itself as it causes the fragmentation of criminal groups, see Trejo e.a. (2016) and Atuesta e.a. (2017).
- 6 *New York Times*, 28 December 1976; *Los Angeles Times*, 29 December 1976; *El Noroeste*, 6 April 1977.
- 7 *Los Angeles Times*, 11 November 1977.
- 8 *New York Times*, 28 December 1976; *Los Angeles Times*, 29 December 1976.
- 9 By way of comparison, in 2010 Ciudad Juárez, then considered the most violent city in the world, had a homicide rate of 262 (and Culiacán 97). In 2020, Zamora, in Michoacán, had a homicide rate of 206. See Laura Y. Calderón, L.Y. et al. (2021: 14).
- 10 All these figures come from the Registro Civil de Sinaloa. We would like to thank Juan Antonio Fernández Velázquez for procuring these figures.
- 11 *El Noroeste*, 30 April 1977.
- 12 Centro Cultural Isidro Fabela, Archivo Alfonso Quiroz Cuarón, Box 14.
- 13 Thanks to Juan Antonio Fernández Velázquez for seeking out these figures.
- 14 See National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 170, Box 160. List of narcotics offenders, 1962.
- 15 Conclusions drawn from drugs cases found in Casas de la Cultura Jurídica in Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez.

- 16 Tribunal Superior de Justicia, Amparos, Miguel Urias Uriarte 1948.
- 17 Casa de la Cultura Jurídica de Tijuana, 1948, Box 1, Exp. 7. D. Urias Uriarte et al.
- 18 In 1900, for example, only four villages in the municipality of Badiraguato had more than 500 residents, see Soto Quintero, M.F. (2011).
- 19 The author of the first insider's account of the Sinaloa drug trade, *El Diario del Narcotraficante*, describes a similar system. In the 1950s, community members in the *sierra* amassed all the gum that they had collected from their individual fields and sold it together and in bulk to the Culiacán buyers. See Nacaveva, A. (1967). Most authors have assumed that *Diario* was an entirely fictional account. No doubt, there were fictional aspects, but the piece was also written by a Culiacán journalist and was heavily based on conversations with local traffickers.
- 20 Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Presidentes, Manual Avila Camacho, 422.2, Rodolfo Loaiza to President Avila Camacho, 17 April 1941.
- 21 See the descriptions in NARA, RG170, Box 23, Anon to Terry Talent, 16 Mar. 1947; Terry Talent to Commissioner of Customs, 11 March 1947.
- 22 See also AGN, MAC, 422.2, José Iribe to President Avila Camacho, 8 February 1942; NARA, RG84, Roman Aispiro to U.S. Consulate, 17 July 1945.
- 23 He was often also called José Dominguez. NARA, RG170, Box 23, Treasury Representative in Mexico to Commissioner of Customs, 26 December 1947, Anonymous report, 27 August 1946; Gustavo Aguilar Aguilar, *Empresarios de origen sonorenses en Sinaloa: Manuel J. Esquer y Francisco Del Rincón Rodríguez* in Arturo Carrillo Rojas et al, (coords.), *Contribuciones a la Historia económica, social y cultural de Sinaloa* (Culiacán: Archivo Histórico General del Estado de Sinaloa/UAS, 2007), 127-151, 141.
- 24 NARA, RG170, Box 23, Anonymous report, 27 August 1946; José María Figueroa and Gilberto Alanís López, *Badiraguato. 18 Encuentros con la historia* (Culiacán: Gobierno del Estado de Sinaloa-Revista Cultural Presagio, 2002), 70, 173.
- 25 See the description of state judicial police chief, Francisco de la Rocha. NARA, RG170, Box 23, Treasury Representative in Mexico to Commissioner of Customs, 26 December 1947.
- 26 Interview with David Wilson, former DEA agent, September 2018.
- 27 NARA, RG 170, Box 23, Treasury representative in Mexico to Commissioner of Customs, 26 December 1947.
- 28 Casa de la Cultura Jurídica de Tijuana, 1947, box 7 exp. 143.
- 29 For a description of this wave of buyers, see Kamstra, J. (1974).
- 30 The story is mentioned repeatedly from 1973 onwards. See Fernández Velázquez, J.A. (2018); Kuykendall, J. (2005); *La Prensa*, 13 December 1975; AGN, Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS), Versión Pública, Federico Castel de Oro.
- 31 Gerald R. Ford Library, Domestic Council, Box 19, Richard Parsons, Report on the Southern Border, September 1976: 9.
- 32 A second cluster of states concerned Sonora, Jalisco and Nayarit.
- 33 Heath mentions that metric tons of heroin entering the US from Mexico dropped from more than 6 in 1975 to 1.1 in 1979.
- 34 AGN-SEDENA, Box 10, file 1297, letter Raymundo Félix to Attorney General, 6 October, 1977.
- 35 AGN-SEDENA, Box 15, file 1298, letter Alfonso Roman Aguirre, 4 August, 1979. In this case, the military police undertook legal action against two officers.

- 36 AGN-SEDENA, Box 41, file 662, report general Mario Oliver Bustamante, 6 July, 1970.
- 37 AGN-SEDENA, Box 207, file 839, several documents.
- 38 AGN-SEDENA, Box 44, file 1012, letter Jerónimo Díaz García to president López Portillo and others, 17 July, 1979.
- 39 These two cases, and many more, are mentioned in Ortiz Pinchetti e.a (1981: 38-39).
- 40 AGN-DFS, box 317, Colegio de Abogados 'Eustaquio Buelna' en Sinaloa, Estudio practicado por el Colegio, May 1978.
- 41 For example, in April 1974, two students were gunned down and killed by police during a riot that was part of a university conflict that lasted for months, *Diario de Culiacán*, 8 April, 1974.
- 42 AGN, IPS, 1711 C, Exp. 4., Report, 23 June 1971.
- 43 AGN-IPS, box 1711C, file 10, report 11 December, 1972. Later, Gárate Bustamante was a DEA operative and allegedly involved in the Enrique Camarena affair. See Russell H. Bartley e.a. (2015: 288, 429-430).
- 44 AGN-IPS, box 1711C, file 10, report, 20 January, 1973.
- 45 AGN-IPS, box 1711C, file 10, report, 12 February, 1973.
- 46 AGN-IPS, box 1711C, file 10, report, 15 June, 1975.
- 47 AGN-IPS, box 1711C, file 10, report, 31 March, 1977.
- 48 As an example, the report mentioned the recent case of an imprisoned former municipal police officer, who together with three prison guards was brutally assassinated in what appeared vengeance by drug traffickers. AGN-IPS, box 1711C, file 12, 24 June, 1976.
- 49 AGN-IPS, box 1711C, file 10, reports 25 and 31 March 1977.
- 50 AGN-IPS, box 1711C, file, report, 6 May 1977.
- 51 AGN-DFS, public version of Pedro Avilés Pérez, report, 16 September, 1978.
- 52 In this section, for reasons of space, we did not bring up the issue of increasing access to guns. But this clearly was a key reason as well for the upswing in murder. See Hearing before the permanent subcommittee on investigations of the committee on government operations, United States Senate, Ninety-fifth Congress, January 12 1977.
- 53 Report by Leopoldo Sánchez Celis, 1968.
- 54 Hearing before the permanent subcommittee on investigations of the committee on government operations, United States Senate, Ninety-fifth Congress, January 12, 1977.
- 55 *El Noroeste*, 10 February 1977.
- 56 Hearing before the permanent subcommittee on investigations of the committee on government operations, United States Senate, Ninety-fifth Congress, January 12, 1977.

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